

Supporting individual needs from a health and safety perspective

Guidance

Supporting individual needs from a health and safety perspective

It is essential that youth work organisations understand the individual support needs of all participants- including both young people and workers, before programmes or services begin. Organisations should carefully review any information received in advance (e.g. application forms or similar documents) and take note of any disclosed pre-existing conditions or accessibility requirements.

Examples could include the following:

- **Medical needs:** Pre-existing health conditions such as asthma, allergies, mental health considerations, and any required medications.
- **Dietary needs:** Food allergies, intolerances, and dietary requirements related to cultural or religious practices.
- **Mobility and access requirements:** Any physical or environmental accommodations needed for full participation.
- **Relevant injury history:** Previous injuries or trauma that may impact or be affected by the activity.
- **Learning and cognitive support needs:** Including but not limited to dyslexia, ADHD, or neurodivergent profiles such as autism.
- **Behavioural support needs:** For example, support strategies for managing risk-taking behaviours, emotional regulation, or past incidents of leaving supervised areas.
- **Sensory needs:** Sensitivities to sound, light, touch, or other sensory inputs that may require accommodations.

Organisations should equally ensure that they gather information from their workers to enable their individual support needs to be met. HR processes should be consulted as applicable and should bear in mind that appropriate support measures for workers may differ from those for young people.

Organisations should take all reasonable steps to fully understand individual support needs and medical conditions as applicable and are responsible for determining what information they require to fully understand an individual's needs.

If organisations determine that they would benefit from seeking further information from the individual's GP or specialist this should be done in consultation and with the prior agreement of the individual and parent/carer as applicable. Organisations should also consult with venues and activity/transport providers if applicable to confirm and ensure that support needs can be met throughout the programme. This should be done and assured in advance.

Information regarding individuals' needs must be used to inform the specific risk assessment for the programme or service delivery to ensure that they do not pose additional risk or affect the use of or access to safety equipment or emergency procedures. Senior staff with responsibilities for health and safety should be involved in the review of information and any judgements about whether support needs can be reasonably met. Where difficult decisions are made about an individual's participation in a programme because of safety concerns and where adjustments cannot, after detailed consideration, be made reasonably, organisations should provide transparency and look to reach an agreement with the individual and parents/carers.

Organisations must uphold their duties against all forms of discrimination in adherence with the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that decisions are made purely on the basis of risk and their ability to adequately safeguard individuals.

Organisations should ensure that they are aware of any protected characteristics (as outlined below) that may affect safety considerations such as the use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment e.g. helmets, safety harnesses or buoyancy aids) or the ability to understand and respond to safety instructions or emergency evacuation procedures (e.g. reduced mobility/sensory impairments/understanding of English language)

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Pertinent medical and personal information for all young people and workers should be communicated and made readily available to delivery workers (those in direct contact with young people) on the programme to support any incidents or emergency situations.

This information and sensitive data should be kept to a minimum and be managed very carefully and securely in accordance with data protection policies and regulations.