



National Day Nurseries Association

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Factsheet

Risk Assessment



Citation

Risk Assessments

NDNA has teamed up with Citation, the Health and Safety specialists, to provide this factsheet to answer questions and give advice on completing risk assessments.

Risk assessments within the nursery sector can seem like a time consuming, mundane and often repetitive task. They are, however, of great importance and it is a legal requirement for all organisations to undertake them. But where do you start and how do you ensure that your risk assessments are all completed to acceptable standards?

What is a Risk Assessment?

A risk assessment is a process of carefully examining what could cause harm to people in the workplace environment and then deciding what precautions should be taken to prevent or minimise harm. The aim is to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of someone being injured or becoming ill. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives but also affect the profitability of businesses through lost output, damaged equipment, damage to reputation, increased insurance costs and legal fees and fines. Forced business closure may also be an outcome in the most extreme situations.

The amount of effort and detail that is required to prepare a risk assessment will depend on the level of risk, complexity of the work/workplace and the type of people involved. Risk assessments must be relevant to the task, work area and persons that may be present.

What are Hazards and Risks?

A 'hazard' is anything with the potential to cause harm (e.g. unsafe working environment, kitchen areas, electrics, access and egress, play equipment, sharp or heavy objects etc.)

A 'risk' is the chance that someone will be harmed by the hazard. Risk also considers the severity of the harm and the number of people who may be harmed.

Who Completes Risk Assessments?

Only trained, competent staff should complete risk assessments. A good place to start could be the Nursery Manager for example. However, it is very important to include others in this process, for example, people with experience and knowledge of the location, tasks and hazards.

This helps to ensure that staff accept the control measures and that the correct controls are implemented. Adding risk assessment training to your staff training records demonstrates good commitment to safe working practices within the nursery too.

Guidance for Completing Risk Assessments

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations is a key piece of Health and Safety legislation and requires all organisations to carry out risk assessments.

The Regulations require that every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the:

- Risks to the health and safety of his/her employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work
- Risks to the health and safety of other persons (including the public, children at the nursery, contractors and visitors, etc.) arising out of or in connection with the employer's work.

Every self-employed person shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the:

- Risks to his/her own health and safety to which he/she is exposed whilst he/she is at work
- Risks to the health and safety of other persons not in his/her employment arising out of or in connection with his/her work.

Risk assessments must be reviewed regularly

(E.g. annually), following accidents, or when working practices and the number of people employed or the working environment have changed significantly (e.g. if you have building work done or new equipment delivered). The employer or self-employed person should ensure that any actions from the review are implemented in a timely manner.

Steps to Risk Assessments

The number of risk assessments needed by your business will depend on several factors including the size and location of the organisation, the type of activities undertaken etc. The order of priority in which these assessments are then developed could depend on:

- The level of risk
- Results of recent accidents, incidents (e.g. near misses) or cases of ill health
- Results of accident trend analysis
- Communication with H&S Enforcing Authorities or insurers
- National or regional trade association guidance
- Client or customer requirements
- Legal requirements
- Internal H&S monitoring findings.

Five Basic Steps when Conducting Risk Assessments

When conducting risk assessments there are five basic steps:

Step 1 - Hazard identification

Assessors should first identify the hazards by:

- Walking around the workplace and looking at what could reasonably be expected to cause harm (concentrate on the significant hazards that could result in harm to one or more persons) in both the short and long term
- Asking employees or their representatives for their views (have they noticed things which are not immediately obvious?)
- Using manufacturer's instructions, material safety data sheets etc.
- Using industry guidance and regulatory information
- Referring to information from parents or third parties.

It can be useful to group hazards into categories, for example:

- Types of premises and area, e.g. offices, nursery rooms, parking area, outdoors, kitchen area etc.
- Types of equipment including a list of operations, office/kitchen work, maintenance etc.
- Computer work stations
- Manual handling activities
- Chemicals/cleaning activities
- Other hazards.

Step 2 – Decide who might be harmed and how?

This will include not only the children in your care and your general employees, but also vulnerable staff such as young workers, new and expectant mothers, those with disabilities or new employees who may be more vulnerable. The effects of workplace activities on visitors, external contractors, maintenance workers, members of the public etc. will need to be considered too.

