

# Safety First

**A Guide to Health and Safety  
in Early Years**



**Think Early Years,  
Think Eden.**

# Introduction

The safety and well-being of children, staff, and visitors in early years settings is paramount. While it might seem obvious, safeguarding everyone involved is essential for a successful and thriving childcare business.

Health and safety isn't just a legal requirement; it's a cornerstone of good practice. By prioritising safety, you're not only protecting your team and the children in your care but also safeguarding your business. A safe environment boosts staff morale, reduces the risk of costly accidents, and helps to create a positive reputation for your setting.

Neglecting health and safety can have serious consequences. From legal repercussions to loss of staff and increased costs, it's clear that a proactive approach is crucial. Let's explore how to create a safe and secure environment for everyone involved.

## The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)

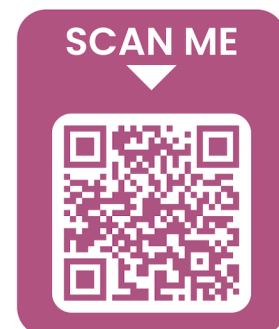
The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA) is the foundation of workplace safety in the UK. It sets out clear responsibilities for employers to protect the health and safety of their staff and others who might be affected by their work.

This law was introduced in response to the alarmingly dangerous conditions prevalent in industries like factories and mines during the 1970s. It aims to prevent accidents and ill health by requiring employers to take every reasonable precaution to safeguard their workforce.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is responsible for enforcing the HSWA, but ultimately, it's the employer's duty to ensure that all health and safety measures are in place and followed. By complying with this essential legislation, you're not only fulfilling your legal obligations but also creating a safe and positive working environment for everyone.



[www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm)



## PURPOSE

The primary goal of health and safety legislation in early years settings is to create a secure and nurturing environment for everyone involved. Including:



- **Staff safety:** Ensure staff well-being while working.
- **Child safety:** Prevent accidents and injuries during activities.
- **Safe substances:** Manage storage and use of hazardous cleaning materials.
- **Clean air:** Minimize harmful emissions.



Early years providers have a legal and moral duty to protect the safety and well-being of both children and staff. Everyone in the setting, from management to childcare practitioners, plays a vital role in ensuring this happens.

To create a truly safe environment, it's essential that all staff members are committed to health and safety. By working together as a team, we can identify and manage risks effectively, protecting both those in our care and ourselves.

## MEETING THE EYFS WELFARE REQUIREMENTS

The way to ensure your setting meets EYFS welfare standards is by having clear policies and procedures in place. These guidelines will help you maintain a safe and healthy environment for everyone involved.

The EYFS requires that:



- Your nursery is clean and well-maintained, with equipment in good working order. You should also be familiar with health and safety laws, including hygiene regulations, and make sure your staff are up-to-date with these.



- You have a comprehensive health and safety policy that outlines how to identify, report, and address accidents, potential hazards, and faulty equipment. This includes conducting regular risk assessments.

## RISK ASSESSMENTS

Early years settings must regularly assess potential risks to identify and address safety concerns. This involves carefully examining the environment to pinpoint hazards and decide how to prevent harm. It's essential to put these safety measures into practice and keep them updated as needed.

**Good care** is centred around the individual, and this includes managing potential risks. Every child deserves the opportunity to be as independent as possible, regardless of abilities. Rather than focusing on limitations, risk assessment should highlight what can be achieved.



**Our apprentices** learn how to conduct thorough risk assessments as part of their training. This essential skill is crucial for creating safe and stimulating environments where children can thrive. By empowering your team with this knowledge, you can foster a culture of positive risk-taking and child-centred practice.

**At Eden Training Solutions**, we're committed to developing highly skilled early years professionals. Our apprentices gain practical experience and in-depth knowledge, including risk assessment, to excel in their roles.



