

RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES PLAYGROUPS

Many of our churches organise playgroups for the children of their congregation and also for the wider community. Playgroups can present great opportunities for parents to develop relationships as well as providing a great environment for children to learn and develop. Playgroups typically encourage parent participation but not always.

As with any activity involving children, we have a duty to keep children safe while they are participating in a playgroup.

This checklist addresses playgroups held in church owned premises and is intended to assist in the identification of risks that might compromise child safety. Risk Management will identify ways of minimising the impact of those risks to help keep our children safe.

Where your playgroup is held in 3rd party owned premises (e.g. a private home or a community hall) you will need to ensure that appropriate insurance arrangements are in place.

Premises / Venue

- Ensure that the activity is adequately insured, including public liability and volunteer insurance. Note that if the activity is an officially sanctioned church activity then these covers already exist.
- Make sure the venue is cleaned and checked for hazards (including choking hazards) prior to any session.
- Does the venue have adequate heating and cooling?
- Confirm that there is sufficient space for the number of people attending, taking into account size of the venue, ages of children and numbers of adults and children attending.
- Create separate spaces for baby changing and parking prams.
- Are there adequate toileting / potty facilities? For children who are toilet trained this could mean use of low wall toilets to help protect their safety.
- Secure chemicals in locked containers.
- Are toys and activities appropriate to the ages of children present?
- Confirm the venue has adequate waste disposal facilities (for nappies, kitchen waste etc.).
- Tag and test all electrical equipment at the correct test intervals.
- Insert protective plugs into power points to protect curious young fingers
- Prior to introduction of any animals to the group, ensure that all children are not going to be adversely impacted (e.g. allergic reaction).

Outside play

- Check outside play areas daily for hazards. Ensure that that equipment cannot trap hands, limbs or fingers.

The information provided is of a general nature only and may not identify all matters that need to be included in the design of effective controls for the subject area. Professional advice should be obtained on individual circumstances.

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- Is play equipment checked to ensure that it is still in effective working order?
- Clean play equipment at the end of each day.
- Identify and remove obvious choking hazards.
- Ensure pathways are clear of any slip or trip hazards.
- Are play areas swept, raked and tidied prior to use?
- Establish SunSmart guidelines (hats, sunscreen etc.).
- Make sure outside play areas are fenced to prevent children from straying and/or unauthorised people from entering the venue.
- Have trees been examined by an arborist to ensure any hazards are identified and managed?

Car Parking

- Make sure that the car park is free from obvious hazards
- Does the car park have clearly separated car and pedestrian areas?

Leaders /Parents

- Have leaders the appropriate experience / training to be leading the group?
- Ensure participants comply with state based “working with children” regulation.

Off-Site Activities

- Prior to undertaking any off-site visits, undertake detailed Activity Risk Assessments (refer BIS website for details) to ensure all additional risks are identified and managed. For example, water hazards.
- Ensure parents have given explicit permission to participate in any off-site visits.

Security

- Secure external doors to prevent straying of children.
- Establish protocols to ensure all persons entering the premises are identified and accompanied, where appropriate (e.g. contractors).

Food

- Ensure there are adequate food storage facilities (cupboards, fridges).
- Clean kitchen facilities prior to use
- Instruct preparers of food in how to operate safely, including:
 - hand washing,
 - fridge temperature control,
 - washing of dishes and utensils,
 - avoidance of burns,
 - how to use equipment,
 - use of a colour system for cloths/sponges.

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- Provide guidelines about the types of food appropriate for the group, including catering for allergies.
- Minimise the possibility of choking
- Separately secure cleaning materials away from food and food preparation areas.

Management of Playgroups

- Is there a formal application process for the playgroup that includes provision of contact details and information about medical conditions that might need to be catered for?
- Do you have established communications protocols for contacting parents routinely or in the event of an emergency?
- Record details of all incidents or injuries, while still fresh in the minds of those involved (this may help determine the outcome of later insurance claims). This could include taking photos subject to the following comments.
- Establish policies /procedures in relation to:
 - photographing children
 - conflict resolution
 - complaints
 - privacy

Emergencies

- Develop an emergency action plan (include emergency phone numbers).
- Ask all families to record all attendees in an attendance book so that in an emergency all can be accounted for.
- Ensure that emergency procedures include a fire evacuation plan. The plan should be practiced.

Medical

- Develop protocols on how to deal with infections, including guidelines on the periods of exclusion for persons with specific infections (for example, for a child with measles, when can they return to the playgroup?).
- Establish who is responsible for managing medical conditions of children attending the playgroup, e.g. asthma, food allergies. This will most likely be the responsibility of attending parents but responsibility needs to be clearly established in writing.
- Have you established protocols for dealing with bodily fluids?
- Do you have guidelines on effective hand washing?
- Do you have a first aid kit and adults who are trained in the application of first aid, including responding to allergic reactions?