

Warwickshire Early Years Quality Inclusion SEND and Safeguarding Team

A Guide to Health and Safety in Early Years and Childcare Settings



This guide has been developed to support all Early Years providers working with children aged from birth to five years, with a focus on good practice in relation to Health and safety.

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Health and Safety in your childcare setting

As an Early Years Provider and Practitioner, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the legal requirements and guidance surrounding health and safety in childcare settings. As well as being the law, it is part of being a good employer to make sure your staff aren't at risk of any injury as a result of the work they do for you. In an early years setting, it's not just your staff that health and safety is important for, it's there of course to protect the children – and also any visitors who come to your premises.

Whilst it is recognised that Early year's childcare providers have a corporate responsibility and duty of care towards staff, children and visitors, individual employees also have responsibility for ensuring their own health and safety as well as that of others. This is why it is so important to ensure all staff, regardless of what position they hold within your setting, recognise the role they have to play in being vigilant and upholding a safety conscious culture within the setting.

The purpose of Health and Legislation

The main purpose of health and safety legislation in an early year's setting is:

- To ensure the health, safety, and welfare of staff.
- To protect children from risks arising from activities
- To control the use and storage of dangerous substances (cleaning equipment).



As an Early Years provider your responsibilities include:

- Providing basic Health and Safety training for all employees
- Carrying out risk assessments
- Have a designated Health and Safety competent person.
- Workplace regulations i.e. heating, ventilation, workstations, lighting, and seating.
- RIDDOR regulations, reporting of injuries, diseases, and dangerous events.
- PPE regulations, providing appropriate protective clothing and equipment for employees.
- Health and Safety information for employees, customers, and visitors
- Providing safe equipment
- Manual handling operations regulations
- Provision of first aid training and making sure you have an adequate amount of first aiders in the building.

The following sections of this guide provide an overview of the key aspects of health and safety regulations and guidance which all staff should have regard to.

Health and Safety Legislation

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

The cornerstone of health and safety legislation in the UK is the [Health and Safety at Work Act \(1974\)](#) (HSWA). This law outlines the general duties of employers, employees, and self-employed individuals to ensure workplace safety.

For early years settings, this means that providers must ensure the health, safety, and welfare at work of all their employees and children.

This covers:

- maintenance of buildings.
- cleanliness of the general environment
- safe use of equipment.
- good working practices.
- a written Health and Safety policy

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for enforcing the HSWA along with local authorities. But of course, it is the responsibility of the Early Years provider to ensure that the health and safety measures put in place are adhered to.

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Building on the HSWA, the [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#) requires employers to carry out risk assessments and make arrangements to implement necessary measures.

In an early years setting, this involves:

- Identifying potential hazards (anything that can cause harm).
- Assessing the risks (the likelihood of harm occurring and the severity of its impact).
- Implementing control measures to minimise those risks.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework

[Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) Statutory Framework 2026](#) is statutory guidance that sets the standards for learning, development, and care for children from birth to five years old. It has specific welfare requirements, including health and safety. Key points include:

- Practitioners must ensure environments are safe and suitable.
- Policies and procedures must be in place for illness, injury, and emergencies.
- Staff should undergo regular training in health and safety matters.

Other key legislations which underpin health and safety in early settings includes:

- [Childcare Act 2006](#)
- [Health and Safety \(First Aid\) Regulations 1981](#)
- [The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 \(COSHH\)](#)
- [The Food Hygiene \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 \(amended 2002\)](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 \(RIDDOR\)](#)



Food Safety

The [Food Safety Act 1990](#) requires early years providers to ensure that food served at the establishment meets appropriate food safety requirements and states that food handlers should be trained in food hygiene and understand the importance of:

- regular hand washing,
- proper food storage,
- clean preparation areas.

The EYFS 2026 states:

There must be suitable facilities for the hygienic preparation of food for children, if necessary, including suitable sterilisation equipment for babies' food. Providers must be confident that those responsible for preparing and handling food are competent to do so.

Food safety regulations include:

- [Food Safety Act 1990](#)
- [General Food Regulations 2004](#)
- [Food Hygiene \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

The [Food Standards Agency](#) provides guidance, advice, and information about all areas of enforcement and regulation to businesses connected with food. Before opening your childcare setting you should familiarise yourself with the information around setting up a food business, including the [safer food, better business toolkit](#) and [food allergen and intolerance guidance](#).



Key considerations and best practices for your setting include:

Hygiene and Safe Food Preparation

- **Hand Washing:** Ensure all staff and children wash their hands thoroughly before handling food.
- **Clean Surfaces:** Regularly clean and sanitize all food preparation areas and equipment.
- **Proper Storage:** Store food at appropriate temperatures to prevent spoilage and contamination.

