



Woodland Pathways

Risk Assessment Policy

Date created or revised: 0925

Date of next review: 0926

1. Policy Statement

Woodland Pathways is committed to ensuring a **safe, secure, and supportive environment** for all learners, staff, and visitors.

Risk assessment is central to our practice and underpins:

- Safeguarding
- Health and safety
- Quality of provision
- Inclusive and accessible learning

We recognise that many learners accessing alternative provision present with SEMH needs, vulnerabilities, and complex risk profiles. Therefore, risk assessment is:

Dynamic, individualised, and safeguarding-led

All risk assessment processes are:

- Proportionate to need and activity
- Regularly reviewed
- Transparent to commissioning Local Authorities and schools

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All learners
- All staff, practitioners, and volunteers
- All Woodland Pathways provision:
 - On-site
 - Off-site
 - Outdoor environments
 - Transport
 - Digital/online learning

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour & Relationships Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- First Aid & Medical Policy
- Health & Safety Policy

3. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy is aligned with:

- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)**
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)**
- **SEND Code of Practice (2015)**
- **Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)**
- **Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership guidance**

4. Key Principles

Woodland Pathways operates under the following principles:

- **Safeguarding is paramount**
- Risk is **identified, assessed, and managed proactively**
- Risk assessments are **individualised and context-specific**
- Staff are trained to respond to **changing and dynamic risk**
- Learners are supported to **understand and manage risk safely**
- All risk management is **transparent and accountable to commissioners**

5. Aims and Objectives

Woodland Pathways aims to:

- Identify hazards and risks across all provision
- Reduce risk through effective planning and control measures
- Enable safe participation in all activities
- Support learners to develop **risk awareness and independence**
- Provide commissioners with clear and robust risk management processes

6. Types of Risk Assessments

Woodland Pathways completes the following:

6.1 General Risk Assessments

- Sites, venues, equipment, and daily activities

6.2 Individual (Learner-Specific) Risk Assessments

- SEMH needs
- Behavioural risks
- Safeguarding concerns
- Medical needs
- EHCP requirements

6.3 Off-Site and Community Risk Assessments

- Trips, visits, and community-based sessions
- Public environments

6.4 Outdoor and Bushcraft Risk Assessments

- Terrain and environmental hazards
- Weather conditions
- Use of tools and fire
- Remote location planning

6.5 Lone Working and 1:1 Risk Assessments

- Staff safety
- Safeguarding risks
- Visibility and communication

6.6 Transport Risk Assessments

- Travel arrangements
- Vehicle safety
- Supervision during transport

6.7 Digital Risk Assessments

- Online platforms
- Cyber safety
- Data protection

7. Risk Assessment Process

All risk assessments follow a structured process:

Step 1: Identify Hazards

- What could cause harm?

Step 2: Assess Risk

- Who might be harmed and how?
- Likelihood and severity

Step 3: Implement Control Measures

- What actions reduce risk?
- What support or adjustments are needed?

Step 4: Record Findings

- Document clearly and accurately

Step 5: Review

- Update regularly or following change

8. Risk Rating

Risks are categorised as:

- **Low Risk** – manageable with standard controls
- **Medium Risk** – requires additional monitoring
- **High Risk** – requires immediate control measures or activity modification

9. Dynamic Risk Assessment

All staff are trained to carry out **dynamic risk assessments** in real time.

This is essential for:

- Outdoor learning
- Community environments
- SEMH-led provision

Staff must consider:

- Environmental changes (weather, terrain, public presence)
- Learner behaviour and emotional regulation
- Unexpected hazards

If risk increases:

- Activity must be **paused, adapted, or stopped immediately**

10. Safeguarding and Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is a **core safeguarding tool**.

Staff must:

- Identify safeguarding risks early
- Link risk assessments to safeguarding plans
- Report concerns to the DSL immediately

This includes risks relating to:

- Peer-on-peer harm
- Exploitation
- Self-harm
- Emotional distress

11. Responsibilities

11.1 Provision Lead / DSL

Responsible for:

- Approving risk assessments
- Ensuring compliance with LA expectations
- Monitoring practice and reviewing incidents
- Liaising with commissioners

11.2 Practitioners

Must:

- Complete and follow risk assessments
- Carry out dynamic risk assessments
- Report concerns immediately
- Adapt provision to maintain safety

11.3 Organisation

Woodland Pathways will:

- Provide training and guidance
- Maintain oversight and accountability
- Ensure compliance with statutory guidance

12. Communication and Commissioner Assurance

Woodland Pathways ensures:

- Risk assessments are **shared with commissioners prior to placement**
- Individual risks are discussed collaboratively
- Updates are provided following incidents or changes

13. Emergency Procedures

In the event of risk escalation or incident:

- Ensure immediate safety
- Contact emergency services if required
- Inform DSL immediately
- Notify parents/carers and commissioners
- Record incident and review

14. Monitoring and Review

Risk assessments are reviewed:

- **Annually** (general)
- **Termly** (higher-risk provision)
- **Immediately** following:
 - Incidents
 - Near misses
 - Changes in circumstances

15. Recording and Documentation

All risk assessments must be:

- Clear and accessible
- Regularly updated
- Stored securely
- Available for inspection and commissioner review

16. Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

Woodland Pathways will:

- Monitor incident trends
- Audit risk assessments
- Use feedback to improve practice
- Ensure consistency across provision

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment Template

Activity / Location: _____

Date: _____

Assessed By: _____

Hazard Identification

| Hazard | Who is at Risk | Risk Level (L/M/H) | Control Measures | Residual Risk |
|--------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|
|--------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------|

Emergency Planning

- Nearest hospital: _____
 - Emergency contact: _____
 - Communication method: _____
-

Additional Considerations

- Medical needs
 - Behaviour / SEMH
 - Safeguarding
 - Environmental hazards
 - Lone working
-

Review

- **Review Date:** _____
- **Updated By:** _____

Appendix 2: Dynamic Risk Assessment Prompt

Before and during sessions, staff should ask:

- What has changed?
- Who is at risk right now?
- Is the environment still safe?
- Does the learner need additional support?
- Do I need to adapt or stop the activity?

