

## Risk Assessment



### Introduction

Each child and every adult using your provision has the right to feel safe and secure. Assessing the risks in your environment is an important part of this; it involves you identifying potential hazards and considering any actions which may need to be taken to minimise the risk that they pose. Risk assessment is something that most of us will do naturally in many environments, for instance, when walking in a wintry environment we may choose to wear boots with good grips, or avoid the patch of ground which is covered in ice. If we walk into a play room and see a small chair upturned then we will choose to pick it up in case anyone falls over it. Risks within the early years environment will vary in severity and although we may consider each risk, not all will need to be formally written down.

This toolkit will support you in assessing risks within your environment, and deciding which need to be formally recorded. The hazard may be a physical object such as a climbing frame, or an activity such as administering medication.

The EYFS statutory requirements state that:

**3.64: 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.**

The toolkit will offer you examples of risk assessment forms that you can choose to complete, and will consider what risks should be assessed within your provision.

For further information, the last page of the toolkit provides a link to the Health and Safety Executive website which will provide current guidance and legislation to support you in assessing the risks in your provision.

## Links with other documentation

### **The Early Years Foundation Stage** (2017)

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

### **Playing and exploring.**

Encourage children to try new activities and to judge risks for themselves.

### **Safeguarding Requirements:**

The safeguarding requirements cover the steps that providers must take to keep children safe and promote their welfare.

3.2 Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. The requirements in this section explain what early years providers must do to: safeguard children; ensure the suitability of adults who have contact with children; promote good health; manage behaviour; and maintain records, policies and procedures

## Safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment

### Safety

3.54 Providers must ensure that their premises, including overall floor space and outdoor spaces, are fit for purpose and suitable for the age of children cared for and the activities provided on the premises. Providers must comply with requirements of health and safety legislation.

### Outings

3.65 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.

3.66 Vehicles in which the children are being transported, and the driver of those vehicles, must be adequately insured.

## Ofsted self-evaluation form

### Section 3. The leadership and management of the early years provision

This section is about the effectiveness of your leadership and management; or if you are a childminder how well you organise your service.

### Section 5. Personal development, behaviour and welfare.

This section is about the effectiveness of your care practices in helping children feel emotionally secure and ensuring children are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy.

## Effective Practice

The **Statutory Requirements** of the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017) states that “*Risk assessments **should** identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked on a regular basis*” & “*Providers **must** determine where it is helpful to make some written risk assessments.*” This does not mean that you need to **formally** record a risk assessment on everything a child comes into contact with whilst in your provision as this could be never ending, but you should be aware of the risks. You should formally risk assess any areas of the environment, equipment, work practices etc which pose a risk or which need checking for safety on a

regular basis. As well as considering the children at your provision, you should also consider the safety of parents, staff and visitors. Visitors may include prospective parents, delivery people, advisers etc

As well as your duty under the Early Years Foundation Stage and Ofsted registration, you will also need to be aware of Health and Safety legislation. Health and Safety law does not expect you to completely eliminate all of the risks within your provision, but it does expect you to protect the people using your provision ***so far as is reasonably practicable***.

When conducting a risk assessment, you should ensure that it is simple, clear and concise. Where possible, it should be written in conjunction with others who use your provision. Everyone using your premises should be made aware of the significant risks and any actions they need to take to minimise these risks. There is no point in writing a risk assessment and then doing nothing about it, as it can only help to minimise risks if people are aware of the risk and any actions they need to take.

You will need to risk assess the physical environment of your provision, both indoors and out. Think about any extra precautions you may need to take in more extreme weather, for instance gritting slippery surfaces in icy weather. You may also have to formally assess some of your resources and equipment for risks. For these risk assessments, as with any others you should record any actions that you need to take. This could be daily checks of the outdoor area, keeping emergency exits clear or disinfecting toys and resources. They could also be one off actions, such as buying a water thermometer, or installing a hand rail.

