Guidance for Policy on Risk Management in Pre-school Services

Contents

1.0   Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide preschool services with the regulatory requirements for the policy on Risk Management, as set out by the [Child Care Act (1991) Early Years Service Regulations (2016)](#). This document provides the core regulatory requirements, in addition to prompts and considerations that will support registered providers to ensure that their policy and procedures are fully developed and are reflected in the practices in their service.

The information in this document should be applied to the specific policy covering Risk Management, and the accompanying procedures of the pre-school service. This document should be read in conjunction with [A Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services,](#) and the [Quality and Regulatory Framework.](#) It is also advisable to refer to [Health Safety and Welfare at Work legislation.](#) Further information on risk management is set out in the Tusla guidance document '[When the Roof is the Sky.](#)

This document is for reference only. It should not be assumed that the guidance provided is comprehensive or that it provides a definitive answer in every situation.

Further resources are available in [Appendix 1.](#)

Regulatory Requirements of this Policy

> **Child Care Act (1991) Early Years Service Regulations (2016), Schedule 5. 1 (r)**
> A risk management policy, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy on the manner in which the registered provider assesses any potential risks to the safety of the pre-school children attending the service, and the steps taken to either eliminate those risks or mitigate them.

2.0   Core policy requirements

> A Policy Statement is recommended in this policy alongside the core requirements as set out further in this document. The risk management policy statement should state that the service strives to offer an environment that is safe, and that the premises is suitable and appropriate for the care and education of the children. The policy statement should commit that the service will assess, manage and respond to any potential risks to the safety, health and welfare of children attending. The policy statement should outline that arising from risk assessment and risk management processes, the service will implement any changes needed to prevent or reduce future accidents or incidents.

Requirement 1

The policy outlines procedures to assesses any potential risks to the safety of the pre-school children attending the service and to determine measures to either eliminate those risks or mitigate them.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

(a) That the risk management strategy will be included in the service's safety statement.
(b) How potential hazards and risks are assessed, to include:
   - procedures for assessing the hazards and/or risks,
   - the current controls in place to address the risk (where identified),
   - additional controls needed to eliminate or reduce the risk-the person or people responsible for implementing the additional controls where appropriate.
(c) How risk assessments are completed to identify any potential hazards which may pose a risk to:
   - the service being well governed,
   - the health, safety, welfare, and development of each child attending.
(d) That a risk assessment for an individual child will be developed, where required.

Requirement 2

The policy outlines how risk assessments completed by the service are conducted and documented.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

(a) The processes and procedures for risk assessments (see Appendix 2 for a sample risk assessment) required to address the specific areas of risk identified for the service. This includes the frequency of risk assessments according to the specific area of practice.
(b) The areas of practice where risk-benefit analysis is more appropriate than risk assessment (e.g. children's play and learning indoors and particularly outdoors).
(c) The procedures for risk benefit analysis where appropriate.
(d) Templates with clear instructions for completion, of documentation required for risk assessing and analysis procedures.
(e) How mitigations and control measures are identified and implemented.
(f) How the service will evaluate the effectiveness of specific control measures and adjust and update as necessary.

Requirement 3

The policy states that the risk assessment record must show who is involved in the risk assessment process.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

(a) The risk management structure in the service, to include roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships.
(b) How all relevant parties will be involved in developing risk assessments, including children and their parents or guardians, if appropriate.
(c) The supporting documentation for identification of the person/role conducting a risk assessment and the person/role with overall responsibility for implementation of the control measures.

Requirement 4

The policy sets out how long risk management records will be kept.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

(a) That risk assessments are recorded and documented.
(b) How and where these records are to be kept and the retention period.
(c) The process for a review process of risk management records.

3.0   Best Practice in developing and implementing a Risk Management policy

In addition to the regulatory requirements for this policy as set out in this document, service providers can enhance the quality of practice in the implementation of the Risk Management policy in the service. In this section, best practice in this policy area is outlined and further information is signposted where available.

- Implementation of this policy should reflect Síolta Standards in particular Standard 2 Environments.
- It is good practice to complete a full risk assessment in your service at least once a year or more frequently if there are any significant changes. However, for any aspects of practice or features on the premises that pose a greater risk (including equipment), you should periodically conduct a risk assessment.
- It is important to understand the difference between risks and hazards. Refer to the definitions of these terms in When the Roof is the Sky.
- Include children in risk assessment processes where appropriate and use these as learning opportunities to teach children about safety.

- As hazards and risks are constantly changing, you should always go back and regularly review your assessments to make sure they reflect current circumstances. Repeat a risk assessment where this is indicated.
- Adopt a risk management approach, rather than a risk averse approach as this is more appropriate to support children's learning and development.

4.0 Appendices

4.1 Appendix 1 - Supporting Information

- Aistear Siolta: Practice Guide
- Aistear Siolta: Supporting risky play opportunities
- Barnardos: Critical Incidents in Early Learning Services
- Early Childhood Ireland: Activity Risk Benefit Analysis
- Health and Safety Authority: A Guide to Risk Assessments
- Tusla. What is a risk assessment?
- Play England. Managing risk in play provision
- Play Scotland: Managing risk

4.2 Appendix 2 - Sample Risk Assessment

Describe the practice, area or feature being risk assessed.						
Date of Assessment:						
Name and signature of person conducting risk assessment:						
What are the hazards?	What are the risks that someone might be harmed? Who might be harmed and how?	What actions are you taking now to control risk?	Do you need to take any other actions to control risk?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Action completed

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