Allergen Management

- **Identify Allergens:** Gather information on any dietary needs and allergies **before** a child is admitted.
- **Avoid Cross-Contamination:** Use separate utensils and preparation areas for allergen-free meals.
- **Labelling:** Clearly label all food items with allergen information.

Safe Food Handling

- **Training:** Ensure all staff involved in food preparation are trained in food hygiene.
- **Supervision:** Adequately supervise children during mealtimes to prevent choking and other hazards.
- **Choking Hazards:** Cut food into small, manageable pieces and avoid giving whole nuts or large chunks of hard food to young children. The Food Standards Agency have issued two posters which can be displayed in your setting where food is prepared and served to children, as a helpful reminder of how to minimise the risk of choking.

Compliance with Regulations

- **Food Business Registration:** Register your setting as a food business if you prepare or serve food on site.
- **Follow Guidelines:** Adhere to the guidelines set out by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework and the Food Standards Agency

Further information:

- [Help for early years providers: Food safety](#)
- [Warwickshire food safety pages](#)
- [Food safety Posters: advice on choking hazards in settings](#)
- [Foundation Years Healthy Eating and Safe Food Preparation](#)
- [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#)

Mitigating Choking Risks

Young children are particularly vulnerable to choking due to:

- Narrow airways
- Developing chewing and swallowing skills
- Natural curiosity and tendency to explore with their mouths

The EYFS statutory framework requires providers to take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well, including during mealtimes.

Children can choke on any food. To minimise the risk of choking:

- remove any stones and pips from fruit before serving
- cut small round foods (like grapes, strawberries, and cherry tomatoes) lengthways and into quarters
- cut large fruits (like melon) and hard fruit or vegetables (like raw apple and carrot) into slices instead of small chunks
- do not offer raisins as a snack to children under 12 months (they can be chopped up as part of a meal)
- soften hard fruit and vegetables (like raw apple and carrot) and remove the skins when first given to babies from around 6 months
- cut sausages into thin strips rather than chunks and remove the skins (sausages should be avoided due to their high salt content)
- remove bones from meat or fish
- do not give whole nuts to children under five years old
- do not give whole seeds to children under five years old
- cut cheese into strips rather than chunks
- consider wholemeal or toasted bread as white bread can form a doughy ball in the throat, and cut all types of bread into strips for very young children
- do not give children popcorn as a snack
- do not give children marshmallows or jelly cubes from a packet, either to eat or as part of messy play activities, as they can get stuck in the throat
- do not give children hard sweets

Supervision

Babies and young children should be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating. Babies and young children must never be left alone while they are eating and must always be within sight and hearing of a member of staff.

A staff member with a valid Paediatric First Aid (PFA) certificate must be present during all mealtimes to respond to incidents like choking or allergic reactions

Where possible, sit facing children while they eat so you can:

- make sure children are eating in a way to prevent choking
- prevent food sharing
- be aware of any unexpected allergic reactions

Suitable Seating

Babies and young children should be seated safely in a highchair or appropriately sized low chair while eating.

Where possible there should be a designated eating space where distractions are minimised.



Weaning

Providers must have ongoing discussions with parents and/or carers about the stage their child is at in regard to introducing solid foods, including to understand the textures the child is familiar with.

Assumptions must not be made based on age. Providers must prepare food in a suitable way for each child's individual developmental needs, working with parents and/or carers to help children move on to the next stage at a pace right for the child.

Further information:

- [Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance](#)
- [NHS Safety Preventing Choking](#)
- [Help for Early Years Providers: Food Safety](#)

Early years food choking hazards	
Below is a table of advice on key foods for care givers who are involved with preparing and serving food for babies and young children (under 5 years old)	
Vegetable and fruits	Advice
Pips or stones in fruit	Always check beforehand and remove hard pips or stones from fruit.
Small fruits	Cut small round fruits like grapes, cherries, berries, strawberries and cherry tomatoes, into small pieces: cut lengthways and then again cut them in halves (quarters).
Large fruits and firm fruits	Cut large fruits like melon and firm fruits like apple into slices instead of small chunks. For very young children, consider grating or mashing firm fruits, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Vegetables	Cut vegetables like carrots, cucumber and celery into narrow batons. For very young children consider grating or mashing. Firm vegetables and legumes like butter beans, chickpeas and tofu, or softening them up by steaming or simmering.
Skin on fruit and vegetables	Consider removing the skin from fruit and vegetables, especially for very young children. Peeled fruit and vegetables can be swallowed more easily.
Cooking fruit and vegetables	Consider softening firm fruit and vegetables (such as carrots, broccoli, yam and apples) by steaming or simmering until soft. Serve cut into slices or narrow batons.

