**Introduction**

Risk assessment is an important part of working with children. It assists with managing both health and safety issues, and the welfare of children.

As adults we assess risks throughout our lives, but when working with children it is important to consider potential risks that may lead to risk to children and to the adults who work with them. Consideration of how to control or manage risk is critical. It is important to identify acceptable levels of risks, as all risk cannot be removed.

Whilst the focus on risk assessment should be on groups of children with whom you are working, as opposed to the physical venue, if a problem with the venue is discovered during the course of assessing (e.g. broken glass, electrical cabling, etc.) this needs to be raised with the appropriate authority in charge of health and safety for the building.

**What does the term ‘risk’ mean?**

A risk is a potential source of harm or adverse health effect on a person or persons. This may include areas such as:

* Failure to comply with effective safeguarding practices, such as lack of supervision ratios or consent forms;
* Medical risks, such as failure to take medication, or inappropriate intimate care practices;
* Physical risk, such s dangerous electrical cabling, or proximity to water.

**Assessing risks**

1. Identify the risk: look for risks in the nature of the activity, and in the place where you are holding the activity.
2. Identify who is at risk: decide who may be harmed and how. Everyone, or perhaps only certain people, may be at risk. Some groups may need special consideration as they may be more vulnerable to certain risks.
3. Identify what the likelihood of harm may be.
4. Identify the consequences of injury or harm: the consequence could range from trivial to severe or even fatal. The most severe risks need the most urgent attention.
5. Identify the controls that need to be put in place to limit the risk.

**Reviews**

Risk should be periodically reviewed, especially in circumstances when a venue changes, a new activity takes place or the members of the group change.