The Health and Safety Executive suggest a five step process to risk assessment (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm>):

- **Identify the hazards** – what is present within your environment that could cause harm?
- **Decide who might be harmed and how** – for example, children, parents, staff, visitors? How are they likely to be harmed?
- **Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions** – how likely is it that someone may be harmed by this hazard? How serious is any injury likely to be?
- **Record your findings and implement them** – recording the risks within your environment makes it much easier to share the information with other people using the provision. It helps to ensure that everyone is aware of the hazards and any measures they must take to minimise the risk to themselves and others. It is also helpful when reviewing risk assessments.
- **Review your risk assessment** – how often you review your risk assessments will depend on the risk and any 'near misses' that occur.

These five steps are helpful to follow when completing your risk assessments. The third step “**Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions**” is particularly important in helping you to decide whether or not a written risk assessment is needed for a particular hazard. For instance if you identify a hazard that you feel is highly unlikely to harm someone, and that the harm they would come to would be minimal, then it should not be necessary to write a formal risk assessment. Considering the risk that this hazard may cause and deciding that it does not need a written risk assessment is itself part of the risk assessment process – you may not have written down the risk/hazard but you have given it due consideration.

When deciding which hazards to formally risk assess it is important that you take a sensible and responsible point of view. You may find that talking the risks over with someone else will help, especially if you are new to the process.

Some of the more specific risks that you may need to consider are:

**COSHH** – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health. This is the law which requires employers to control substances which may be hazardous to health. You should obtain Safety Data sheets for each product you use from your supplier or the manufacturer and these will give you the necessary information to support you in assessing any risks. You will need to consider things like how you store the products, are they locked away, are they used when the children are present etc. The Health and Safety Executive website will give you further, up to date information on risk assessing substances which fall under COSHH. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/index.htm>

**Manual handling** – Some activities such as nappy changing, lifting or carrying upset children and moving heavy objects may pose a physical risk to staff. Manual handling risk assessments for these activities will help you to ensure that physical risk is minimised as far as is reasonably practicable. Again, more specific information can be found on the Health and Safety Executive website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/faqs/manualhandling.htm>

**Fire risk assessments** – The North Yorkshire Fire and Safety website provides guidance and information on the legislation that applies to businesses [http://www.northyorksfire.gov.uk/for\\_businesses/index.html](http://www.northyorksfire.gov.uk/for_businesses/index.html). If you are working from non domestic premises you will need to carry out a fire safety risk assessment and implement a fire management plan. When assessing fire risks you will need to consider things such as fire exits and evacuation procedures, fire extinguishers and storage of flammable resources.

**Food hygiene** – The Food Standards Agency website: <http://www.food.gov.uk/> has information on all aspects of food hygiene including details on how to order the “Safer Food, Better Business” pack which will help you to ensure that you comply with the current food hygiene regulations - <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodindustry/regulation/hyqleg/hyqlegresources/sfbb/>. There is a specific

pack for childminders and those providing food on domestic premises which includes advice on allergies and feeding babies and young children.

**Safer recruitment** – Having a safer recruitment policy and procedure will help you to ensure that you follow important protocols and legislation when employing new staff or accepting volunteer/student placements. Having a strong procedure for safer recruitment will mean that you do not need a risk assessment specifically for this. However, if you receive any information about a prospective member of staff, volunteer or student, through for example an Enhanced DBS disclosure or references, then a risk assessment should be undertaken to help you decide whether or not to accept the candidate. The risk assessment should take into account the information disclosed, any circumstances surrounding the event, the level of involvement in the event, previous and subsequent good character and any other mitigating circumstances.

**Pregnant staff** – When you find out a member of staff is pregnant you should consider any added risks that she may be exposed to, for instance lifting children, reaching too high, various infectious diseases and caring for pets. These risks may change during the pregnancy, or new risks may appear so regular meetings to discuss these risks will be important.

**Trips and outings** – Risk assessments help us to ensure that our environment is safe and secure, but they also need to be carried out when leaving the premises on trips and outings. The Statutory Requirements state that: *“3.65 Children must be kept safe while on outings, and providers must obtain written parental permission for children to take part in 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.”*

If you're going to a place that regularly accepts visitors such as a children's farm, or tourist attraction they will often have their own risk assessments which you can request access to prior to your visit. However, you will need to review this carefully and add any points that will apply to your own outing such as ratios, travel arrangements, hand washing and nappy changing facilities.