Safe Sleep

Ensuring that every child is physically safe and emotionally secure during sleep and rest is a critical element of safeguarding. Safe sleep practices, play a pivotal role in preventing accidents, injuries, and more severe outcomes such as SIDS.

The EYFS 2026 states:

*The [EYFS statutory framework](#) states: "All children must be **frequently checked** when sleeping "to ensure that they are safe. Being safe includes ensuring that cots and bedding are in good condition and suited to the age of the child, and that babies are placed down to sleep safely in line with the latest government safety guidance."*

Creating a Safe Sleep Culture

Leadership and management play a critical role in establishing and maintaining a safe sleep culture within early years settings. Effective leadership ensures that the importance of safe sleep is fully understood that staff are well-trained, and that policies are consistently followed.

Shared responsibility and team accountability

Within each early years setting every practitioner must take ownership of their role in ensuring a safe sleep environment. This means being proactive in following and promoting safe sleep guidelines and being vigilant in identifying and addressing potential risks. Ongoing discussions, between staff especially during handovers, are vital in ensuring that all children's sleep needs and any specific requirements are consistently met. This continuous communication helps maintain a high standard of care. Encouraging staff to foster a supportive open culture within their teams will also enable staff feel comfortable raising concerns about sleep safety and to offer peer support to one another.

Developing Parent Partnerships for Safe Sleep Practices

Through developing positive relationships with parents, practitioners can gain valuable insights into children's sleep needs, which will support settling in and ensure any changes or issues in sleep patterns are shared. Practitioner can also help promote safe sleep practices within the home through offering parents' advice and guidance or through holding workshops on safe sleep.

- **Establish and implement clear, comprehensive sleep policies** based on the latest guidance from the NHS, Lullaby Trust, and [EYFS 3.86](#)
- **Follow Safe Sleep Guidelines:** Always place babies on their backs to sleep, and use a firm, flat mattress with a fitted sheet. Avoid soft bedding, pillows, and toys in the sleep area.
- **Provide an Appropriate Safe Sleep Environment:** Ensure the sleep area is free from hazards. Keep the room at a comfortable temperature and avoid overheating. If possible, provide a separate sleep area for children to minimise disturbances and ensure a quiet, restful environment.
- **Conduct Regular Sleep Checks** This requires more than a regular visual check of a group of sleeping children. **Practitioners must regularly check that each child is breathing, comfortable, safe from hazards and not too hot or cold.**
- **Maintain the correct adult-to-child ratios** during nap times to ensure all children are adequately supervised.
- **Regularly carry out risk assessments** to identify any hazards in the sleep environment.
- **Provide Staff Training:** Ensure all staff are trained in safe sleep practices and understand the importance of following these guidelines consistently.
- **Foster an open culture** where staff feel comfortable raising concerns about sleep safety.
- **Maintain open communication with parents** about their child's sleep patterns and any concerns. Share safe sleep practices to ensure consistency between home and the early years setting.
- **Conduct regular audits** of the nursery's sleep areas and staff adherence to safe sleep practices to ensure compliance with safety standards.
- **Provide tailored care** for each child and seek specialist advice for children with SEND who may require additional support or reasonable adjustments.

Further information and useful links

- [NHS advice on sudden infant death syndrome:](#)
- [NHS advice on safe sleeping:](#)
- [The Lullaby Trust](#)

Fire Safety

The [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order](#) Legislation states that early years settings must carry out Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) and ensure appropriate fire safety measures are in place. These include:

- Regular fire drills
- Clear evacuation procedures.
- Installation and maintenance of fire alarms and extinguishers

In addition to this the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2026 states that:

Providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff, and others on the premises in the case of fire or any other emergency.

Providers must have:

- *An emergency evacuation procedure.*
- *Appropriate fire detection and control equipment (for example, fire alarms, smoke detectors, fire blankets and/or fire extinguishers) which is in working order.*

In addition to this Fire exits must be clearly identifiable, and fire doors free of obstruction and easily opened from the inside.

The Creation of a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)

The creation of a Fire Risk Assessment will help early years providers to take steps to reduce the risk of fire and as far as is 'reasonably practical' and ensure that procedures are in place so that everyone on the premises can safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire.

The government have provided some very in-depth information to support with this: [Fire Safety Risk Assessment](#). **However please be advised that even if you follow this document, it is still recommended that you seek professional support to carry out a Fire Safety Assessment.**

Sharing the information outlined in the Fire Safety Risk Assessment with all employees is extremely important in order to ensure that the risk assessment is followed in case of an emergency, but also so that employees are aware of what needs to be done on a daily basis to ensure that the risk of fire is reduced.

