



RISK ASSESSMENT

Alison Smith Counselling

Wick Yard, Bath Road, Farleigh Wick, Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, BA15 2PU

Name of setting Premises 5, Wick Yard, BA15 2PU Name(s)
of those who conducted the Risk Assessment are:

Alison Smith, Director of Alison Smith Counselling

Hannah Lindsay, Director of Wiltshire Equine Assisted Learning

Jen Chequer, Director of Art and the Outdoors

Most of my work will involve clients staying onsite at Wick Yard – primarily within the therapy room and walking around the site - but occasionally, clients and animals may walk on various public footpaths which run through the site. For older clients, I may cross the main road. A full risk assessment will take place for any new environment.

As well as working in the therapy room, clients will walk through the stable yard, into the adjoining paddocks and small woodland area. Interactions with animals such as horses and sheep are likely. Clients may be given the opportunity to interact with horses on the ground. I will have signed permission forms for such interactions and will dynamically risk assess these interactions, involving the client in this process.

Interactions with my dogs will also be part of sessions but I will assess this with each client individually. Interactions with small animals – rabbits and guinea pigs – may also be available and again, this will be assessed on an individual client basis.

While outside, clients may play with items they find in the natural environment such as sticks, stones and other natural material. Areas will be risk assessed and I will dynamically risk assess constantly. Clients may climb trees and again, these trees and areas are risk assessed and I will be dynamically risk

assessing with my clients to encourage their own risk assessment process too
– this is an important part of the experiential learning and nature of the work.

How was the risk assessment done?

- We followed guidance from the HSE website.
- To identify the hazards, we looked at the HSE website, following guidance for small businesses. There is an accident book on the premises which is completed and reviewed annually by the Board of Directors, and any critical incidents would be taken to the Board as and when necessary.
- Hazards, and who they might affect, were identified.
- For each hazard, controls were put in place in accordance with practice guidance on the HSE website.
- We discussed our findings with the Board of Directors
- Alison Smith Counselling has Professional Liability insurance to cover up to £1,000,000 in any one claim. This provides cover for Public Liability, Professional Indemnity, Product Liability and Libel & Slander.

The certificate can be viewed on my website under the Policies section [Policies](https://alisonsmithcounselling.com/policies)
(alisonsmithcounselling.com) A copy of the certificate is also kept on the premises

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are we already doing?	Further Actions
Horses and other animals • Sheep • Guinea Pigs • Dogs	• Staff and clients may be injured by horses, animals kicking, biting, scratching, stepping on toes, being crushed or knocked over. • Risk of infection/hygiene risks	• Alison is a qualified first aider. • First Aid Box in the Therapy Room • Choosing horses and other animals carefully. New staff will receive horse handling training and supervision. Permission form signed by parent/guardian outlining risks. Providing clients with induction before they handle horses or animals. • Limited numbers working with horses or any animals at any one time and under the close supervision of all clients. Hats available for those who want to wear one. • Information provided for every client prior to the start of the course regarding suitable clothing i.e. appropriate footwear with grip, gloves, wet weather clothing, sun hat, sunscreen etc. • Accident book to be completed by staff after any incident. Accident book reviewed by Alison after any noted incident, or at least annually with report made to Board of Directors and any actions identified and completed. • Handwashing/gels after all interactions	
Equipment	• Staff and clients may be injured if they use tools, farm or animal equipment incorrectly, especially when working with the horses/animals. i.e., wrapping rope around hands could cause rope burns, blistering, or worse, if the horse were to take off. Stepping into a coil of rope could lead to being dragged along.	• Providing induction for clients before they meet the horses/animals. Allowing time to settle in a safe environment before meeting the horses. • Close Supervision by Staff at all times • All farm equipment to be stored safely • Provide all resources for practical activities, ensuring they are fit for use, checked and maintained. • A full health and safety tool/equipment talk before client commences activity, as part of the induction. • Keys for tractors/quad bikes to be kept securely locked away. • All sharp tools and potentially harmful tools kept secure i.e. ropes, scissors, tools, knives, pitchforks, grooming equipment, etc. • All use of animal care, tools and handling equipment to be supervised by Facilitator	

