

Making things easier – Assessing risks

There is a common perception that Risk Assessments are unnecessary paper chasing activities and in many Health and Safety systems risk assessments are repetitive and often not read thoroughly by staff because they are all very similar and the user has not been involved in the development of the assessment.. Often people feel the need to risk assess each and every activity, in a mud kitchen this could be hundreds. Therefore it is much more enabling, to group the activities. Leaders can then follow a child led learning process wherever it takes them as long as it doesn't fall outside of their parameters.

Focusing on specific areas for example

1. Risk assessment - Natural materials

e.g. ingredients mud ,water sand plants

2. Risk Assessment - Resources

All the items in the Mud kitchen pots pans utensils

3. Risk assessment Infrastructure

Cupboards, walls, fences, seats floor surfaces overhanging trees.

4. People involved Staff, volunteers, children public

Individuals with specific requirements, babies more likely to put things in their mouth than a group of 10 yr olds.

5. the weather

Rain ice sun

Templates for these risk benefit assessments are attached with a few boxes filled in as examples these templates are not complete and should not be used as a replacement for carrying out the Risk benefit process.

This approach is more focused on leaders confidently and competently thinking on their feet as situations change. Not having to stick rigidly to restrictive paperwork that reduces the opportunity to apply common sense.

Most of the activities you could dream of now should fit into these risk assessment areas. So leaders can facilitate and explore without fear that the children are suddenly doing something you haven't assessed.

Occasionally the group may want to participate in an activity that you feel falls out of these areas e.g. tree climbing. In circumstances such as this where there is an added element you may feel a specific RA is necessary and extra precautions put in place.

These Risk Assessments will pretty much apply to all outdoor play so once again you can reduce paper work and making these comprehensive enough for all your activity.

6. The Risk assessment process with guidelines from HSE
Making sure risk assessments are done correctly.