Best practices to consider:

- **Fire Risk Assessment:** Conduct regular fire risk assessments to identify potential hazards and ensure appropriate measures are in place to mitigate them. This includes evaluating the layout, materials, and activities within the setting.
- **Emergency Evacuation Plan:** Develop and regularly update an emergency evacuation plan. Ensure all staff are familiar with the procedures and conduct regular fire drills to practice safe and efficient evacuations.
- **Fire Safety Equipment:** Install and maintain essential fire safety equipment, such as smoke detectors, fire alarms, fire extinguishers, and fire doors. Regularly check and service this equipment to ensure it is in working order.
- **Staff Training:** Provide comprehensive fire safety training for all staff members. This should include the use of fire safety equipment, evacuation procedures, and how to assist children, especially those with additional needs.
- **Clear Signage and Escape Routes:** Ensure that all escape routes are clearly marked and free from obstructions. Install visible signage to guide staff and children to the nearest exits.
- **Special Considerations for Children:** Tailor fire safety measures to accommodate the needs of young children. Develop a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) to ensure that each child's specific needs are addressed during an evacuation. For children with additional needs advice should be sought from professionals who are involved with the child such as IDS, Speech and Language, Occupational Therapy, Health visitors and the child's parents.
- **Regular Drills and Reviews:** Conduct regular fire drills to ensure everyone knows what to do in case of an emergency. Review and update fire safety policies and procedures periodically to reflect any changes in the environment or regulations.

Further information:

- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order](#)
- [Government publications fire-safety-risk-assessment-5-step-checklist](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive Fire Safety Toolkit](#)
- [Fire Safety Risk Assessment-educational-premises](#)

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

[COSHH regulations](#) require early years settings to manage and control exposure to harmful substances. COSHH covers substances in many forms, including chemicals and products containing chemicals (including cleaning products), medicines, art supplies, fumes, dusts, and vapours.

Practitioners must ensure these materials are stored safely and used according to their guidelines.

Implementing practices for the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) in early years settings helps to create a safer environment for children, staff, and visitors.



Some key points to consider:

Identification of Hazardous Substances: Common hazardous substances in early years settings include cleaning products, art supplies, and certain maintenance chemicals. It's important to identify these substances and understand the risks they pose. COSHH chemicals can be identified by the warning labels on the containers.

Risk Assessment: Conduct thorough risk assessments to evaluate the potential hazards associated with each substance. This includes considering how, when and where the substance is used, stored, and disposed of.

Safe Storage: Ensure that hazardous substances are stored securely in locked cupboards and appropriate warning signs are displayed. Ensure all bottles containing decanted substances are labelled accordingly. Ensure that non compatible substances aren't stored together.

Training and Awareness: Provide regular training for staff on the safe handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous substances. Ensure that all staff members are aware of the COSHH regulations and understand how to implement them.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): When handling hazardous substances, staff should use appropriate PPE, such as gloves and masks, to minimize exposure and protect their health.

Emergency Procedures: Establish clear procedures for dealing with accidents or spills involving hazardous substances. Ensure that staff know how to respond quickly and effectively to minimize risks.

Documentation and Record Keeping: Maintain detailed records of all hazardous substances, including risk assessments, safety data sheets, and training records. This documentation is crucial for compliance and for ensuring a safe environment.

Further information:

For more information see the [Health and Safety Executive's advice on COSHH](#).

The Reporting of Accidents and Injuries

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR)

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) places a duty on employers, those self-employed, and people in control of work premises, to report certain serious workplace accidents, occupational diseases and specified dangerous occurrences. In childcare settings any incident resulting in serious injury or risk should be reported to the Health and Safety Executive.

For more advice, including a list of occurrences which must be reported, see the [Health and Safety Executive's information on RIDDOR](#).

Reporting injuries

Minor scrapes and tumbles are an everyday occurrence in an early years setting and usually when it comes to dealing with minor accidents and injuries the administration of first aid, logging the injury in an accident book, and informing parents is normally what is required of childcare providers.

However, if the injury is a serious injury, it is a statutory requirement for early years providers in England to notify Ofsted as soon as reasonably possible – and in any case no later than 14 days of becoming aware of the incident. More guidance on reporting children's accidents and injuries can be found on the government's website [here](#)



Informing Ofsted

As detailed in the [Early Years Compliance Handbook](#), childcare providers must notify Ofsted if a child in their care suffers a 'serious injury'.

Ofsted officially describes the following as serious injuries as:

- Fracture/ Broken Bones
- Loss of consciousness
- Pain that's not relieved by simple painkillers
- Acute confused state
- Major dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee, elbow, or spine
- Unconsciousness or medical treatment received as a result of inhaling, ingesting, or absorbing harmful substances through the skin
- Breathing difficulties or persistent, severe chest pain
- Amputation
- Temporary or permanent loss of sight
- Eye injury from chemical or hot metal burns
- Unconsciousness due to asphyxia or exposure to harmful substances, toxins, infected material, or biological agents
- Injury from electric shock, electrical burn or hypothermia resulting in unconsciousness, or requiring resuscitation or hospitalisation for more than 24 hours

Early Years Providers can report the accident by calling 0300 123 1231 or report online using the designated 'Notification of Early Years Provision Incident' form on the Ofsted website.