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Allergic reaction to bites, animals, seasonal allergies, hay.	• Ill health from contact with animals. • Risk of infection from contact with animals - in particular lambs.	• Explaining on client information sheet about appropriate clothes to bring to a session (eg, gloves). • Identify any allergies prior to commencement of sessions. • Advising facilitators to watch for sneezing/ runny eyes. • Provide handwash/sanitiser for all staff and clients after animal handling. Discuss antihistamine medication prior to sessions for clients who may have a known allergy.	No further action identified.
Hazardous substances	• Medication for ponies. • Animal wormers. • Chemical substances used around the farm. • Muck heap and animal droppings. • Working in stream or woodland.	• All hazardous substances to be stored in a locked room. Clients will not be able to access the room unless directly supervised by a Facilitator. • Stock levels to be checked regularly by Facilitator. • All animals to be regularly wormed, in line with annual worming programme. • Clients taking part in animal care/outside learning (stream/woodlands) may come into contact with droppings and therefore facilitator to ensure they wash their hands thoroughly following contact with animals. • Sanitiser provided in all areas. • All animal droppings picked up regularly by staff and hands washed • Nettles/hazardous plants identified and controlled - education of clients regarding these	No further action identified.
Slips and Trips - outdoors on stairs/indoors	• Staff and visitors risk serious injury if they slip or trip, even on the level.	• Regular, visual checks for potholes and trip hazards. Facilitators to point out trip possibilities eg into the round pen, paddock, toilet, steps into rooms, stairs etc. • Ensure clients wear sensible and appropriate footwear to minimise risks. • Paths to field maintained in winter with field mats to ensure safer surface to field. • Dry mop floors on wet days to reduce risk.	No further action identified.
Transport		• Permission must be sought from client or parents/guardians prior to any client travelling in vehicles and those vehicles to be insured for business use.	No further action identified.

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Fields and gate entrances	• Trapped fingers • Escaping animals • Trampling, dangers of accident with loose animals • Climbing • Fall, sprain, twists, head injury, broken bone • Damage to property and risk to security of animals.	• Staff to assist clients when appropriate. • If animal near by facilitator take charge of safe passage through gate. • Risk of being barged at a gate • Ensure it is closed fast. • Enforce rules of no gate climbing.	• Reading body language of nearby animals. • Learning the country code. • Listening, understanding, following instructions.
Interactions with the public and dog walkers • Dogs off lead • Risk of unsafe interactions. • Risk of breach of confidentiality. • Risk of dog bite/attack	• Supervising 1:1 at all times. Ensure client is always in site of facilitator. • Dynamic risk assessment. Request for dog on lead etc. • Remove and go to quiet space if people are around	• Assess body language. • Maintain personal space • Encourage safe interactions with animals and people. • Educate how not to over excite dogs.	• Teach respect of the unknown. • Dynamic risk assessments • Learning about stranger danger.
Manual handling	• Staff and Clients may be at risk of injury whilst handling equipment used around the farm and in sessions.	• Managing Director to assess risks and ensure staff are aware of safer handling guidelines. All training needs to be identified. • Health and Safety Policy to be reviewed and updated annually. • Equipment to be used, where possible, to move any heavy load – i.e. hay bales • Clients to be supervised by Facilitator if moving or handling any equipment and advised on safe handling • Any injury to be dealt with immediately by Facilitator and recorded in accident book.	No further action identified.
Electricity	• Staff risk injury from electrical appliances or electric fencing.	• Electrical installations on premises inspected by a qualified electrician. Staff visually check leads and plugs items before use. • Signs displayed regarding any mains electric fencing and staff and clients are instructed regarding safe use	