Key Statement

Woodland Pathways ensures that risk assessment is embedded across all aspects of provision, enabling safe, inclusive, and responsive delivery that meets the expectations of Local Authorities, safeguarding partners, and statutory guidance.

Appendix: Example Risk Assessment Bank

1. 1:1 Session Risk Assessment (SEMH / Alternative Provision)

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Emotional dysregulation | Harm to self/others | Trauma-informed approach, de-escalation strategies, safe space available |
| Lone working | Safeguarding risk | Check-in/out system, approved location, DSL oversight |
| Allegations/misinterpretation | Professional risk | Visible environments, professional boundaries, clear communication |
| Absconding | Safety risk | Clear boundaries, risk assessment, supervision, agreed plan |
| Lack of engagement | Escalation of behaviour | Flexible, learner-led approach |

2. Off-Site / Community Session

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Public interaction | Safeguarding risk | Supervision, appropriate location, staff awareness |
| Traffic / roads | Injury | Road safety briefing, supervision, safe routes |
| Unfamiliar environment | Anxiety / behaviour | Pre-visit planning, clear expectations |
| Loss of learner | Safeguarding risk | Headcounts, boundaries, emergency contact plan |

3. Transporting Learners

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--|
| Road traffic accident | Injury | Licensed driver, insured vehicle, safe driving |
| Behaviour in vehicle | Distraction risk | Clear expectations, seating plan |
| Lone working | Safeguarding risk | Approved transport, risk assessed |
| Breakdown | Safety risk | Emergency contact plan, mobile phone |

4. Indoor Learning Session

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|----------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Slips/trips | Injury | Clear environment, safe layout |
| Behaviour escalation | Harm | De-escalation strategies, supervision |
| Equipment misuse | Injury | Clear instructions, supervision |

5. Digital / Online Learning

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Cyberbullying | Emotional harm | Monitoring, clear rules |
| Inappropriate content | Safeguarding risk | Filters, supervision |
| Data breach | Confidentiality risk | Secure systems, staff training |

Appendix: Outdoor Activity Risk Library

Woodland Pathways – Outdoor & Bushcraft Provision

1. Woodland Environment (General)

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Uneven terrain | Trips/falls | Appropriate footwear, site briefing |
| Weather exposure | Hypothermia/heat | Weather checks, appropriate clothing |
| Natural hazards (branches, plants) | Injury/allergic reaction | Site checks, awareness training |
| Remote location | Delayed response | Emergency plan, communication system |

2. Campfires / Fire Lighting

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|-------------------|--------------------|---|
| Burns | Injury | Fire safety briefing, safe distance (fire circle) |
| Clothing ignition | Serious injury | Appropriate clothing, supervision |
| Smoke inhalation | Respiratory issues | Positioning, awareness |
| Uncontrolled fire | Major risk | Water/fire blanket available, trained staff |

3. Tool Use (Bushcraft – Knives, Saws, Axes)

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cuts/lacerations | Injury | Tool safety training, 1:1 supervision |
| Misuse of tools | Harm to others | Clear rules, designated tool area |
| Dropping tools | Injury | Safe handling procedures |
| Emotional dysregulation | Increased risk | Tool use restricted if unsafe |

4. Tree Climbing

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| Falling | Injury | Height limits, supervision |
| Weak branches | Fall risk | Tree checks by staff |
| Overconfidence | Unsafe behaviour | Clear rules, guidance |

5. Den Building / Natural Play

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|---------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Falling structures | Injury | Safe construction guidance |
| Lifting heavy objects | Strain/injury | Supervision, appropriate materials |
| Conflict between learners | Behaviour risk | Staff support, clear expectations |

6. Water Play / Mud / Wet Environments

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Slips | Injury | Supervision, appropriate footwear |
| Water hazards | Drowning risk (if applicable) | Strict boundaries, supervision |
| Cold exposure | Hypothermia | Time limits, warm clothing |

7. Wildlife and Plants

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Allergic reactions | Medical risk | Medical info known, first aid ready |
| Bites/stings | Injury | Awareness, avoidance |
| Toxic plants | Illness | Identification training |

8. Weather Conditions

| Hazard | Risk | Control Measures |
|---------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Extreme cold | Hypothermia | Clothing checks, warm breaks |
| Heat | Dehydration | Water available, shade |
| Wind | Falling branches | Site assessment |
| Rain | Slips/hypothermia | Adapt activities |

Dynamic Risk Reminder

During all outdoor sessions, staff must ask:

- Has the environment changed?
- Is the learner regulated and safe?
- Are controls still effective?
- Do I need to adapt or stop the activity?