For all outings, some things you may need to consider are:

- Road safety - will you use pushchairs, hold hands? Are there suitable pedestrian crossings on the route?
- Transport (for instance suitable car seats/restraints, insurance, roadworthiness of the vehicle)
- Things to take with you, such as a first aid kit, drinks, mobile phone
- Adult:child ratios, considering adult qualifications and any volunteers



**Risk and challenge** - Elements of risk and challenge can be very beneficial to children's development often encouraging children to problem solve and make decisions, as well as gain an awareness of what they can and can't yet do. These risks however still need to be carefully considered, it may be that you can minimise the risk by adding or removing certain equipment, or you may identify that close adult supervision is essential for some activities.

### **Monitoring and reviewing your risk assessments**

The EYFS states that your risk assessment should be "*checked on a regular basis*". Risk assessments are put in place to minimise harm to others, therefore one of the most meaningful ways to monitor them is to monitor your records of accidents and 'near misses'.

A 'near' miss' is a potential accident or incident in which no-one is actually injured, so for instance a heavy object falling off a shelf at height, or a gate/door being left open. If you find that (for example) a working practice or a piece of equipment within your provision has resulted in an accident then this means that a risk assessment may need to be formally recorded for it. If you already have a risk assessment for this particular hazard then you should review it thoroughly giving regard to the accident/incident records.

**Working as a team** – It is important that the people accessing your provision especially staff, students and volunteers, are fully aware of the risk assessments in place and of course any actions that need to be taken to minimise the risks. This will also ensure that if any changes or additions need to be made then they are aware of what is included in the original risk assessment.

## **Reflecting on practice**

How good is your risk assessment process at ensuring that hazards to children, staff, parents and visitors are minimised?

### **Activity 1**

Walk around your provision looking at everything through a child's eyes – what dangers can you see? If you are able to, comparing your notes of the dangers you see with other people's perceptions can be very useful. Think about how likely it is that the dangers you have spotted may result in an accident, also consider what the result of an accident may be. For instance, this could be burns, slips or trips, cuts etc. Are there any ways that you could help lessen the likelihood of an accident from this danger? For instance ensuring socket covers are in place, fitting finger guards to doors, hanging blind cords out of reach etc.

## Activity 2

Take a critical look at the accident, incident and near miss records for your provision for the past 6 months. Identify the hazard in each record – for instance this could be a wet floor or a climbing frame. Is there anything that could have been done to prevent the accident? Is this a one off action, something that needs to be completed and checked regularly or something that is beyond your control?

### Questions for the leader / manager / childminder

<b>Consider</b>	<b>Our current practice</b>	<b>Examples of evidence of this within our setting</b>	<b>Any further development needed</b>
Who is responsible for ensuring that all risks are assessed effectively within the provision?	<i>e.g. Do you have a delegated person for risk assessment or does everyone take responsibility?</i>		
Who is responsible for putting in place any extra measures necessary to minimise the risk?	<i>e.g. This varies and is noted on our risk assessment forms</i>		
How do you record any extra measures or actions which are put in place	<i>e.g. On a risk assessment form</i>	<i>e.g. Risk assessment forms and reviews</i>	
How do you decide which areas, resources or activities to formally risk assess?	<i>e.g. Another local childminder and myself help to risk assess each others provision – we find that a new pair of eyes always helps!</i>		



<b>Consider</b>	<b>Our current practice</b>	<b>Examples of evidence of this within our setting</b>	<b>Any further development needed</b>
Who is able to access the risk assessments?	<i>e.g. The risk assessments are in the entrance hall but more significant ones are also displayed in the relevant area</i>		
When were your risk assessments last reviewed?	<i>e.g. Last September</i>	<i>e.g. Signature and date on my risk assessments</i>	
Have any actions that needed to be completed on your risk assessments (such as fitting a safety gate) been completed?	<i>e.g. All except one – I still need to buy a lockable box for storing medicines but in the meantime they are stored out of reach of the children</i>	<i>e.g. Completed actions have been noted on the risk assessment forms</i>	<i>To buy a lockable box for medicines</i>
Do you monitor accident and incident forms to ensure that you are aware of any unsafe practices or areas of your provision?	<i>e.g. As I work alone I see all accident forms – I complete additional risk assessments or reviews as is necessary.</i>	<i>e.g. Last week I noted a repeat accident form – a second child had fallen off the trike. When I inspected the trike I noticed an unsteady wheel and threw it away.</i>	