First Aid

The [Health and Safety \(First-Aid\) Regulations 1981](#)

require employers to provide adequate and appropriate first aid equipment facilities, and personnel. In childcare settings, this means ensuring that there are first aid kits fully stocked with the necessary supplies, as well as access to a designated first aider who is trained in paediatric first aid. Additionally, it is crucial to:

- Regularly check and maintain equipment and furniture to prevent accidents and injuries.
- Maintain a well-stocked first aid kit
- Ensure that at least one member of staff has up to date paediatric first aid training.

In addition to this the EYFS 2026 states that:

At least one person who has a current paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present and must accompany children on outings. The certificate must be for a full course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex A. PFA training must be renewed every three years and be relevant for people caring for young children and babies.

Providers should take into account the number of children, staff, and layout of premises to ensure that a paediatric first aider is able to respond to emergencies quickly.

All staff who obtained a level 2 and/or level 3 qualification since 30 June 2016 must obtain a PFA qualification within three months of starting work in order to be included in the required staff: child ratios at level 2 or level 3 in an early years setting. All staff who have completed the experience-based route must obtain a PFA qualification before they can be included in the staff: child ratios at level 3. To continue to be included in the ratio requirement the certificate must be renewed every 3 years.

Providers should display (or make available to parents) staff PFA certificates or a list of staff who have a current PFA certificate.



Best practises include:

Training and Certification:

- All staff should be trained in paediatric first aid, beyond the minimum requirements. Regular refresher courses are essential to maintain competence.
- Training should be certified by recognised bodies such as Ofqual and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Legislation and Regulations:

- Adhere to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, which mandates basic first aid training for all staff.
- Comply with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 and other relevant legislation.
- Common First Aid Scenarios: Be prepared for typical incidents like cuts, nosebleeds, and allergic reactions. Swift action and correct procedures are vital.

First Aid Kits:

- Ensure well-stocked first aid kits are available in every childcare area. Regularly check and replenish supplies.
- Scenario-Based Learning: Incorporate practical simulations and scenario-based learning to enhance staff skills in responding.

Parental Involvement:

- Offer first aid workshops for parents to extend these critical skills into the home.

Further information:

[Health and Safety Executive first aid/legislation.htm](#)
[The Health and Safety \(First Aid\) Regulations 1981](#)

Risk Assessments

Early years providers are required to conduct regular risk assessments, which identify aspects of the environment that must be checked on a regular basis. This involves deciding what should be done to prevent harm and ensuring that the relevant actions are taken and are updated whenever necessary.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the owner to ensure that all risk assessments are completed, and that effective procedures and protocols are established based on the collected information. However, this responsibility can be delegated to a competent person. **ALL early year's staff should have knowledge of risk assessments to be able to assess each situation in real time, so that they do not put children in harm's way.**

Everything has a risk associated with it; however, the purpose of a risk assessment is to identify potential dangers and then take action to reduce them. It may not always be possible to eliminate every risk for every situation, but it is possible to minimise risk. Where this has been done and the risk is considered low, then activities can usually go ahead. However, if risks cannot be lowered enough then activities should not go ahead, and risks should be removed.

When should a risk assessment be carried out?

Risk assessments should be undertaken whenever there are activities or practices which could pose a risk to the children, OR to the adults involved in their care. So, for example, most settings will know that a risk assessment needs to be done for a trip out of the setting, but did you know that it is a legal requirement to do a risk assessment if a member of staff becomes pregnant and continues to work in the setting?

Since there are an infinite number of things that could happen every day in any setting, identifying all of them would be impossible and there is always the potential for a freak accident that no one could foresee. However, by considering what 'could' happen carefully, and identifying common hazards and risks, you will be doing the best you can to keep everyone safe.:

The [Health and safety Executive website](#) contains important information early years providers must be aware of to make sure you meet regulations and don't put children, visitors, staff, yourself, and your business at risk.