# Here's a risk assessment template to get you started:

## GENERAL SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Location:

Signature:

Risk Assessment:

Date:

DESCRIPTION	HAZARD	RISK	CONTROL	FREQUENCY*	RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTROL	COMMENTS
<i>Wet floor near toilets</i>	<i>Danger of slipping and falling</i>	<i>High to medium risk of injury to children and adults</i>	<i>Mop floor and place warning sign for wet floor</i>	<i>Frequently during the day</i>	<i>All staff to ensure dry and safe floors if problem seen</i>	<i>Generally good control, if all staff follow procedures and their individual responsibilities for Health and Safety</i>
<i>Toys left out on floor after a play activity</i>						
<i>Hot water &amp; sharp objects in kitchen area</i>						
<i>Untidy layout of room with obstructed hallways</i>						

# WHAT IS A 'HAZARD'?

While early years settings have strict regulations to protect children, potential hazards can still arise. It's essential to identify these risks when conducting a risk assessment to ensure children's safety and well-being while maximizing their learning opportunities.

## Common hazards and risks include:

Lifting,  
carrying and  
moving children  
and objects

Working at low  
levels (on floor  
or on children's  
furniture)

Slips, trips and  
falls; especially  
slippery wet  
floors.

Standing on  
chairs and  
tables to put  
artwork up

Communicable  
diseases

## Additional hazards for children include:

Cutting  
themselves

Burning  
themselves

Fire

Food  
poisoning

Hygiene

Broken  
Equipment

# THE LEGISLATION ITSELF

## Health & Safety Act 1974

Ensure the health, safety, and well-being of all staff and children.

- Maintain buildings in good condition.
- Keep the environment clean.
- Use equipment safely.
- Follow safe working practices.
- Have a written safety policy.

## COSHH Regulations

The establishment must identify and manage the risks associated with substances that could harm health, taking appropriate control measures.

## RIDDOR 1995

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations

Serious incidents like deaths, major injuries, or prolonged absences must be reported to the relevant authorities. This includes accidents that almost happened, as well as certain illnesses. Reports must be made in writing using a specific form, and in the case of severe incidents, an immediate phone call is required.

## Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage 2014

Safety and suitability of premises, environment and equipment

Early years settings must ensure that the physical environment is safe and suitable for the children they care for. This includes providing adequate indoor and outdoor space that supports the range of activities provided.

Additionally, providers must have comprehensive emergency plans in place to protect the safety of children, staff, and visitors in the event of a fire or other crisis. Essential fire safety equipment should be readily available and maintained.

## Food Safety Act 1990

Food safety is crucial in early years settings: all food served must meet strict hygiene standards, and staff responsible for food preparation should be properly trained in food safety practices.

## Reporting Injuries

Reporting of minor injuries vs. serious injuries

You should have a dedicated health and safety folder containing essential documents: this should include a copy of the legislation table for quick reference and additional blank risk assessment forms for future use.

## **REPORTING INJURIES**

Minor accidents like bumps and scrapes are a common part of early childhood. In most cases, providing first aid, recording the incident, and informing parents is sufficient. However, serious injuries require immediate attention. If a child suffers a serious injury while in your care, you must notify Ofsted within 14 days. For detailed guidance on reporting accidents and injuries, visit the government website.

[www.gov.uk/guidance/childcare-reporting-childrens-accidents-and-injuries](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/childcare-reporting-childrens-accidents-and-injuries)

## **WHEN YOU SHOULD REPORT AN INJURY TO OFSTED**

As detailed in the *Early years Inspection Handbook* childcare providers must notify Ofsted if a child in their care suffers a 'serious injury'. Ofsted officially describes the following as serious injuries:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif)

**Fracture/ Broken Bones**

**Loss of consciousness**

**Pain that's not relieved by simple painkillers**

**Acute confused state**

**Major dislocation of the shoulder, hip, knee, elbow or spine**

**Unconsciousness or medical treatment received as a result of inhaling, ingesting or absorbing harmful substances through the skin**

**Breathing difficulties or persistent, severe chest pain**

**Amputation**

**Temporary or permanent loss of sight**

**Eye injury from chemical or hot metal burns**

**Unconsciousness due to asphyxia or exposure to harmful substances, toxins, infected material or biological agents**

**Injury from electric shock, electrical burn or hypothermia resulting in unconsciousness, or requiring resuscitation or hospitalisation for more than 24 hours**



# REPORTING ACCIDENTS TO OFSTED

To report an accident, call Ofsted on 0300 123 1231 or complete the online 'Notification of Early Years Provision Incident' form on the UK Gov website.



