

Our Free Minds

Risk Assessment Policy

Purpose of the Policy:

This policy is written in support of the Our Free Minds Health and Safety Policy, endorsed by the board of trustees.

This policy is designed to help all staff and volunteers manage risk with a view to maintaining a safe working environment for themselves and others, and a safe environment for the children in our care as well as visitors to the setting.

Policy Statement:

Our Free Minds will comply with all legal requirements concerning the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which pose a legal requirement to make a written risk assessment for all hazards, so as to determine what measures need to be taken to protect the health & safety of employees/volunteers. These will be reviewed at regular intervals: as a minimum annually, or immediately if circumstances change.

Legal Framework

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR), the employer must make an assessment of risks to the health and safety of employees and others.

Risk Assessments

The purpose of the assessment is to identify action necessary to comply with legal requirements, making suitable and sufficient assessments of risks, arrangements for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of the preventive and protective measures.

Although the phrase "risk assessment" may conjure up images of a complex process of judgement, based upon skilled technical knowledge, the assessment is in fact nothing more than a careful examination of what is likely, in the setting, across the organisation as a whole, to cause harm to the children in our care, staff, volunteers, visitors or anyone else who could be affected by Our Free Minds activities.

In addition risk assessment will identify risks to the organisation in being able to meet its operational and charitable objectives whilst maintaining a quality service. From this information Our Free Minds can then weigh up whether or not there are sufficient precautions in place, or more needs to be done to prevent that harm/threat materialising.

The primary aims are to make sure that Our Free Minds remains a viable organisation fit for its purpose, that no person suffers harm due to conditions either in the workplace, or as part of their attendance to our setting, due to poor working practice or errors in our care provision. Undertaking risk assessments ensure that we can take decisions, provide guidance and apply protective and preventive measures to assure ourselves that systems are in place to create a safe environment and meet our charitable obligations.

Identification of Risks

Risks are primarily identified through the risk assessment process, however they can be identified through a number of other avenues including listening to the children themselves.

Risk assessment in our setting is a dynamic and ongoing process that considers both potential hazards and the developmental benefits of children's independent activity. We do not seek to eliminate all risk or require constant adult oversight, as this can undermine children's ability to assess risk for themselves. Instead, children are supported through regular safety education, including six-monthly in-house grounds safety training, and through activity-specific in-house training and certification for higher-risk activities. Where activities such as woodwork or kitchen use are involved, adult supervision is always provided unless a child has completed relevant safety training and has been formally assessed and signed off as competent by a Facilitator. Supervision levels are therefore adapted according to the environment, the activity, and the individual child.

Organisational risks are identified through threats to the financial and operational performance of Our Free Minds.

Any risk identified should be reported to the Board of Trustees.

Risk Management is a process where risks are identified and analysed. Steps are then taken to reduce, control, or eliminate the risk.

The aims of Risk Assessments are to identify what potential or actual risk are faced when accessing the services provided by reviewing the following areas:

- Training and Supervision
- Management of Group activities
- Written Protocols and Guidelines
- Record Keeping
- Complaints and Claims Management
- Induction of staff
- Equipment
- Incident Reporting

Risk Assessment Ownership

Local ownership of the assessment is essential in identifying potential or actual risks for which measures can be put in place to remove or reduce the likelihood of occurrence. In other words, where possible the person who will be responsible for the activity is the person who should be responsible for the risk assessment.

Aims and Objectives

- To ensure compliance with relevant legislation, in particular with the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999).
- To undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of all workplace risks, identifying hazards and judging the level of risk.
- To eliminate or reduce, as far as reasonably practicable, all unacceptable risks by the implementation of appropriate alternatives or control measures.
- To record and review assessments at an appropriate frequency.

- To provide suitable information, supervision and training to enable effective risk assessments to be carried out.

Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees has the overall responsibility, statutory and operational, for managing health and safety.

The Manager will ensure that:

- i. An assessment of risks for the areas under their control is performed.
- ii. Actions are identified and implemented.
- iii. The results of the risk assessment are documented and kept.

All staff, including contractors and volunteers, will ensure that they participate as requested in the risk assessment process and use/maintain any control measures identified as being necessary to minimise risks.

Arrangements

Assessments will be recorded on the Our Free Minds Risk Assessment Form in accordance with the Risk Assessment Procedure set out below.

Copies of completed risk assessments will be reviewed and monitored on a regular basis.

Records will be held by the Manager and will be available to staff and volunteers for information and also for audit purposes.

All assessments will be entered in the Risk Register, which is housed on Our Free Minds drive in the Risk Assessment Folder.

Training

Staff/volunteers will undertake in-house risk assessment training.

Health and Safety training will raise awareness to all staff relating to risk and their responsibilities.

Risk Register

The Manager is responsible for ensuring that risks are reviewed and the register is updated.

Reported risks are reported to and reviewed by the Board of Trustees on a quarterly basis.

Acceptable Levels of Risk

It is accepted that it is neither realistic nor possible to totally eliminate all areas of risk. It is however feasible to develop a systematic approach to the management of risk so that adverse consequences are minimised.

Monitoring

The quality and content of risk assessments will be monitored on receipt by The Manager.

Five Key Steps in the Risk Assessment Process

Step 1: Observe the workplace overall and then systematically address individual areas including processes and equipment.

Step 2: Decide who is likely to be harmed and how.

Step 3: Evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or not. When you have assessed the need for action, it is then necessary to address the question of controlling the hazard.

E: Eliminate Can the hazard, product, or process be eliminated completely?

R: Reduce Can the level of exposure to the hazard be lessened, or can a less hazardous substitute be used?

I: Isolate Can clients/staff be isolated from the hazard or can the hazard be isolated from the clients/staff

C: Control Can the hazard be controlled by:

- o Methods of work/Procedures
- o Training
- o Information
- o Instruction
- o Supervision
- o Or provision of protective equipment?

Step 4: Report your findings - Record your findings on the risk assessment form. Using the risk assessment matrix, categorise the risk factor to provide an indication of significant risks that need urgent attention. Record control measures to be taken to eliminate/reduce the risk.

Step 5: Review the assessment regularly, especially when new staff, new equipment or new methods of work are introduced, at a minimum of three monthly intervals. Revise if necessary. In any event all risk assessments must be reviewed annually and evidenced that this has in fact taken place.

This policy statement was adopted by: Our Free Minds	Last reviewed and signed by:
Date of last review: 17.01.2026 To be reviewed: 10.10.2026	- Katie Kotting , Chair of the Board of Trustees - Clea Sambrook , Trustee for Safeguarding - Poppy De Witt , Trustee

Risk Assessment Process