Common situations where risk assessments should be undertaken in early years settings include:

- Access to the setting and security
- Children and parents arriving and leaving the setting.
- Transport
- Feeding children including lunches and snack times
- Allergies
- Children needing to use the toilet and/or personal care routines
- Intimate care
- The storage, administration and recording of any medication
- All aspects of outdoor play areas
- All aspects of risky play
- All indoor areas and resources
- Safety features such as fire alarms/extinguishers/gates and fences
- Children with additional needs (SEND)
- Trips, visits, and outings
- Playing with different materials such as mud, water, sand, art materials
- Pregnant members of staff or those with additional needs
- Home visits and personal safety with parents or visitors
- Working from heights or lifting/carrying/moving things or people
- Storing, preparing, and cooking food
- Spillages and accident management
- Using chemicals such as cleaning routines
- Maintenance of all sites and equipment
- Emergency evacuation and procedures (e.g. intruder)

How To Conduct A Risk Assessment

The actions needed for a risk assessment are:

1. **Identify hazards** – look for the dangers involved
2. **Assess the risk** - decide who/what is in danger and to what level
3. **Identify the precautions and control measures** needed to reduce the risk to an acceptable level – what should be done? By whom? And by when?
4. **Record and share the findings** – create a document and log actions
5. **Review the process regularly** – especially in the light of changes, near misses or accidents

Using a log to record and report daily checks and dynamic risk assessments

In addition to risk assessments, daily checks and dynamic risk assessment throughout the day should be carried out by all staff working with young children. Where additional risk are noted, staff should take immediate action to minimise these and also report them. A logbook can be a helpful way to recording all reported risks related to risk assessment in early years. Here's a simple structure you may choose to follow:

- **Date:** When the risk was reported.
- **Reported By:** Name of the person who reported the risk.
- **Description of Risk:** Detailed description of the risk identified.
- **Risk Category:** Categorize the risk (e.g., physical, emotional, environmental).
- **Impact Level:** Assess the potential impact (e.g., low, medium, high).
- **Likelihood:** Estimate the likelihood of the risk occurring (e.g., rare, possible, likely).
- **Actions Taken:** Steps taken to mitigate or address the risk.
- **Follow-Up:** Any follow-up actions or monitoring required.



Employers must:

- identify possible risks to employees and measures to avoid them. Written risk assessments are required by law if there are 5 or more people working together in a business.
- consult and work with staff in protecting everyone from harm.
- provide the training needed to enable people to do their jobs.
- provide employees with equipment and any protective clothing that staff need.
- provide toilets, washing facilities and drinking water.
- provide adequate first aid facilities, including first aid training and risk assessments.
- report major injuries and fatalities at work, as well as other injuries, diseases, and dangerous incidents.
- hold insurance covering staff in case they get hurt or ill through work.
- work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace or providing employees, such as agency workers, so that everyone's health and safety is protected.
- You should remember that the statutory framework must be followed at all times; where you have deemed something fit for purpose or a person as competent, you need to be able to explain the reason for your decision.

When completing risk assessments, you need to consider the benefits of risky play for children, the importance of children problem solving for themselves, and the role of the adult.

Further information:

- [HSE Managing risks and risk assessment at work](#)
- [HSE health-safety risk-assessment template-and-examples](#)

An example of risk assessment can be found on the following page.

For advice and support regarding risk assessments for pupils with additional needs or disabilities please contact IDS or the child's health visitor.

Risk Assessment Form

SEVERITY NEGLIGIBLE MINOR SERIOUS SEVERE VERY SEVERE		LIKELIHOOD				
		VERY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	LIKELY	HIGHLY LIKELY	ALMOST CERTAIN
		LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW	LOW
		LOW	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
		LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
		LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH
		MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	

Risk Assessment for (Activity/Process/Operation)

Service	Team / Section	
Assessment Date	Review Date	Reference Number

What are the hazards	Who might be harmed and how?	What existing control measures are in place to reduce / prevent the risk?	Considering existing controls, what is the current risk level. Low/ medium / high	Further Action to be taken to control the risk?	Assigned to	Completed by whom & when

Name of Assessor	Signature
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Name of Manager responsible for activity / process	Signature
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Managing Infection Control

You must have a policy for responding to children who are ill, and this must be discussed with parents. Your policy should include arrangements for excluding children who are infectious, and the procedures for contacting a parent or another designated adult if a child becomes ill whilst in your care. Excluding children who have certain contagious illnesses helps to prevent others from becoming infected.

Preventing and controlling infections

Preventing and controlling infections in nurseries is another especially important area that can be problematic, but it is essential to put systems in place to avoid spreading germs. Young children are particularly susceptible to infections because their immunity is still developing. They also have close and frequent contact with other children and staff, so illness can spread easily. Fortunately, there are several things that nurseries can do to help keep children healthy, including:

- Recommending children and staff receive their routine immunisations.
- Excluding infectious children and adults from the nursery, when appropriate
- Implementing effective hygiene procedure
- Ensuring prompt and appropriate treatment of illness

Further information

[Managing cases of infectious diseases posters](#) can be downloaded and displayed in your settings to promote the latest advice and guidance in [managing cases of infectious diseases](#).