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Risk to Horses and other animals from Clients	Horses and other animals worked with during sessions risk injury from Clients	- Clients to be supervised at all times during contact with animals. - Facilitator to be aware of the animal's body language and to change direction of the session if the animal appears anxious or distressed in any way - Twice daily visual checks of all animals to ensure they are healthy, relaxed and not injured. - Promotion of kindness and empathy during sessions. Where a risk from a client is identified, a further risk assessment will be completed to minimise the risk to the animals. - A zero tolerance approach to any roughness with the animals will be taken and clients not adhering will be removed from contact.	No further action identified.
Toilet - Heater, hot water, step up to toilet, slip risk on floor if wet, electrical equipment - Cleanliness, risk of infection	clients and staff	- daily cleaning and encouraging clean use of facilities - Clients to be supervised from outside at all times - Clients warned about steps up and gaps - Switches out of reach to clients. - Mat at door and mop available to dry wet floor if using during rain. - Electrical equipment checked by facilitators and PAT tested. - Kettle/coffee machine and microwave to be used only by staff. - Hot water temperature to be set at comfortable level.	weekly toilet check
Public space	- Risk of breach of confidentiality if parents/families/teachers waiting for clients and another session is running concurrently with another client. - Deliveries and farm traffic - Risk of clients escaping to busy road or onto footpaths.	- Parents/carers asked to wait within car or to leave. - Induction brochure made available to highlight risks of site - Barrier erected to prevent vehicles passing beyond the car park area. - At times of deliveries and farm traffic, clients to remain close to facilitator and advised where to stand. - Slow down sign at car park. - The entrance to Wick Yard is a public space and the public have access through the site. Clients are therefore accompanied and overseen at all times and collected and returned to the pick up point. - There is a main road at the entrance protected by a swing footpath gate and a cattle grid. - Specific risk assessments will be made as to the suitability of the child to the site.	- Induction brochure to be talked through with client and parents on initial session. - Commissioners invited to visit site to assess the suitability of specific clients prior to commencing sessions.
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are we already doing?	Further Actions

Parking area	• Safety risk from incoming and site traffic to children and any animals loose in the yard.	• Sign on drive to remind visitors to slow down for children and loose animals in the yard at entrance to the farm • Close gates between fields and parking areas at all times.	Induction brochure signposted to commissioners and clients.
Muck heap	• Slips trips & falls. • Risk of flies, risk of contamination.	• Clients to remain with facilitator at all times. • Wash/sanitise hands after contact. • Make gloves available. • suitability of clients interaction with waste individually assessed.	• Understanding of essential care of animals. • H & S around droppings. • Fine & gross motor skills. • Team work.
Therapy Room	• Slips trips and falls on entry • Burns, scalds, electric shock from kettle • Burns from heater and hot glue gun • Cuts, incisions from scissors or scalpel • Sand in eye from sand tray • Slips trips and falls from sand on the floor from sand tray	• Ensure slip proof mat is in porch and on entry into room. Clients advised to wipe/dry their feet and take off muddy or slippy shoes on entry • Kettle in room will be operated by me only. No clients will be able to use it. It will be emptied after use and unplugged. Kettle to be kept away from toys, near my desk in the area that clients keep away from. The microwave will be kept here too • Ensure heater is kept at lower heat when clients are in the room. Keep heater away from areas where a child might play • Explain safe use of glue gun with client. Only use with clients who are secondary aged or deemed sensible. Unplug immediately after use and keep out of reach as cooling • Scissors and sharp cutting tools/scalpel to be kept in desk draw away from clients. • Clients to be closely supervised while using cutting implements for art projects • All cutting activities to take place on a solid, non-slippery and flat table surface • Hand washing after therapeutic play/work in the sand tray • Encouraging safe use of the sand in the sand tray and keeping it in the tray • Floor around the sand tray to be swept after use	• Kettle to be PAT tested again Sept 2024

Description of site for Forest School activities:

- 5 acre paddocks ○ Fields and woodland area with a shallow brook running through in the winter. The brook is not visible from the paddock and is hidden from clients so not immediately accessible. Clients only allowed into these fenced areas, supervised 1:1.
- Animals
 - Usual country animals of non-dangerous nature are present. Horses, sheep, dogs, guinea pigs, and rabbits are also on site but they have no access to woodland or stream and are contained within their own areas.
- Dogs
 - Facilitators often work with their own dogs in sessions. Owner's are required to clear up after their dogs and each individual dog has been risk assessed.
- Flora and Fauna ○ There is a wide variety of trees and ground flora. Good habitat for birds, insects and mammals. These are dynamically assessed within their season for poison, irritants and allergy potential.
- Access
 - Through a paddock and along a woodland path to a sunken lane. No vehicles are able to access this area. The car park active with public vehicles but no vehicle is able to reach the paddock woodland where we will be predominantly working when not indoors.
- Water: ○ There is a shallow brook in the sunken lane in the winter.