Employers will need to decide how and when people or groups of people might be exposed to the hazards and potentially harmed.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done

In this step, the risk of a hazard causing harm to someone is considered, including the need for risk reduction or elimination.

Assessments should focus on significant risks. Effort should be made to eliminate the risk or reduce the level of risk to as low as possible. However, the law appreciates that risk reduction can be an expensive process so it provides for organisations to take a 'reasonably practicable' approach. This

means that organisations can consider reasonable costs time and the effort to decide what control measures need to be implemented. For example, it would not be expected for a small nursery to send its entire staff on expensive individual training courses, but it could be reasonably practicable to send one member of staff on a course who then passes on their knowledge to colleagues in the form of team meetings/discussion exercises.

The decision of whether risks are high, medium or low is very subjective and everyone will have a different perception of the level depending on their experience, knowledge and training etc. For instance, electricity is a hazard that can kill but the likelihood may seem to be low (due to the number of reported deaths/injuries in the UK). Thus, organisations need to take a consistent approach in calculating levels of risk.

Although determining risk levels can be important for prioritising the implementation of actions, or deciding monitoring frequencies, the key message is that if there is a significant risk of harm in the workplace then suitable control measures should be in place to eliminate or minimise the chance of harm.

In controlling risks, the following principles should be applied:

- Try to avoid the hazard altogether
- If the hazard cannot be eliminated, reduce the risk
- Tackle the risk at source
- Adapt the work to the individual rather than expecting people to fit the job, e.g. allow staff to handle loads within their capability
- Provide appropriate instruction and training and then document this on training records.

Other control measures may include health surveillance for specific hazards, or having a monthly meeting to discuss current working practices and any suggestions for improvements.

At the end of this process there may still be some risks remaining. An action plan will then need to be drawn up and any actions prioritised based on the criteria set out at the start of this factsheet. The time scales set in the action plan should be realistic and reasonable as they may be scrutinised by local authority enforcement, insurers or even potential customers.

Step 4 – Record the findings

Only those organisations that employ five or more people need to have risk assessments documented. However, Citation recommends that all organisations document their assessments irrespective of the number of employees. It is important that the findings of risk assessments are brought to the attention of employees. It is good practice to request that employees are given time to read and comment on the documented risk assessments and then, when agreed, sign to confirm that they have read and understood them. It may be also required to communicate any relevant findings to visitors, external contractors etc.

These written records may be requested by an Enforcement Officer/Insurer during a routine inspection or accident investigation to ensure that the hazardous and associated risks to the children, employees and others have been adequately assessed. During actions for civil liability, such records can demonstrate that reasonable steps had been taken to prevent harm.

Step 5 – Review the assessments and revise if necessary

Over time, there may be new equipment, substances, procedures or people introduced into the nursery that may lead to new hazards. With any significant change, risk assessments

should be reviewed and if necessary, amended. It is good practice to review the assessments regularly but at least annually (more often for high-risk work or areas) to ensure that the precautions are still working efficiently.

Risk assessment format

There is no legal format for undertaking risk assessments. You are able to decide which format suits you best, and the one most readily understood and followed by your employees. Citation's online platform, Atlas, makes risk assessments easy. It's quick to use, picture based and offers email reminders to make sure you're up to date. It also holds over 500 ready-made templates, including many nursery specific ones.

The final message about risk assessments is keep it simple

NDNA would like to thank [Citation](#) for providing this factsheet on risk assessments. If you would like more information about how [Citation](#) can assist your business with risk assessments or any other health and safety issue, please call 0345 844 1111 quoting NDNA or visit

<https://www.citation.co.uk/industries/nurseries>

Other useful sources of information on health and safety are the Health and Safety Executive at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/> and NDNA's quality improvement scheme, e-Quality Counts, has a full module on improving health and safety in your setting. Visit <https://bit.ly/2NL4zOF> for more information.

Further information - for more information, why not have a look at the following products:

- [Health and Safety and Risk Assessments for All Staff](#)
- [Health and Safety and Risk Assessments for Managers](#)
- [Health and Safety for Childcare Practitioners Level 2](#)
- Health and Safety general policy for [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#)
- Health and Safety in the Office policy for [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#)
- [Citation Safety Poster packs](#)

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NDNA is the national charity and membership association representing children's nurseries across the UK. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability, so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours.

We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

See the full range of NDNA factsheets at www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets

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