

Safety Monitoring and Audit

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Monitoring

Effective safety management is normally delivered using a systems-based approach and an important component of this is monitoring and review. Monitoring the effectiveness of an organisation's safety management helps ensure that it remains fit for purpose and helps identify issues in advance, allowing opportunities to implement changes to avoid unsafe practice. It is part of a good safety culture and helps demonstrate management commitment to overall safety management.

Monitoring uses resources but when conducted effectively, it is a useful investment of both time, effort and money. The complexity and scale of monitoring should be proportionate to the size of the organisation and identified risks.

There are two types of safety monitoring that organisations can use and the best results normally combine elements of both.

- **Reactive monitoring:** For youth programmes, this often takes the form of reviewing incident/near miss reports, safety related complaints and annual trends.
- **Proactive monitoring:** This usually involves visits by trained individuals who have experience of applicable safety standards to observe practice and report back on their findings.

Tips when establishing proactive health and safety youth programme monitoring systems:

- Select competent individuals to perform the monitoring visits
- Design an observation sheet or framework that can be used consistently across different activities and programmes to help ensure consistency of reporting
- Consult with staff at different levels when designing monitoring report forms to ensure the right criterias are monitored
- Track the output of monitoring as a way of reporting to senior management and for measuring performance over time. This can support corporate governance and be included in formal Board reports
- Establish a schedule of monitoring over time that is proportionate and sustainable to deliver in terms of the time and staffing available to deliver it
- Consider whether to monitor equally across all programmes versus the benefits of targeting those identified as higher risk; those where a higher incident rate has been identified through reactive monitoring; and when new systems or processes have been introduced

Audit and review

Organisations with established safety management systems will naturally seek to ensure they remain fit for purpose and, in some cases, benchmark against sector good practice or external standards. To do so demonstrates good governance and will also help ensure that safety policies and procedures are 'maintained' and kept up to date as youth sector practice, and potentially legislation or statutory guidance develops over time. Furthermore, organisations may develop new programmes that alter risk profiles from when policies were initially drafted and a structured approach to review and audit may help identify this.

Safety audits are a more formal and structured review process, normally checking compliance to health and safety and associated legal requirements. Audits may also highlight safety management system gaps and identify opportunities for improvements. There are clear advantages to engaging external auditors since they can provide an independent perspective, unencumbered by the outcomes of potential findings within the organisation, and will be able to provide broader sector-wide perspectives. However, smaller organisations may wish to conduct this internally, thereby saving the costs of external consultants, but should only do so if there is the relevant in-house competence of conducting such audits.

In addition to auditing general health and safety compliance, it is useful to audit against frameworks specific to the youth sector. UK Youth provide such a framework called [Safe Spaces](#). Quality can provide an alternative organisational performance measure and is often audited in a similar way to health and safety.