

Introduction to Health & Safety

adapted from Norfolk County Council documents.

Myth of the Month – Health & Safety Executive

“Health and safety law is often used as an excuse to stop children taking part in exciting activities, but well-managed risk is good for them. It engages their imagination, helps them learn and even teaches them to manage risks for themselves in the future. They won’t understand about risk if they’re wrapped in cotton wool. Risk itself won’t damage children, but ill-managed and overprotective actions could!”

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974

The Health and Safety at Work Act outlines the general legal duties an employer has to their employees and members of the public to ensure their health, safety and welfare **as far as reasonably practicable**. It also outlines the duties employees have to the employer and each other.

Employers are often local educational authority, governing bodies or trustees.

Employers with more than 5 employees must have a written Health & Safety policy appropriate for their work situation.

Employees must follow training received; taking reasonable care of their own and other people's health & safety, and report to someone if they think precautions are inadequate.

Health & Safety & working with children

In addition to Health and Safety Law, Teachers and other staff in charge of children have a common law duty of care to act as any **reasonable parent** would do in similar circumstances.

Useful documents are available on Learning Outside the Classroom website:

www.lotc.org.uk

- Organisations that work with children also need a safeguarding children policy.

What if you are self-employed as Forest School & Nature-based practitioner?

- Make yourself familiar with procedures and guidance for schools so that you can support your groups.
- You are expected to have policies & procedures in line with statutory requirements and good practice, appropriate to your site and client groups.
- You are expected to have insurance and risk assessment as an outdoor provider.
- We recommend presenting policies & procedures in the form of a working document or 'Handbook'.

Why do practitioners need policies & procedures?

- **Professional integrity** – good practice & being well prepared.
- **A communication tool** – what & how things are done to share with staff, managers, clients, parents.
- **Protection against litigation** – evidence your risk limiting procedures.
- **A legal requirement** – Health & Safety Law.

Possible Policies & related procedures

Health & Safety including statements on: **POLICY:**

- Risk management and assessment
- First Aid provision (inc. Emergency equipment carried)
- Staff/helpers qualifications, training & responsibilities
- Equipment
- Use of personal protective equipment
- Welfare requirements – toilets, hygiene, food and drink
- Emergency and Incident management
- Contingency and cancellation
- Transport
- Insurance

Related Procedures

- Risk assessment
- Weather and clothing
- Gaining parental consent
- Administering medicines/items to children
- Tool and equipment operational
- Fire protocol
- Toileting
- Food Hygiene
- Emergency and serious incident
- Reporting and near miss
- Cancellation and contingency
- Walking/driving/transport

Safeguarding Children Policy including:

- Parental/carer communication and permissions
- Training for staff and responsibilities
- Vetting and Barring (what was CRB)
- Ratios
- Preparing children for Forest School
- Use of photographs and digital recording media
- Receiving visitors

Related procedures

- Safeguarding recording and reporting
- Disclosure
- Lost or missing child
- Unwanted visitor

Learning and Development Policy

- Forest School ethos
- Aims and objectives
- Observation and assessment
- Role of the adult

Related Procedures

- Observation and evaluation
- Planning
- Procedures for certain experiences e.g. fire, cooking, using tools, climbing, games, construction etc.

Equality & Diversity Opportunities Policy

- Special educational needs
- Inclusion and access
- Behaviour management
- Anti-bullying

Related Procedures

- De-escalation
- Positive handling
- Rewards and sanctions

Environmental/ Sustainability Policy

- Sustainable use of site
- Care of flora and fauna
- Purchasing/suppliers

- **Related procedures**

- Ecological impact assessment and
- Management plan
- Procedures for certain tasks – coppicing, minibeast hunts, planting, mowing etc. sensitive to ecology of site

- **Terms and Conditions Policy**
 - Booking
 - Cancellation
 - Complaints

Policies and Procedures should be realistic and attainable; your handbook should reflect your practice. As your practice develops and changes, so too should your handbook. Your handbook should be considered a useful tool that is regularly reflected upon and updated.

All policies and procedures should be signed and dated by the author, with a review date specified, at least annually or after a change, incident or near miss.

What's the difference between policies and procedures?

Policies and procedures go hand-in-hand to clarify what your organisation wants to do and how to do it.

Policies

Policies are clear, simple statements of how your organisation intends to conduct its services, actions or business. They provide a set of guiding principles to help with decision making.

Policies don't need to be long or complicated

Procedures

Procedures describe how each policy will be put into action in your organisation. Each procedure should outline:

Who will do what

What steps they need to take

Which forms or documents to use.

Procedures might just be a few bullet points or instructions. Sometimes they work well as forms, checklists, instructions or flowcharts.

Policies and their accompanying procedures will vary between workplaces because they reflect the values, approaches and commitments of a specific organisation and its culture. But they share the same role in guiding your organisation.