

How to... manage health & safety

Health and safety must be considered across all your activities and in many cases you will need to complete a risk assessment before starting work.

- Check in advance with your local council regarding health & safety requirements relating to your activities
- Visit the [Health & Safety Executive website](#) for information about managing health and safety and carrying out your own risk assessments
- Ensure that your group is adequately insured for the activities that you will undertake. The RHS offers very competitive [Public Liability insurance for groups](#).
- Groups working with children and young people must ensure that they are doing so in accordance with the law with regards to child protection and safety. For further information and guidance please contact your national volunteering body: Volunteer England; Volunteer Development Scotland; Wales Council for Voluntary Action; or the Volunteer Development Agency in Northern Ireland.

Tips from groups

- The local Council Parks and Green Spaces team have simple templates for addressing health and safety issues which might arise when volunteers are engaged in various activities e.g. maintaining a flower bed. We use and adapt these templates to show we have considered possible risks. (*St Lukes Church, Crosby, IYN*)
- RAMS: Risk assessments and method statements. Think of who can be affected, how they can be affected, what are the potential risks and how can you prevent or minimise them. PPE: personal protection equipment and always do a session on use of any equipment the correct way and how to store it when not in use. If possible, ensure qualified supervision and support. (*Airedale Shopping Centre in Bloom*)
- We have an insurance policy, supplied via the RHS, and we use risk assessments for all our activities to ensure that we have identified risks when projects are being carried out. We advise volunteers what they need to bring with them - suitable clothing and footwear etc. (*Friends of Parkinsons Park, IYN*)
- A health and safety policy is often needed to be attached, along with a copy of your insurance policy, to grant applications. Contact your local Volunteer Services Council for help. (*Prestatyn in Bloom*)
- Develop a simple "one covers all" risk assessment to cover any projects you might like to start. This can be then adapted or added to to cover specifics. Local Authorities have excellent examples to adapt for your own needs. Make sure before you start any work at all, that all volunteers have read it, signed it and have a copy of it.
Always have a basic first aid kit, clean water and antiseptic hand wash/wipes on site. Make sure all workers are aware of who is a first aider. Perhaps there is a house or pub nearby who is happy for you to use their facilities if necessary.

RHS BRITAIN IN BLOOM advice sheet

When you leave a site between working shifts try to take a dated and timed photograph of where you are working so anyone who breaches warning signs, netting etc. cannot say it was left unsafe by you. This is particularly necessary if you are working on riverside paths, public areas, footpaths, verges, etc.

If you are working on land which is governed by local authority make sure they are fully aware of what you intend to do, with full plans, risk assessments and time scales so they will not be under the risk of litigation because of the work you are doing. Get permission in writing. Make sure all tools on site are kept safely out of the reach of children, away from pathways to avoid accidents. (*Ross-in-Bloom*)