



Safety on Group Walks Project

Note to Walk Leaders

We want our new walk leadership resources to be the go-to guide for planning and leading group walks both within and outside of the Ramblers. We want to share our experience and skills with others so that they can get out and enjoy walking with friends as we do.

We know from your feedback that there are questions that you would like clarity on, so we've collected the six main questions you've asked to date and answered them below.

Why have you introduced a new approach to leading group walks?

Covid acted as a catalyst for the Ramblers, forcing us to review our approach to managing safety on group walks. And after delving deeper into this, we discovered there are a lot of assumptions in our current system.

Initially, we responded by introducing written risk assessments but it became clear through conversations with volunteers and independent research that we needed a better approach. So we've been working side by side with volunteers to develop something new, to bring together best practice in a concise way and provide a guide for new walk leaders coming into the role.

We know our walk leaders have a wealth of experience leading group walks and lead them to a very high standard. This new approach is not about telling you what you already know: it's about pulling together all the processes and examples of your high standards into one place.

We want to ensure consistency across the whole variety of walks and areas in which we operate and provide a training tool for new walk leaders coming into the role. This approach will highlight what we as the Ramblers believe is the best method for planning and leading a walk. So should the worst happen, both the Ramblers, and you as walk leaders, can demonstrate the process you followed to ensure that the walk was planned and led in line with best practice.

What is my liability as a walk leader?

The bottom line is that if an incident does occur on your walk and a claim is made, both the Ramblers as an organisation and you as the walk leader will come under scrutiny. Technical experts would give evidence as to whether current norms were followed and whether best practice was adhered to. You will have to demonstrate that you were appropriately prepared, experienced and competent to lead that walk. The Ramblers is here to support you as a walk leader. The new approach with its guide, eLearning and Code of Practice will support you to be able to demonstrate that you were appropriately prepared, experienced and competent to lead that walk. It sets the benchmark for best practice within



the organisation and gives you a clear approach to plan and lead enjoyable, welcoming and safe walks based both on current norms and the high standard of walk leadership that already exists within Ramblers.

Am I covered by the insurance?

The Ramblers provides two types of insurance for walk leaders:

- Public liability insurance - This provides cover for damages or legal costs against you if someone is injured or property is damaged because you did something wrong – as long as your actions weren't deliberate or reckless. To be covered, you must follow the Ramblers Code of Practice as outlined in the new guide.
- Personal accident cover - This can provide insurance to you or your family in the unlikely event you're seriously injured while volunteering for the Ramblers. To be covered by this, you need to be registered as a volunteer at the Ramblers, be under 90 years of age and a UK resident. You are only covered while undertaking your role as a walk leader.

Ultimately, the best way to make sure you're covered is to follow the Ramblers Code of Practice. Unfortunately, insurance is simply not black and white. Just as no two walks are ever the same, each incident will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. However, a walk leader puts themselves in the best possible position by following the Ramblers approach. This not only reduces the likelihood of anything happening in the first place, but also enables the walk leader to demonstrate that they took all appropriate actions to lead a safe, enjoyable and welcoming walk.

How do I report an incident?

You can report an incident - whether injury, near miss or property damage - via the Ramblers Incident Form which can be downloaded from Assemble (Document Hub>Group Walks>Leading Walks Folder). You then send the completed form to incidents@ramblers.org.uk within 10 days of the incident, where we will log and action it, providing extra support for your group as needed.

Do I still need to complete a risk assessment?

When the new approach is in place, it will no longer necessary to complete a risk assessment for every single walk. As part of the new approach, walk leaders will be given all the information they need to decide whether a risk assessment is necessary to ensure they've managed the risks on their walk. Groups may choose to hold generic risk assessments for walks which are reviewed and updated every year, or a walk leader might choose to do their own risk assessment for their own peace of mind. Either way, Ramblers will provide some generic risk assessments to support groups and walk leaders in their choices.

What about the walkers on my walk, don't they have a responsibility to act safely too?

Yes, everyone on a walk has a responsibility to act safely and to report any safety concerns. We will be updating information for walkers to make sure this is clear. However, as a walk leader, you are ultimately responsible for the group on the walk. You do not have to be the only person managing safety on



the walk. You can delegate to back markers and middle markers, but you should remain mindful that ultimately, as the leader of the walk, you are responsible for planning and leading that walk safely.