### Questions for practitioners

<b>Consider</b>	<b>Our current practice</b>	<b>Examples of evidence of this within our setting</b>	<b>Any further development needed</b>
Are you fully aware of all the risk assessments for your provision?	<i>e.g. Yes, I feel confident in this.</i>	<i>e.g. I have read and signed all risk assessments.</i>	
If you noticed a potential hazard in your provision what would you do?	<i>e.g. If I could remove the hazard I would, otherwise I would talk to our leader about the hazard.</i>		
What are the main hazards in your indoor environment?	<i>e.g. The floor can be hazardous around the sand and water play areas. There is a long corridor for the children to go down to reach the toilets and if children take their shoes off the floor can be very slippery in socks.</i>	<i>e.g. Accident forms for slips on the floor</i>	
What are the main hazards in your outdoor environment?	<i>e.g. I feel that security could be better – the wall is quite short and there is no lock on the gate. We get a lot of standing water as the ground is uneven and this makes for very slippery icy puddles in colder weather!</i>	<i>e.g. Accident forms</i>	

<b>Consider</b>	<b>Our current practice</b>	<b>Examples of evidence of this within our setting</b>	<b>Any further development needed</b>
Considering the general tasks that you do throughout your working day – which of these do you feel could be potentially dangerous?	<i>e.g. We have some children with quite severe food allergies and this can make mealtimes potentially dangerous. When children are coming in or going home it can get a bit hectic and we need to watch the door closely</i>	<i>e.g. Allergy charts and registers</i>	
Where would you find the risk assessments for your provision?	<i>e.g. I would have to ask the manager</i>		<i>e.g. Find out where the risk assessments are kept.</i>
Are there any actions that you need to make others aware of (such as parents) to help minimise risks?	<i>e.g. In summer we ask parents to bring in sun cream and a hat for their child. We also ask parents to make sure all doors and gates are closed behind them</i>	<i>e.g. Notices on parents board, newsletters</i>	
If a parent or visitor raised a concern about (for instance) the children's safety over lunchtimes – how would you deal with this?	<i>e.g. Some parents were concerned as they were let into the provision by a parent that they did not know. They were worried that this parent would have let anyone in the building.</i>	<i>e.g. We now have a member of staff deployed at the door during the beginning and end of sessions.</i>	

### In action

This is an example of a completed risk assessment form – you may choose to use a different form that suits your needs better as there is no set way that you have to present your assessments. The HSE website (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/>) has a variety of examples that you can look at.

What is the hazard?	Who might be at risk?	What do you do to minimise the risk?	What (if any) further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Completed
Cleaning chemicals	Children and visitors	All cleaning chemicals are in their original containers. We use a limited number of chemicals that we have previously agreed to ensure that we have the correct COSHH data. All chemicals are stored in a locked cupboard – only the manager has the key. Where possible cleaning is done when children are not present. No bleach is used or stored on the premises.	Spare key to be held by Deputy in case of managers absence.  Ensure that we have up to date COSHH data for all chemicals.	<b>Manager</b>  <b>Deputy</b>	<b>01/05/17</b>  <b>01/06/17</b>	
Cleaning equipment – cross contamination	Children, staff and visitors	Use colour coded cleaning cloths and mops, i.e. green for food, red for bathroom, yellow for general. Mops and cloths are regularly washed and replaced.	Notices for colour coding and further reinforcement of the policy with staff team.	<b>Manager</b>	<b>01/05/17</b>	

## Places to look

### *Useful links*

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/> - A section of the Health and Safety Executive website which focuses on risk assessment

<http://www.food.gov.uk/> - The Food Standards Agency

<http://www.northyorksfire.gov.uk> – North Yorkshire’s Fire and safety website

### *Useful documents*

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf> - 5 steps to risk assessment

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/villagehall.htm> - Example risk assessment for a village hall