The HSE also provide information on [infections at work](#)



Best practices to consider...

Hand Hygiene:

- Encourage regular hand washing with soap and water, especially before meals, after using the toilet, and after outdoor play.
- Use hand sanitizers when soap and water are not available.

Cleaning and Disinfection:

- Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces, toys, and equipment.
- Pay special attention to high-touch areas like doorknobs, light switches, and tabletops.

Ventilation:

- Ensure good ventilation in indoor spaces to reduce the concentration of airborne pathogens.

Personal Hygiene:

- Teach children to cover their mouths and noses with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing.
- Dispose of tissues immediately and wash hands afterward.

Illness Policies:

- Implement clear policies for when children and staff should stay home if they are unwell.
- Communicate these policies to parents and caregivers to ensure understanding and compliance.

Vaccination:

- Encourage up-to-date vaccinations for children and staff to prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Training and Education:

- Provide ongoing training for staff on infection control practices and the importance of maintaining a hygienic environment.
- Educate children in age-appropriate ways about germs and hygiene.

Monitoring and Reporting:

- Monitor for signs of illness and have procedures in place for reporting and managing outbreaks.

Legal Requirements and Guidance for Security

Security is another essential aspect of ensuring a safe environment for children and staff. This involves protecting children from harm ensuring secure premises and safeguarding sensitive information.

Safeguarding and child protection

Understanding and implementing safeguarding practices is paramount in childcare. The [Childrens Act 1989](#) and [2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#) and the [EYFS 2026](#) provide the legal framework for safeguarding.

These require early years providers to ensure.

- A designated safeguarding lead is in every childcare setting.
- Procedures are in place to report and respond to allegation of abuse.
- Staff are well inducted and provided with regular training on safeguarding policies and recognising signs of abuse.

Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018 ensures that children's personal information is handled securely. For early years providers this means:

- Collecting only necessary information
- Storing data securely
- Ensuring data is only accessible to authorised personal.

The [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\)](#) offers several resources and guidance to help early years providers, comply with data protection laws. The ICO can assist with:

- Data Protection Tips
- Privacy Notice Generation
- Registration and Compliance

Secure premises

Ensuring the physical security of the premises is essential, this helps to protect children and staff from authorised harm.

Key measures include:

- Ensuring doors, and gates are locked and secured to prevent unauthorised accessed.
- Secure entry systems such as keypad or swipe cards
- CCTV monitoring where appropriate

Visitor Management

Managing visitors to the setting is essential to maintaining a secure environment. Procedures may include:

- Keeping a log of all visitors
- Verifying the identify of visitors
- Supervising visitors at all times.

Emergency procedures

Developing and practising emergency procedures is key to ensuring children and staff know what to do in various situations such as locks downs and evacuations.

The non-statutory [Protective security and preparedness for education settings.](#)

guidance provides advice to help early years providers to become better prepared for and able to respond to terrorism and other major incidents. It sets out practical steps to keep learners and staff safe in the event of an incident through simple and cost-effective methods.

E safety

With the growing use of digital technologies e-safety has become an important aspect of security in settings. This involves:

- Implementing policies to monitor and control internet access.
- Educating children about online safety
- Ensuring staff understand the risk associated with digital environments and how to mitigate them.

The non statutory guidance [Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations](#) is helpful guidance for those who work in early years settings to consider their practice and to take steps to safeguard both children and adults online. [Internet safety](#) also provides advice and guidance about online safety issues.

Things you can do to support children's use of technology in your setting include:

- Outlining how you support children's use of technology in your setting - it can be helpful to combine this with safeguarding policies
- Using [device safety settings](#) to ensure apps and content are age appropriate.
- Monitoring and supporting children while they use devices.
- Thinking about what you post online and how this may impact your role - this could be ensuring you do not share details about children, parents or other practitioners and adhering to any social media policies which cover staff personal use of social media platforms.
- Getting parental consent before creating or sharing images of children and storing them safely.

You should teach children about internet safety by:

- making them aware of what safe use of technology looks like.
- choosing [educational apps and platforms](#) that help them to develop their skills

Staff recruitment and Vetting: Ensuring that all staff undergo **rigorous** background checks is essential for maintaining a secure environment.

The EYFS 2026 states: *Providers must ensure that people looking after children are suitable; they must have the relevant qualifications, training and have passed any required checks to fulfil their roles. Providers must take appropriate steps to verify qualifications, including in cases where physical evidence cannot be produced. Providers must also ensure that any person who may have regular contact with children (for example, someone living or working on the same premises the early years provision is provided), is suitable.*

Registered group and school-based providers, except CoDP providers, must obtain an enhanced criminal records check for every person aged 16 and over including all volunteers, who:

- Works directly with children.
- Lives on the premises on which the childcare is provided (unless there is no access to the part of the premises when and where children are cared for) and/or
- Works on the premises on which the childcare is provided (unless they do not work on the part of the premises where the childcare takes place, or do not work there at times when children are present).

