

Health and Safety Policy

Policy

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A health and safety policy provides a youth work organisation the opportunity to detail what it will do to manage health and safety, and how it will make youth programmes safe. As such, it will form a core part of an organisation's overall safety management system and sets out the organisation's approach to keeping young people, workers and the public safe during its activity.

The law requires any organisation employing more than five people to write their health and safety policy down and it is commonplace to see health and safety policies form part of a formal suite of governance documents. Youth work commissioners or sponsors often ask organisations to provide copies of health and safety policies as part of their due diligence since they provide a good opportunity to gauge a youth work organisation's approach and commitment to this essential area of youth work. Established youth work organisations are likely to have a thorough policy already so this section is designed for those who are yet to produce one or who wish to check its structure and contents are appropriate.

A health and safety policy sets out your general approach to health and safety. It explains how you, as an employer, will manage health and safety in your business. It should clearly say who does what, when and how. HSE

Policy structure

It is commonplace for health and safety policies to follow a similar structure that consists of three main areas:

- a. Commitment/Statement: This tends to be a statement of several paragraphs, signed by the CEO or other senior manager, that outlines the overall organisational commitment to keeping young people, staff and others safe. It should state commitment to compliance with legal requirements, commitments to improving performance and how employees are crucial to safe delivery. This part of the policy is often posted on staff notice boards or other areas such as staff handbooks etc.
- b. Responsibilities: This section of the policy details who is responsible for which aspects of the safety management system. It can be represented as a table or organisational chart but the format is less important than the content. Any individual or role holder who has defined responsibilities should be included along with a description of their area of health and safety responsibility.
- c. Arrangements: This section details how the organisation will meet the commitments made in the first section. It is often the most detailed part of the policy and can summarise and link to numerous separate processes or operating procedure documents. A key arrangement to detail will be the policy and approach to conducting risk assessments. Other aspects to include will be minimum worker competencies for different programmes, staff induction and training, minimum safety operating standards, supervision, third party subcontracting/due diligence, supporting individual needs, welfare, safety monitoring/review, first-aid and critical incident management. The health and safety policy will often have important links to other key policies such as safeguarding and the arrangements detailed in such linked policies should be aligned together as much as possible.

Who can write the health and safety policy

There is no specific qualification needed and anyone who understands the youth work organisation itself, how it is structured, the needs of young people, the systems used to keep them safe, and who has a sound knowledge of health and safety can write this policy. Organisations who don't have anyone with specific health and safety knowledge often choose to seek external support when drafting such a policy. Membership bodies, trade associations, public liability insurers, specialist consultants such as Pharos Response and the HSE can all help. The [HSE](#) provides advice and some basic templates on its website. In a similar way to the process of drafting risk assessments, youth work organisations are advised to avoid simply copying others' policies: this can introduce inconsistencies and errors that at worst, could lead to health and safety system shortfall which could subsequently place people at risk of harm. The proactive involvement of employees and others in the organisation will often help achieve a better and more informed policy. Youth work organisations are encouraged to seek employee and worker input through forums, working groups or other consultation.

When to review a health and safety policy

Health and safety should be regularly monitored as part of good governance. Since the health and safety policy is core to organisational practice, the [HSE recommends](#) that the Board 'examines whether the health and safety policy reflects the organisation's current priorities, plans and targets' annually. Other reasons for reviewing this policy is to keep up to date with changes in health and safety law and other non-statutory sector good practice; and to reflect any changes to programmes, people and/or processes.

Communicating health and safety policy

An organisation must inform its employees and others who have health and safety responsibilities of the policy. This is normally done through a mixture of information, instruction, training and by providing ready access to written documents.