

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is an important process that everyone needs to

- understand and;
- actively engage with in order to keep children safe at all times.

Whilst you may not have the sole responsibility to assess risks for your setting, for instance you may not have management oversight or ultimate responsibility for health and safety matters, BUT you still have a part to play in identifying risks for children and taking action to prevent dangerous situations from occurring.

Risk assessment isn't complicated or difficult. When working with children we need to be extra vigilant due to various hazards and dangers that they might come across. In addition to this we have to consider that children are dependant upon adults to keep them safe. They need help to know what is safe and what isn't. Children are still learning about risks, it's our responsibility to help them do this in a safe and supportive way.

What is risk assessment?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) describes risk assessment as;

'A careful examination of what in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precaution or should do more to prevent harm'.

What does legislation say about risk assessment?

The *Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)* states that providers must ensure that they:

- take all reasonable steps to ensure staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks and must be able to demonstrate how they are managing risks.
- determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments in relation to specific issues, (not childminders) to inform staff practice, and to demonstrate how they are managing risks if asked by parents and/or carers or inspectors.

What needs to be risk assessed?

Its impossible and also impractical to have long list defining what exactly needs to be risk assessed in our settings. The EYFS gives us some idea of what we should take into account when looking at risk assessment.

'Risk assessments should identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis, when and by whom those aspects will be checked, and how the risk will be removed or minimised'. (EYFS)

Aspects of the environment – what these aspects are indoors and outdoors?

Checked on regular basis – how frequently, regularly, when and who will do this?

How the risk will be removed or minimised – what actions are we taking in order to manage risk?

Assessing and managing risk

The Health and Safety Executive explain five simple steps for risk assessment, they are to;

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on your actions/precautions
4. Record your findings and implement
5. Review your risk assessment

Trips and outings and managing risk

- Children must be kept safe while on outings.
- Providers must assess the risks or hazards which may arise for the children, and must identify the steps to be taken to remove, minimise and manage those risks and hazards. The assessment must include consideration of adult to child ratios.
- The risk assessment does not necessarily need to be in writing; this is for providers to judge.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Risk benefit models – children learning to manage risk in play; 3 points!

1. Risk assessment is a vital part of planning provision for physical activities or exploration which needs to be undertaken by a competent individual
2. A good first step is to consider the concept of risk benefit or in other words what are the benefits of an experience balanced against the risks
3. Once you have evaluated the benefits of your activity you can move forward to risk assess it.