

Risk Assessments

7 Oct 21 This email has been sent to area chairs and secretaries.

Hello everyone,

Since we sent out the new walk leader checklist and risk assessment six weeks ago, we have had conversations with some volunteers. Today, we wanted to give you an update, and say thanks to everyone that has supported us in introducing these changes. We know it has not always been easy, and there are a variety of views on the decision we have taken.

Some volunteers have been in touch a number of times since our last update to request more detail on risk assessments for group walks, the reasons for their introduction, and to express their concerns about their impact. We're getting in touch today to confirm why we implemented the risk assessments and how we need to move forward.

Why have risk assessments been introduced?

Walking is an inherently safe activity, and we all want it to be as fun and easy as possible for walkers and our walk leaders. The Ramblers has some of the most experienced walk leaders across Great Britain and we know that they take the reasonable steps necessary to ensure that walkers are welcomed and safe on each walk.

On average we experience a low number of incidents each year, with only a few resulting in an insurance claim. However, where there is a claim, our insurers have been very clear that having a written record of risks, and our actions before and during an incident, is vital to demonstrate that we have acted responsibly.

Our insurers understand that we are a volunteering organisation and are happy to support our approach to keep these records as simple as possible. However, they have confirmed that we must complete risk assessments and keep them for three years, in line with the limitation periods within UK law. We are keen to explore options with you for storing these in a safe and easy way.

[Read more about our guidance for group walks](#)

Impact on walk leaders

We know that this decision to introduce risk assessments has led to some walk leaders deciding to take a step back from leading walks.

Completing a risk assessment should not take a lot of time to complete – this is a simple record of the previously informal or subconscious risk assessments that walk leaders already carried out as part of their recce or other planning activities, and is all part of how together, we manage risk.

We are committed to working with you to help recruit and support new and existing walk leaders and would like to reiterate how much we value all that you do.

Working together

Members of the staff team have been in touch with many of you as part of this work on introducing risk assessments, and we know that some of you have felt unhappy or uncomfortable with these changes. We are sorry that we haven't always got this right and are committed to improving how we work with you in the future.

We recognise that not everyone will welcome these changes regarding risk assessments but we hope that you understand the reasons behind them. We cannot continue to send individual responses to volunteers who wish to contest the decision. Please support our staff team by allowing them to focus their time on improving everyone's experience with the Ramblers and helping us to grow.

We hope that this email and our [guidance for group walks](#) give you the information you need to reassure your groups. We will also publish the message on Assemble to give all volunteers the opportunity to read it for themselves. Please signpost this to your groups.

Let's continue working together as one team to ensure that the Ramblers is a great charity to work for, volunteer with, walk with, and be a member. We all share a common goal – to help everyone enjoy the benefits of walking and protect our access to the outdoors.

On behalf of the staff team and trustees, thank you for your understanding and we look forward to seeing some of you at the forthcoming Area AGMs.

Best Wishes,

Tanya Curry, Interim Chief Executive Officer, and **Rebecca Dawson**, Chair of the Board of Trustees