

Community Pre-school Risk Assessment Policy

At Community Pre-school create a nurturing environment where young children can learn, explore, and thrive in safety. Central to this responsibility is the implementation of a comprehensive risk assessment policy. This document outlines, principles, procedures, and practices that underpin risk assessment in our pre-school settings. The aim is to identify, evaluate, and manage potential hazards to protect all children, managers, staff, volunteers, visitors, and the wider community.

Objectives

- To ensure compliance with statutory requirements and best practice in health and safety for early years settings.
- To promote a culture of safety and vigilance among staff, children, and families.
- To systematically identify and control risks associated with all aspects of pre-school provision, including indoor and outdoor environments, activities, outings, and special events.
- To provide clear guidance for staff on carrying out and reviewing risk assessments.
- To review policies and procedures regularly to reflect changes in legislation, guidance, or practice.

Legal Framework

Community Pre-school's risk assessment policy is guided by relevant legislation and statutory frameworks, including but not limited to:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002
- Other locally relevant policies and guidance

Principles of Risk Assessment

- Prevention: All reasonable steps will be taken to prevent harm by identifying and managing potential risks.
- Participation: Risk assessment is a collaborative process involving staff, and where appropriate, families and children.
- Proportionality: Measures to control risks should be appropriate to the level of risk and the age/stage of the children.
- Documentation: All risk assessments will be recorded, reviewed, and updated regularly.
- Empowerment: Children are encouraged to develop an awareness of safety and learn to assess risks appropriate to their developmental level.

Types of Risk Assessment

- General Environment Risk Assessment: Regular checks and reviews of indoor and outdoor learning spaces to identify hazards such as slips, trips, falls, access to toxic substances, and equipment safety.
- Activity/Trip Risk Assessment: Specific risk assessments for activities such as water play, messy play, cooking, use of technology, and outings to parks, museums, or community spaces.
- Individual Risk Assessment: Assessments for children (or staff) with specific medical needs, allergies, disabilities, or behavioural challenges.
- Emergency Risk Assessment: Planning for fire, flood, severe weather, lockdown, or other emergencies.

Identifying Hazards

All staff are responsible for being vigilant and identifying potential hazards. This includes:

- Daily safety checks before the children arrive.
- Ongoing monitoring throughout the day, especially during transitions or changes in activity.
- Reporting any new or unexpected hazards immediately to the manager or designated health and safety officer.

Assessing Risks

When a hazard is identified, the following steps are taken:

- Assess the likelihood of harm occurring and the possible severity.
- Consider who may be at risk (children, staff, visitors).
- Identify existing control measures (e.g., supervision, barriers, first aid).
- Determine if further actions are required to mitigate risk.

Controlling Risks

The pre-school will adopt a hierarchy of control, prioritizing risk elimination where possible. Control measures may include:

- Removing the hazard entirely (e.g., locking away cleaning chemicals).
- Substituting with safer alternatives (e.g., using non-toxic art supplies).
- Implementing physical barriers or additional supervision.
- Developing safe work procedures and providing staff training.
- Using personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary.

Recording and Review

All risk assessments must be documented and kept on file. Regular reviews are scheduled:

- Annually, or more frequently if there is a significant change (e.g., new equipment, changes to the premises, a serious incident).
- After an incident or near miss to analyse causes and prevent recurrence.
- In response to updated legal or regulatory guidance.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Management: Ensure a robust risk assessment policy is in place and that it is implemented and reviewed. Allocate resources for training and safety improvements.
- Designated Health and Safety Officer: Lead on risk assessment, provide guidance and training, conduct inspections, and keep records up to date.
- Staff: Participate in training, carry out daily checks, report concerns, and follow safety procedures.
- Parents/Carers: Cooperate with the pre-school in implementing safety measures and inform staff of any relevant health or developmental needs of their children.
- Children: Encouraged to think about safety and develop age-appropriate risk awareness.

Indoor Environment

- Regular inspection of floors, furniture, and equipment for wear, cleanliness, and stability.
- Safe storage of cleaning materials, sharp objects, and small items that could pose a choking risk.
- Temperature control and adequate ventilation.
- Secure access to electrical outlets and appliances.
- Clear pathways and emergency exits.

Outdoor Environment

- Fencing and secure boundaries around play areas.
- Inspection of play equipment for stability, sharp edges, and cleanliness.
- Regular removal of hazardous materials such as broken glass or animal waste.
- Weather-appropriate clothing and sun protection.

Fire Safety

- Regular fire drills and clear evacuation procedures.
- Accessible and well-maintained fire extinguishers and alarms.
- Fire exits kept clear at all times.
- Checks on electrical equipment to avoid fire hazards.

Trips and Outings

- Formal risk assessment prior to any outing, including transport arrangements, supervision ratios, and emergency contacts.
- First aid kit, medication (if needed), and staff trained in first aid accompany all outings.
- Parental consent and clear communication with families.
- Regular head counts and buddy systems for children.

Food Safety and Allergies

- Clear procedures for the preparation, storage, and serving of food.
- Safe management of allergies and dietary requirements, including staff awareness and emergency procedures.
- Hygiene practices, including hand washing and surface cleaning.

Health and Infection Control

- Policies for exclusion of unwell children and staff.
- Hand hygiene and cleaning schedules for surfaces, toys, and shared equipment.
- Procedures for managing outbreaks of infectious disease, including communication with parents and health authorities.

Training and Awareness

All staff receive regular and comprehensive training in risk assessment, health and safety protocols, and emergency procedures. New staff receive induction training before starting work. Refresher courses are scheduled annually or as required. Information on safety and risk assessment is shared with families through newsletters, meetings, and displayed notices.

Monitoring and Review

The risk assessment policy is a living document, subject to ongoing monitoring and review. The management or committee holds responsibility for ensuring that:

- All risk assessments are completed, recorded, and updated as needed.
- Incidents and near misses are reviewed for learning and improvement.
- Feedback is sought from staff, children, and families to inform improvements.
- Policy is reviewed at least annually, or in response to significant incidents, legislative changes, or feedback.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Any personal information gathered as part of the risk assessment process is treated in line with Community Pre-schools data protection and confidentiality policies.

Links with Other Policies

This risk assessment policy links with other key pre-school policies, including Safeguarding and Child Protection, Health and Safety, Outings and Visits, First Aid, Fire Safety, Inclusion and Equality, and Data Protection.

By embracing a culture of vigilance, collaboration, and continuous improvement, the community pre-school ensures that every child has the opportunity to learn and grow within a safe and supportive environment. Regular risk assessment is not simply a legal obligation but a core element of quality early years provision, building trust with families and the community.