There are three elements to this assessment:

- Benefit - the positive outcomes of the experience / planned activities
- Hazard - the potential for something to cause harm
- Risk - Evaluating these elements allows decisions to be made about managing and taking risks.

The Health & Safety Executive have produced advice and guidance on risk assessment, identifying five logical steps to obtain effective risk assessments:

- Identify the hazards
- Decide who could be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risks arising from the hazards and decide what measures are required to reduce those risks
- Record the findings
- Review the assessment periodically, making revisions as and when necessary

Several types of risk benefit assessment are needed for outdoor play:

- A risk assessment of the natural and non-natural hazards, with an accompanying hand drawn map of the site
- A general risk assessment of experiences the children may choose to undertake on the site e.g. climbing trees, log piles, digging in soil
- Risk assessments of specific individuals taking part in an activity, i.e. if they have any special needs which are felt to need more support than a 1:1 facilitator:client ratio
- New risks identified on visual check
- Dynamic on-going risk assessments during a session

- Covid 19 risk assessment - all clients and staff are required to adhere to guidance outlined in the Covid 19 risk assessment and policy including temperature checks, handwashing and social distancing guidance.

I hold insurance for counselling, eco-therapy and animal-assisted therapy.

Alison Smith Counselling - outdoors and creative therapy for children, young people and adults

Site Assessment for Outdoor Learning and Forest School Activities

SESSION RISKS

Risk	-/+	Hazard	Benefit
Forest school walks, - To include in field, woodland and public footpath areas. - Slips, Trips, Falls. - Interaction with other animals	Medium	- Clients to remain close to facilitator at all times. Facilitator to communicate potential hazards on route. - Only partake in activity if wearing appropriate footwear and clothing. - Offer assistance to Clients with a mobility issue, to assist balance etc. Undertake individual risk assessments for clients as to appropriateness of terrain.	- Encourage clients to make dynamic assessments of the environment. - Communication - Team work - Physical exercise, fine & gross motor skills. - Imaginative play. - Develop Respect for our environment and our impact of our actions within it.
Activities involving sticks, branches and lengths of wood, eg Den building: Scratches, Cuts, puncher wounds, eye injury.	Medium	Clients to follow Forest School rules of, wood handling. Support given where needed by trained staff. Any safety issues dealt with immediately. All accidents to be reported and dealt with immediately, in line with current legislation.	Challenges gross motor skills, balance, cardiovascular, physical strength. Fine motor skills with knot tying. Challenges social skills and negotiation when working as a team or problem solving individually. Use of communication skills and awareness of others.
Using String and rope: Friction burn, sprain, strain	Low	Clients centred activity on different types of useful knots and application ie making dens and tying sticks together. Support and guidance from trained staff where required.	Challenges fine motor skills. Hand eye coordination. Memory recall of learned skills. Challenge to follow stepped instructions.
Allergies or clients existing conditions	Medium	Clients, parent, or guardian to have raised this on the consent/ client information form. All staff to be informed of any known allergies or conditions. Staff to be briefed on action to be taken for identified clients.	Encourage clients to be self aware, knowledgeable and independent in their ability to identify and avoid allergy inducing items, and confidence to inform others of this.
- Missing client; - Client may wander off into neighbouring fields	Medium	Clients to follow forest school rules. Clients to be shown boundaries of land and asked to stay within. Client to stay 1:1 and in sight of facilitator at all times.	Clients to understand importance of following rules and boundaries. Understand the importance of keeping them and others safe. Building trusting relationships and working together.

Risk	-/+	Hazard	Benefit
Animals: Horses, Sheep, Dogs, Guinea pigs; Bites, kicks, spitting, knocking over, scratches	Medium	- Clients to follow rules and instructions when near the animals. Be able to demonstrate understanding, and feedback the safety rules and procedures prior to interacting or handling the animals. 1-1 Staff to client ratio while clients are engaged in an animal activity and full supervision throughout activity.	Challenges the clients to think about communication and feelings. Improves confidence and self esteem by being with the animals and interacting under the animal's terms. Develops clients self control of body and emotions as the animals, in turn, react to these. Builds resilience as animals can be stubborn and won't always do as we want. Problem solving skills developed.

Risk assessment reviewed on 1 2025 September by Managing Director – Alison Smith For next review on 31 August 2026