

**Risk Assessment Policy**

At Free Rangers, we believe the health and safety of the children is of paramount importance especially as they take part in activities that carry an inherent risk. We ensure our setting is a safe, healthy but challenging place for children, parents, staff and volunteers by assessing and controlling potential hazards and risks, enabling children to thrive but also develop a sense of responsibility towards their environment and their safety. It is important to differentiate first between a risk and hazard:

*A hazard is something that can potentially cause physical, emotional, or psychological harm, whereas the risk is the potential likelihood of harm occurring from that hazard.*

The bedrock of this policy is the Risk-Benefit Assessment (RBA). RBAs transcends traditional risk assessment strategies by identifying hazards and considering whether “controlling” the risk associated with the hazard would prevent the children from experiencing or learning from any potential benefits. For example, a wet slippery log or the use of loppers and knives presents an immediate hazard or perhaps a fall or a trip. The RBA would see the potential learning/benefits before placing any controls in places such as the development of sensory motor skills and planning, balance and coordination or development of a child’s own risk assessment strategies.

A *Site* RBA (*see Appendix a1 – Site Risk Assessment*) follows these stages:

1. Identification of risk (where/what is it?) and who is at risk i.e. children, staff, visitors, or outside companies/personnel.
2. What the specific risk could be (e.g. slips, trips, or falls)
3. What the probability of any hazards having any potential impact (low, medium, and high)
4. Assessment of any benefits from hazards and the corresponding benefit rating.
5. Any control measures or precautions to reduce/eliminate risk: what will you need to do, or ensure others will do, to reduce the risk (if applicable)? *IF* the level of risk is still high after any precautions or controls then the hazard should be avoided.

Furthermore, daily risk assessments of the site and detailed risk benefit assessments of the planned activity should be completed before any activities commence. These follow similar stages to the above but give a much more relevant and up-to-date picture of the associated hazards minus the risk and benefit ratings. The daily risk assessment covers individual areas of the outdoor spaces at Free Rangers, mirroring many of the hazards on the site RBA but takes into consideration seasonal/daily aspects such as the weather as well as the individual aspects of the activity that’s been planned. The activity RBA shows how you have managed hazards associated with your session. Hazards have been noted, any existing controls that have been put in place, the associated benefits of the activity or hazard and any long-term controls that might be needed. This information is then shared with all those who will be encountering the risk assessed space.

As part of our Risk Assessment strategy, we also look to empower the children to assess their own risk on Forest School, and as such have 3 basic Forest School rules, which are discussed before every session starts:

1. *Let the adults know, and you can go!* – our Forest School site is quite large and varied and we regularly have sessions where the children can explore on their own terms, but we ask the children to check with us first before heading off. This rule is also used in conjunction with our shout and respond to game *1, 2, 3, Where are you?* used if the children wander off too far or without consulting an adult first.
2. *We do not put things in our mouths!* – We ask the children not put things into their mouths to prevent illness or injury. We have a few plants (i.e. Lords and Ladies, stinging nettles), which do pose a risk to health if ingested or touched, and these are managed as per our Environmental Policy (5i), through daily checks and discussed during the rules.
3. *We Respect the Fire!* – Fires are an integral part of Forest School development, both as a learnt skill and as an experience for the children. However, fires do pose as a significant hazard, but the benefits of its use certainly outweigh the risks. In order to prevent any unnecessary injury, we look to routinely ensure the children actively think about how they can be safe around the fire (i.e. sitting/kneeling, not throwing things on the fire, not running nearby, carefully adding wood on the fire) as well as what they need to do in the event of them burning themselves (cold tap/water for 20 mins and/or burns kit).

Free Rangers holds detailed full risk assessments for all areas within our premises including: the paddock, woods, pond, farm, rooms and gardens which are updated and assessed on an annual basis or if situations change (new buildings/areas/equipment) – see appendix a *Risk Assessment*. The staff complete daily risk assessments and notify management of any issues or hazards that arise. Staff will continually risk assess when on outings (see generic outing risk assessment) and throughout their daily work. Risk assessments are reviewed annually and adapted when necessary.

Covid19 Update: in accordance with Government Guidance: Safe working practice in Education, childcare and children’s social care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safe-working-in-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care>) & Free Rangers Covid19 Procedural Changes Policy, risk assessments have been updated to reflect the current situation to include:

* the more frequent and thorough washing of limited outdoor equipment and handwashing facilities should be adhered to daily.
* Furthermore, the more frequent handwashing of adults and children’s hands during and after outdoor play will be adhered to. As always, hands should be washed for 20 seconds with warm running water with a hand sanitiser used after and applied to all areas of the hands.
* In ref to the above: snack should be eaten before embarking to the paddock. The indoor spaces are easier to control in terms of the spread and risk of contamination of Covid19.
* All adults should adhere to the proper PPE throughout the day (including gloves, aprons and facemasks)
* the use of the Hive garden is not allowed due to private use and the need for social distancing.
* The use of gates into the paddock areas should only be used by the staff with gloves to limit the potential spread of germs.
* Attending children will be accessing the outside spaces more frequently and for longer periods throughout the day, but social distancing, within this age group is hard to police. Outdoor groups will then be spilt up into core groups where they play with the same children and not mix within other groups. These groups will have their own spaces to play across the site.

Updated: 11th May 2020

Next Review: Jan 2021