8.4 Risk Assessment

Policy statement

We believe that the health and safety of children is of paramount importance. We make our setting a safe and healthy place for children, parents, staff and volunteers by assessing and minimising the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment.

Children crave risk when there playing, they want challenge and excitement in their play, and they learn from it. They need to experience challenging play in order to develop important life skills and to better manage risk and challenge in their daily lives. Opportunities for children to take risks are are often limited due to our risk-adverse culture and a preserved increase in health and safety. We need to reflect on whether we have a genuine reason to stop risky play, or if we are simply intervening out of habit due to personal limitations.

Risk assessment means:
Taking note of aspects of your workplace and activities that could cause harm, either to yourself or to others, and deciding what needs to be done to prevent that harm, making sure this is adhered to.

The law does not require that all risk is eliminated, but that 'reasonable precaution' is taken. This is particularly important when balancing the need for children to be able to take appropriate risks through physical challenging play. Children need the opportunity to work out what is not safe and what they should do when faced with a risk.

Health and safety risk assessments inform procedures. Staff and parents should be involved in reviewing risk assessments and procedures-they are the ones with first-hand knowledge as to whether the control measures are effective - and they can give an informed view to help update procedures accordingly.

This policy is based on the five steps below:
- Identification of a risk: Where is it and what is it?
- Who is at risk: Childcare staff, children, parents, cooks, cleaners etc?
- Assessment as to whether the level of a risk is high, medium, low. This takes into account both the likelihood of it happening, as well as the possible impact if it did.
- Control measures to reduce/eliminate risk: What will you need to do, or ensure others will do, in order to reduce that risk?
- Monitoring and review: How do you know if what you have said is working, or is thorough enough? If it is not working, it will need to be amended, or maybe there is a better solution.

Procedures
- Our manager undertake training and ensure our staff and volunteers have adequate training in health and safety matters.
- Out risk assessment process covers adults and children and includes:
- Determining where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how we are managing risk if asked by parents and/or carers and inspectors;
- Checking for and noting hazards and risks indoors and outdoor, in relation to our premises and activities;
- Assessing the level of risk and who might be affected;

- Deciding which areas need attention; and
- Developing an action plan that specifies the action required, the time-scales for action, the person responsible for the action and any funding required.

- Where more than five staff and volunteers are employed, the risk assessment is written and is reviewed regularly.
- We maintain lists of health and safety issues, which are checked daily before the session begins, as well as those that are checked on a weekly and termly basis when a full risk assessment is carried out.
- Our manager ensures that checks, such as electricity and gas safety checks, and any necessary work to the setting premises are carried out annually and records are kept.
- Our manager ensures that staff members carry out risk assessments that include relevant aspects of fire safety, food safety for all areas of the premises.
- Our manager ensures that staff members carry out risk assessment for work practice including:

- Changing children;
- Preparation and serving of food/drink for children;
- Children with allergies;
- Cooking activities with children;
- Supervising outdoor play and indoor/outdoor climbing equipment;
- Putting babies or young children to sleep
- Assessment, use and storage of equipment for disabled children;
- The use and storage of substances which may be hazardous to health, such as cleaning chemicals;
- Visitors to the setting who are bringing equipment or animals as part of children's learning experiences; and
- Following any incidents involving threats against staff or volunteers.

- Our manager ensures that staff members carry out risk assessments for off-site activities if required, including:

- Children's outings;
- Forest schools;
- Home visits; and
- Other off-site duties such as attending meetings, banking etc.

Legal Framework

- Management of Health and Safety at WorkRegulations (1999)

Further Guidance

- Five Steps to Risk Assessment (HSE 2011)

This policy was adopted by ..... (Name of Provider)

On ..... (Date)

Date to be reviewed ..... (Date)

Signed on behalf of the provider .....

Name of signatory .....

Role of signatory (eg Chair, director or owner) .....

Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance Publications

- Managing Risk (2009)