An additional criminal records check (or checks if more than one country) should also be made for anyone who has lived or worked abroad.

Providers must tell staff and prospective staff that they must disclose any information which may affect their suitability to work with children including, but not limited to, arrests, charges, convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings (whether received before or during their employment at the setting). Providers must not allow individuals to begin working or volunteering at the setting until they have received the applicant's enhanced criminal records and barred list check. Providers must not allow anyone whose suitability has not been checked, including through a criminal records and barred list check, to have unsupervised contact with children being cared for. Providers must record information about staff qualifications and the identity checks, vetting processes and references that have been completed (including the criminal records check reference number, the date a check was obtained and details of who at the setting obtained it). Providers are required to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service if a member of staff is dismissed (or would have been, had they not left the setting first) because they have harmed a child or put a child at risk of harm

Developing a safety conscious culture

Getting the whole team on board is one of the best ways to improve communication regarding health and safety in the setting. It is essential that both employers and employees work together to make sure that they meet their responsibilities and in doing so create and maintain a safe and healthy environment for the children.

The HSE recommends a simple, four-stage approach for successfully managing health and safety:

Plan ➡	Do ➡	Check ➡	Act ➡
Identify what you want to achieve.	Implement your plan.	Is your plan working in reality?	Is your plan working in reality?
Involve your staff in the plan.	Drive the plan with strong, effective leadership and management.	What systems are in place to confirm that this is happening?	What systems are in place to confirm that this is happening?
Use risk assessment to prioritise what needs to be done first	Provide ongoing training and development.	Is your plan up to date – are there any changes, e.g., law, practice, premises, that you need to consider?	Is your plan up to date – are there any changes, e.g., law, practice, premises, that you need to consider?
	Encourage practitioners' participation and engagement.		
	Ensure understanding and ownership of responsibility		



We know that successful health and safety systems are not just about someone being appointed as the designated Health and Safety officer who fills out risk assessments and keeps the paperwork up to date. It's imperative that the whole team is vigilant and that you have their 'buy-in' from the moment they start working at your setting.

Here are some ways in which you can get your staff on board with health and safety:

- Communicate with the team on updates on health and safety within the setting, such as changes to policies, procedures, risk assessments etc.
- Provide team training – make sure you keep up to date with changes in legislation and provide regular team training
- Display relevant posters in your setting to remind staff and children of good health and safety practises, e.g. handwashing, food preparation, infection control.
- Have all the paperwork in one place so that when the time comes to complete a risk assessment or report an injury, everything is kept together, and templates can be used.
- Challenge your staff to 'spot the hazards' within different scenarios to see if they are able to identify them all!



In Summary

Ensuring compliance with health, safety, and security regulations in early years settings is crucial for creating a safe and nurturing environment for children. Here are some key points to keep in mind:

- Keep staff updated with regular training sessions on the latest health and safety regulations.
- Conduct regular risk assessments to identify and mitigate potential risks. Ensure these risk assessment are shared with all staff and reviewed regularly.
- Develop clear policies and procedures for health, safety, and security, and ensure all staff are familiar with them.
- Have a well-documented emergency plan in place and conduct regular drills.
- Maintain a clean and safe physical environment, including safe equipment and facilities.
- Keep open lines of communication with parents about safety measures and any incidents that occur.
- Ensure robust child protection policies are in place and that staff are trained to recognize and respond to signs of abuse or neglect.

By staying proactive and informed, you can provide the highest standards of care and ensure the well-being of all children in your setting.



It is fundamental that all stakeholders recognise that promoting health and safety in early years settings is a collective responsibility and understand the way they can contribute.

Outlined below are some suggested ways different stakeholders can contribute:

- **Staff:** Staff are well-trained, vigilant, and proactive in identifying and mitigating risks. They should follow established policies and procedures and model safe behaviour for children.
- **Parents and Carers:** stay informed about the setting's health and safety policies, communicate any concerns, and reinforce safety practices at home.
- **Children:** Children are taught in age-appropriate safety rules and share their feelings if they feel unsafe or notice something wrong.
- **Leaders and Managers:** provide ongoing training for all staff, maintain clear and updated policies, and ensure the environment is safe and well-maintained.
- **Visitors and Volunteers:** Follow the setting's safety guidelines and report any hazards or concerns they observe.

By working together in our early year's settings, everyone can help create a safe and supportive environment where children can thrive. Regular communication and collaboration are key to maintaining high standards of health and safety.