## MANAGING INFECTION CONTROL

It's important to have a clear plan for handling sick children. Discuss your illness policy with parents and include procedures for excluding children with contagious illnesses. If a child becomes unwell, know how to contact their parents or emergency contact. Also, excluding children with certain illnesses helps protect everyone's health.



[www.gov.uk/guidance/  
report-a-serious-childcare-incident](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-a-serious-childcare-incident)

## PREVENTING AND CONTROLLING INFECTIONS

Preventing the spread of germs in nurseries is essential for young children's health. As their immune systems are still developing and they have close contact with others, infections can spread quickly. Fortunately, there are effective strategies to keep children healthy, including:

Recommending children and staff receive their routine immunisations

Implementing effective hygiene procedure



Excluding infectious children and adults when appropriate

Ensuring prompt and appropriate treatment of illness

# A 'SAFETY-CONSCIOUS CULTURE'

Creating a safe and healthy environment for children requires a collaborative effort from everyone involved in the setting. By communicating and working together, employers and employees can effectively share responsibilities and establish a strong foundation for safety.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommends a structured four-step approach to successfully manage health and safety:

## 1. Plan

- Identify what you want to achieve
- Involve your staff in the plan
- Use risk assessment to prioritise what needs to be done first

## 3. Check

- Is your plan working in reality?
- What systems are in place to confirm that this is happening?
- Is your plan up to date – are there any changes, e.g., law, practice, premises, that you need to consider?

## 2. Do

- Implement your plan
- Drive the plan with strong, effective leadership and management
- Provide ongoing training and development
- Encourage practitioners' participation and engagement
- Ensure understanding and ownership of responsibility

## 4. Act

- Regularly review and improve safety measures.
- Keep your safety plans up-to-date.
- Learn from accidents and near misses.
- Use review findings to improve safety and future plans.



## **GETTING EVERYONE INVOLVED**

A successful health and safety system involves everyone, not just a designated officer. It's essential to create a safety-conscious culture where all staff are actively involved in identifying and managing risks. Building a shared commitment to safety from the very beginning is crucial for long-term success.

Here are some ways in which you can get your staff on board with health and safety:



- Maintain open and effective communication with the team, ensuring everyone is informed about health and safety updates and developments.



- Prioritize ongoing training and development to equip staff with the latest knowledge and skills to comply with changing legislation in the health and safety field.



- Invest in accessible and cost-effective online CPD training courses to enhance staff expertise and refresh existing health and safety knowledge.



- Create a visually engaging learning environment by displaying informative posters on essential topics like handwashing and infection control.



- Establish a well-organized system for storing and accessing important documents such as risk assessments and injury reports to streamline processes and ensure efficiency.



- Foster a proactive safety culture by encouraging staff to actively identify potential hazards through engaging activities and games.

**Under Health & Safety legislation employers are legally required to provide adequate staff training.**

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# Eden Training Solutions

## At Eden, we offer the following:

- **Early Years Practitioner**  
(Level 2)
- **Early Years Educator**  
(Level 3)
- **Advanced  
Childcare Practice  
& Management**  
(Level 4)
- **Early Years Lead  
Practitioner**  
(Level 5)
- **Teaching Assistant**  
(Level 3)
- **Learning &  
Skills Teacher**  
(Level 5)



**PAEDIATRIC  
FIRST AID**



**CHILD'S  
DEVELOPING  
MIND**



**SENCo**

*(complimentary with an Eden Apprenticeship)*