

Risk Assessments



Risk / Benefit Analyses

We believe that, while there are risks that must be considered, there are also a wide range of potential benefits that can be gained by those involved. We also recognise that taking risks is an important part of learning and developing and we want to provide a safe and supportive environment in which participants can learn about risks, challenges and personal safety. Consequently, we will use a risk/benefit analysis in our assessment of our sites and activities.

Risk Assessment Procedures

Forest School and Outdoor Learning sites must be safe and easily accessible, so whenever possible we will visit and assess sites before activities take place. During our assessment we will seek to identify significant hazards and take action or precautions to reduce the risk to a safe level. The location of the site and its grid reference are noted in the Site Information page of this Handbook and at the top of each site risk assessment. All staff, and volunteers will have access to this information in case the Lead Facilitator is unable to attend to an incident.

We will make agreements with landowner and explore specific site issues if necessary. Whilst doing this we will identify any hazards and implement the necessary controls, check for mobile phone coverage and access in case of emergency, and assess toilet facilities. We will ensure all staff and partners are provided with a copy of the risk assessment prior to an activity. When and where possible, we will carry out a last check of a site prior to the arrival of a group. Changing weather conditions and visitors to the site can create new challenges, such as fallen branches and litter. These will need to be assessed and may alter previously arranged activities. Where checks are not possible prior to groups' arrival a site sweep and assessment will be made with the group upon their arrival.

There are five steps to risk assessment:

1. Look for the hazards, such as windblown trees or litter
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done
4. Record the findings
5. Review the assessment and revise if necessary

Risk Assessments for General Session Safety & Group Guidance Dogs & Members of the Public

Some sites visited will be open to the public and so there may well be other people out enjoying the woods. Most people will be happy to pass by the Forest School and Outdoor Learning group without hindering activities, but there is the possibility of unwanted attention from a passer-by. In this event an adult will step in and assure the member of public that if they wish to raise any issues, then they should contact

Coed Cariad outside of contact times with the children and provide them with a contact card.

If the situation escalates to a dangerous level staff will use a mobile phone to call the police and use the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure.

Some children and adults may be unused to or even afraid of dogs. If this is known to be the case for any particular children please inform the Lead Facilitator in the welcome information or as the needs arise. If a dog appears, the fearful child can be joined by at least one member of staff. If a dog approaches the group and appears to likely to cause trouble all children will be advised not to run or act excitably – ideally keep arms by their sides, voices low and stay as still as possible. An adult will speak to the owner. Signs will be mounted on footpaths close to the Forest School and Outdoor Learning area asking dog-owners to keep dogs under control and for cyclists to be aware that children are playing in the area.

Safe Lifting

Outdoor activities can be physically demanding for children and adults, for example when handling heavy objects, so it is wise to be aware of best practise. One of the greatest causes of back injury is lifting or handling objects incorrectly. Here are some tips:

- 🟢 Think and plan where and how you are going to move an object before you lift
- 🟢 Keep the load close to your waist and the heaviest side of the load next to your body
- 🟢 Adopt a stable position with feet apart and one leg slightly forward if possible
- 🟢 Ensure a good hold on the load, hug it close to your body if possible
- 🟢 Avoid bending your back, only bend at your hips or knees if possible
- 🟢 Avoid twisting the back or leaning sideways especially if bending at the back
- 🟢 Keep your head up and look ahead, not down at the load once it is held securely
- 🟢 Move smoothly
- 🟢 Know your limits - don't lift or handle more than you can easily manage without help
- 🟢 Put the load down if you need to adjust it
- 🟢 Where possible, use ropes to drag objects such as trees

Group walking

When the group goes for a walk the following procedures will be followed:

- 🟢 The destination will be communicated to all present (unless a surprise is planned!!)
- 🟢 Children will be counted at the beginning and end of the walk, and at any necessary points in between, such as after a rest or play stop.
- 🟢 Walking on roads will be avoided, but where necessary will be in single file, with an adult at the front and the rear, and remaining adults interspersed between children.

- For longer walks and those which venture beyond the site, the route and projected timings will be communicated so somebody who is not with the group, and arrangements made for a check-in system between that person and the Lead Facilitator.

Site Risk Assessment

See appendices for Heartwood Site Risk Assessment and any other regular site risk assessments. One off site risk assessments will be conducted and kept in the red file.

Activities Risk Assessment

Activities for Outdoor Learning are diverse and numerous but it should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas.

Some activities might include:

- Shelter building
- Fire lighting
- Tool use
- Studying wildlife
- Playing team and group games
- Sensory activities
- Tracking games
- Cooking on an open fire
- Using a Kelly Kettle
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional craft
- Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities

Please see the appendices for the Activities Risk Assessments

Individuals Risk assessment

Individuals in each group may require their own risk assessment. This may be due to a variety of reasons including, phobias, medical needs, behavioural needs, and learning needs. A blank individual risk assessment is available in the appendices.