

Outdoor learning areas: Guide to the education risk benefit assessment template

"Children and young people need to encounter some real risks if they are to respond positively to challenging situations and learn how to deal with uncertainty. This cannot be achieved by limiting them to supposedly safe environments. Therefore, providers of play opportunities have no choice but to offer situations in which children and young people can experience real, not make-believe, hazards"

From Managing Risk in Play Provision, by Ball, Gill and Spiegel

Risk Management

Risk is inherent within our education, care and every day activities. The aim of managing risk is to minimise negative outcomes, **NOT** to eliminate risk and challenge for children.

Risk is measured in terms of a combination of the consequence/impact and the likelihood of a positive or negative impact balanced against the benefits (learning outcomes).

Risk Assessment – Purpose

The purpose of conducting a risk assessment is to

- Identify the source of the risk
- The consequence should the risk occur
- What measures are currently in place
- What additional measures need to be implemented to further reduce the level of risk.

Why conduct a risk assessment?

- Provides written information and analysis that has supported decision making
- Documents the benefit/s for children's learning outcomes
- Demonstrates evidence of due diligence and governance
- Captures actions taken to control adverse events and the reduction of consequences should they occur.

Benefit Assessment – Purpose

The purpose of conducting a benefit assessment is to

- Identify the potential learning opportunities
- Determine short term or long term impact on learning outcomes should a risk be minimisation or eliminated
- To be able to weigh up the learning outcome benefit/s against the risk

Using the Risk Matrix to complete a risk benefit assessment

The matrix is a tool to assist you to determine a measure of risk based on the likelihood of the risk of occurring and if it was to occur what would be the consequence which can then be evaluated alongside the benefit (learning outcome/s) of an activity or event.

Example

Activity	Climbing Trees	
Risk Assessment	Source	4 possible trees in Outdoor Learning Area with 2 suitable for climbing re accessible limbs Falls from tree
Overall Preliminary Risk Assessment	Moderate	
	Measures in place	Install softfall (bark chips) under the tree to a depth of 300mm under the climbing limbs or position impact absorbing mats on the fall zone (under the limbs)
	Additional measures	Identify climbing trees and limbs with a green tape Develop a risk assessment plan with children – rules of climbing
Benefit Assessment	Learning Outcomes	Confidence through challenge Develop coordination and strength Problem solving Social interactions Connection with nature Creative and imaginative play
OVERALL LEVEL OF RISK (with control measures in place)	LOW	
BENEFITS	CONSIDERABLE	
OUTCOME	BENEFITS OUTWEIGHS THE RISK	

Risk Matrix

Likelihood	Almost Certain	<i>Possibility of occurrence more than 75% expected to occur</i>
	Likely	<i>Possibility of occurrence between 50% - 75% - probably will occur at some time</i>
	Possible	<i>Possibility of occurrence between 25% - 50% - may occur at some time</i>
	Unlikely	<i>Possibility of occurrence between 5% - 25% - could occur at some time</i>
	Rare	<i>Possibility of occurrence less than 5% - may never occur</i>

Consequence	Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical incident. (e.g. Death or permanent disability of adult or child; high level of distress to other parties) Sustained negative publicity or damage to reputation from a national perspective or from the community welfare perspective
	Major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple injuries requiring specialist medical treatment or hospitalisation; and/or major occupational health safety & welfare liability incident / issue Major incident which damages public or parent confidence
	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious injuries and/or illness. Complex welfare and/or health care issue Serious disruption or incident, resulting in distress to children and adults
	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor first aid or minor occupational health safety & welfare liability incident / issue (e.g. minor cuts, bruises, bumps)
	Insignificant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No treatment required

		Likelihood				
		Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
Consequence	Critical	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	Major	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
	Minor	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Insignificant	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

