**RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT**

**Risk Benefit Assessment (RBA)** is an approach to risk assessment that focuses not just on the risks of the activity, but on the benefits of the activity. It is particularly valuable in the context of residentials and outdoor learning and as such as been adopted by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (Rospa), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and other leading education associations as their preferred method of risk assessment.

RBA, sometimes also known as Risk Benefit Analysis, starts with the principle that risk is an essential element in the development of learner’s physical, emotional and intellectual development. RBA helps us as decision makers ascertain whether the level of risk inherent in an activity is ‘worth it’ – in other words that the benefits young people gain from the activity outweigh the risks associated with it. This process, whenever possible, needs to be co-designed, agreed then regularly checked in with throughout the cycle of any project or placement.

Using a RBA approach still means you need to consider how to mitigate risk and clarify how you will deal with risk. Consider how learners would miss out, if they *weren’t* able to engage in the activity in question – in other words, carry out a ‘reverse’ risk assessment. For example,

* What would learners miss out on, if they never learned how to light and manage a fire? What would the risks be if they didn’t learn these skills?

When it’s couched in that way, it’s easy to justify why (using this example) fire management is an important skill and that we should be looking at ways of enabling our learners to experience it.

By tackling risks in a safe, managed environment and supported by caring, knowledgeable adults, and our learners to gain the skills and confidence to take on bigger risks as they learn more will enable them to feel more confident. Risk isn’t just about physical actions – for example climbing a tree or using new tools for making. It’s also about taking intellectual risks – trying anything for the first time, testing new ideas, accepting other people’s opinions (even if you don’t agree with them).

Placements and live client projects related to real world challenges are perfect places to practice and develop these skills. Learners will also encounter emotional risks throughout their lives, so by developing a culture of risk taking through placements and live client projects, our social enterprise can contribute to supporting learner’s find their inner creative thinking, solution focused and innovative, practical skills to feel more confident to manage the future and uncertainty.

**HOW TO MAKE A RBA WORK**

You will already have written risk assessments for your residentials and will be ‘dynamically’ risk assessing throughout the residential itself. When writing up an RBA for any project

* think about how you can *enable* exciting activity, rather than *preventing* it.
* consider any potential **hazards**, and decide whether, on balance, the hazard represents an **acceptable risk** or an **unacceptable risk**. The outcome might be different for each participant, depending on their own ability and confidence levels, as well as the context of the risk - that’s where the mitigating factors, or ‘precautions’, come in.

Use the RBA template overleaf to risk benefit assess some of the activities you plan to do on each specific project. There will be some core ways of working that link to the overall mission, values and practices of working at Open To Create… as well as using common sense and the legal responsibilities we have to ourselves and any partner setting, learner or participant we chose to work with. Then, when you feel confident using it, ask partners and learners to risk benefit assess our work together through working through the template to establish how, together, you can make it happen. This is key as being clear about risks, and how we can work with them is a key empowerment tool

**RISK BENEFIT ASSESSMENT**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Location / Activity:** |  | **Date:** |  |
| **Assessor:**  |  | **Review date:**  |  |

The boxes in the table below will expand as you type into them; pre-entered text is simply for illustration. You should delete irrelevant items and replace with text relevant to your circumstances.

**Your overall risk rating – Low, medium or high – is based on your judgement about whether the BENEFITS of the activity or opportunity outweigh the RISKS.**

| **ACTIVITY** | **How will young people BENEFIT from this activity?** | **Possible hazards** | **Who is at risk?** | **PRECAUTIONS in place to reduce the risk of injury** | **Overall risk RATING: L/M/H** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| POND DIPPING: Slippery pond decking or edges | The decking allows close access to the contents of the pond and is an essential component of exploring this habitat. | Slips, trips and falls.Cuts, grazes and abrasions.Drowning. | Young people; adults | * Banks shallow and planted to prevent accidental entry.
* No access to banks for young people; use decking or ‘beach’ area only.
* Deepest area is centre of pond – keep to edges.
* Perimeter kept clear of dense or high foliage so pond edges are clearly defined and can be seen / avoided.
* Dipping platform kept clear of trip hazards (e.g. nets, trays)
* Pond use rules clearly displayed and reviewed at the start of each session.
 | Low |
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**MORE INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION**

* PlayLink – have a look at their very detailed [Risk Benefit Assessment form](http://www.playlink.org/pubs/Risk-bformWeb15.12.09.pdf)
* Managing Risk in Play Provision – Play Safety Forum / Play England. [Download the PDF.](http://www.playengland.org.uk/resources/managing-risk-in-play-provision-implementation-guide.aspx)
* High Level Statement on Children’s play: a balanced approach – HSE. [Download the PDF.](http://www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/childs-play-statement.htm)