



# Risk management

Training Aid 4

## Effective risk management in advocacy practice

This guide provides practical advice for identifying, assessing, and managing risks during advocacy work. It emphasises the importance of understanding potential risks and taking proactive steps to address them. This guide complements the YVC Risk Management Policy and Procedure.

## Understanding risk management

Risk management involves recognising potential risks, evaluating their impact, and implementing strategies to mitigate or prevent them. Effective risk management ensures the safety of advocates, volunteers, and the people we support, creating a secure and supportive environment for advocacy work.

## Stages of risk management

### 1. Identifying and assessing risk

- **Consider all factors:** Take into account the environment, context, individuals involved, and history of similar cases.
- **Gather information:** Collect detailed information from referrals, case notes, and any known background of the individual to assess potential risks.
- **Evaluate risk:** Assess how likely and impactful each risk could be. Include known behaviours like frustration leading to shouting, aggression, or other factors such as domestic violence or sexualised behaviour.

### 2. Planning mitigation

- **Document and log risks:** Use Charity Log's "Risk" menu to document each known risk, ensuring that all mitigating actions are clearly outlined.
- **High-risk situations:** For cases with known safety concerns such as past incidents of aggression or domestic issues, that could compromise the safety of the advocate, do not visit alone. Arrange visits with the presence of a support team member, another advocate, or a professional, such as a social worker, to ensure a safe and supportive environment for both the advocate and the individual.
- **Adhere to setting policies:** Follow the risk management policies of settings visited, ensuring they align with YVC procedures.
- **Request safety tools:** For secure settings like inpatient wards, request personal alarms and avoid off-ward meetings that isolate you from staff oversight.

- **Maintain privacy:** Where necessary, arrange to use a communal room in the setting for meetings and request that a staff member remain nearby to ensure safety while maintaining confidentiality.
- **Pre-visit checks:** Contact the setting before the visit to confirm any risks and ensure suitable meeting arrangements. This is part of a dynamic risk assessment approach.

### 3. Reviewing and monitoring

- **Continuous review:** Update risk assessments regularly, especially when new information is obtained.
- **Adapt strategies:** Monitor the effectiveness of any actions taken to mitigate risks and make adjustments as needed to ensure ongoing safety.

### Example scenario: Supporting Sam's transition to independent living

Situation: Sam, a 25-year-old with a mild learning disability, has asked for advocacy support as he transitions to independent living. Sam has a history of becoming frustrated when discussing significant changes, sometimes resulting in raised voices or agitation.

#### Risk assessment by the advocate:

##### 1. Behavioural triggers:

- **Risk:** discussions about moving could trigger frustration or agitation.
- **Mitigation:** Schedule the visit when a member of Sam's support team is available to be present. Plan for the meeting to take place in a communal room where a staff member can stay nearby, if needed.

##### 2. Emotional responses:

- **Risk:** Sam may become distressed or upset during conversations.
- **Mitigation:** Prepare strategies for de-escalating heightened emotions, such as taking breaks and using calming communication techniques.

##### 3. Communication barriers:

- **Risk:** Sam may have difficulties processing or communicating information.
- **Mitigation:** Use clear, simple language and check for understanding throughout the discussion.

##### 4. Physical environment:

- **Risk:** The room may not be suitable for a private, safe discussion.
- **Mitigation:** Confirm with the setting that an appropriate room is available for meetings to protect privacy while ensuring safety.

**Outcome:** The advocate's thorough risk assessment and preparation lead to a productive and safe visit. The presence of a support team member provides reassurance, while a well-chosen meeting space supports effective communication. The advocate's awareness and strategies prevent escalation, empowering Sam to engage in the discussion confidently.

## Visit preparation and compliance with YVC policy

Inadequate documentation could lead to safety issues and gaps in accountability.

**Mitigation:** Log all visits in the calendar as per YVC policy, including details such as the individual's name, address, and visit purpose. Ensure your phone is fully charged and use the Safepoint app for additional safety.

**Outcome:** Thorough preparation and documentation create a safer, more transparent advocacy practice.

### Tips for advocates:

- **Plan visits carefully:** Arrange to have support or company for visits where there are known risks.
- **Prioritise safety:** Use communal spaces with staff presence during sensitive discussions.
- **Be prepared:** Familiarise yourself with de-escalation techniques and dynamic risk assessment.
- **Maintain confidentiality:** Balance safety measures with the need for privacy and dignity during meetings.

### Key takeaways for advocates

- **Document thoroughly:** Log all identified risks and steps taken in Charity Log to ensure clear risk management plans.
- **Collaborate when needed:** Engage with support teams or other professionals for potentially high-risk visits.
- **Ongoing review:** Regularly update risk assessments and adjust as needed to respond to new information or changes in circumstances.

By following these risk management strategies, advocates can create a safer environment for both them and the individuals they support, ensuring effective and respectful advocacy practices.



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