**Risk Assessment and Planning**

1. **Introduction**

Risk can be broadly defined as 'the probability that an event will occur with beneficial or harmful consequences'.

Risk-sensible not risk-averse practices should be followed when completing any risk assessment so a realistic and proportionate approach to risk is in place which enables children and young people to grow and learn.

Risk assessments are an important part of Children's Social Care; they should be in place to support carers and the child or young person in relation to any identified risks.

There are still times when others need to intervene and risks are unacceptable and should be avoided.

Risk assessment are carried out by all agencies involved in Children's Social Care and the child's social worker should provide foster carers/residential staff with all up-to-date risk assessments in relation to the child or young person they support. Carers should be consulted in the formulation of risk assessments and should use and follow the risk assessment written for them or the child placed.

1. **Purpose of Risk Assessment**

The purpose of any risk assessment should be to reduce harm or the risk of harm and evidence that these risks are now minimised. It should consider all the risks as well as control measures that need to be in place; it should be fit for purpose and consider every issue relevant.

Risk assessments should be completed in relation to premises, equipment used for the child such as oxygen use in the household, animal ownership, risks from other people and activities such as holidays.

1. **Levels of Risk and Control Measures**

**Risks** can be seen as the following:

* **Low** - where something may be likely but the consequences are likely not to have a huge impact;
* **Moderate** - where the consequences may be high but specialist support or skills can mitigate the risk;
* **High** - where the risk cannot be mitigated.

**Control measures take the form of Advice, Protect and Avoid.**

* **Advice** - where skills, appropriate training for foster carers/residential staff, supervision and observation can reduce the risks;
* **Protect** - where specific equipment or specialist expertise can support the situation such as hoists, fire doors, advice in relation to moving and handling, signage;
* **Avoid** - where the risk cannot be mitigated by advice and protection.

All risk assessment should state what the risk is and how it will be safely managed.

All risk assessments should be signed and dated and reviewed when situations change.

1. **Risk Assessing Planning**

Looked after children and young people may have experienced a number of events in their lives which may impact on the level and type of care they require to keep themselves and others safe.

Possession of a risk assessment does not guarantee safety and cannot prevent unpredictable situations. However a risk assessment can be a useful tool to help prevent a situation occurring. Foster carers/residential care staff should always seek advice around dangerous behaviours and should not just hope for the best.

See also: [**Positive Relationships and Behaviour Management Procedure**](https://bradfordchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_behav_man.html).

**All risks should be known before placing a child or young person.**

When social workers complete a Placement Referral form this will include a risk assessment. The risk assessment will inform the placement matching process and ensure that any risks posed are known and can be managed by the foster carer/Home.

The risk assessment should distinguish between fact and opinion. The risk and frequency of risk should be recorded and how this should be managed in different environments. All known vulnerabilities should be recorded for the child and set out any actions to address these risks. The foster carer/Home should feel they can provide the child with appropriate and safe care.

* 1. **Safer Caring Plan**

Each child/young should have an individualised Safer Carer Plan and this should be regularly reviewed. The Safer Carer Plan should include agreed measures that can be put in place to manage and reduce risk.

The child/young person should also be involved in this assessment. The child or young person's age and level of understanding and their attitude to risks should also be considered as part of the risk assessment.

See also: [**Personal Care and Relationships Procedure**](https://bradfordchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_pers_care_rel.html).

* 1. **Health and Safety Risk Assessment**

A health and safety risk assessment should be completed in relation to the placement in the residential/foster home.

See: [**Health and Safety Procedure**](https://bradfordchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_health_safety.html).

* 1. **Other Risks**

Risks may come from a variety of sources and there may be external factors to the immediate placement (environment, peer relationships, sexual exploitation, county lines). The risk assessment should be child focussed and identify how the child/young person can be supported in their development.

1. **Monitoring and Reviewing the Risk Assessment**

The level of risk may change over time and the regular review of risk should take place noting how risk has been successfully managed. Foster carers/residential staff will make an active contribution to the risk assessment based on their experience of caring for the child/young person.

Whilst it is important to consider risks that may have been previously identified, caution should be taken in labelling children/young people and the level of current risk should be continuously assessed.

Changes in risk should be considered as part of on-going work with the child/young person such as in supervision; as part of risk management meetings; and as part of looked after child reviews.

The placement plan should consider the risks and how this will be managed for both planned and unplanned placements. Intervention may be necessary by others to keep the child or young person safe.

Training around how to complete a risk assessment should be in place for carers/ staff to aid them in considering how risks and control measures should be addressed.

If a child/young person moves to another placement the risk assessment should follow them and be updated as appropriate.