

Active Learning

Category: Early Years

Risk Management and Legal Implications

Failure to manage risk may impact on the delivery of Service objectives and the outcomes achieved by Service users. Education and Children’s Services aim to mitigate the implications by ongoing management and review of risk in all elements of work activity.

The production of this document is one way in which we aim to reduce our exposure to risk. By providing staff with information on good practice, making reference to other guidance that is available across the Council and providing clarity on how we should do things, we can ensure that the management of risk is intrinsic to what we do.

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Active Learning

The European Commission working group on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) describes the image of each child as:

'a unique and a competent and active learner whose potential needs to be encouraged and supported. Each child is a curious, capable, and intelligent individual. The child is a co-creator of knowledge who needs and wants interaction with other children and adults. As citizens children have their own rights which includes early education and care'.

(European Commission, 2014)

'The defining feature of being a young active learner is the need to widen experiences and learning in all areas of development. The important role for the practitioner is to determine what the young child could learn through their own interests, balanced with learning across the areas of the curriculum. Supporting this in a quality learning environment with high quality interactions will enable the young child to support and extend their learning, deepen thinking, and make progress'.

(Realising the Ambition: Being Me)

Active Learning allows children to be more involved in decision making using their ideas to find out what they would like to learn and taking these ideas forward. This allows children to take greater responsibility for their own learning rather than dictating what they should learn. As a result, children become more fully engaged in their learning. Active Learning is learning which engages and challenges children's thinking using real life and imaginary situations. It takes full advantage of the opportunities for learning presented by:

- spontaneous play
- planned purposeful play
- investigating and exploring
- events and life experiences
- focused learning supported, when necessary, through sensitive intervention to support or extend learning.

Active learning encompasses indoor and outdoor learning, and all areas of the curriculum can be enriched or developed through play.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that CfE will continue to encourage and support developmentally appropriate early years pedagogy across the early level, promoting active learning which engages and challenges children's thinking using real-life and imaginary situations and making effective use of play-based learning'.

"By identifying more closely what we want children to learn and how best children learn we can enhance the range of learning opportunities and try to ensure that, whatever setting children attend, they have an equal access to broad and balanced learning experiences."

(A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning & Childcare in Scotland)



Children learn and develop at different rates personal to themselves. They are continually trying to make sense of the world around them. Children learn best when they are active, busy learners. It could be said that they are learning all of the time from all of their experiences. In the book *Children's Rights and Early Education* (1996), Nutbrown talks about the curriculum in this way.

"What makes working with young children so exciting is the way the anticipated possibilities planned and provided for by the educator are used by individual and groups of children in spontaneous and dynamic ways. The people, children, parents, and educators, who share the experiences construct the curriculum."
(Realising the Ambition: Being Me)

We understand that play is something that a child can engage in best. A child's play has a purpose and can be a step towards the learning and understanding of valuable knowledge and skills. It can help the child fit into the world physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially and grow to be a happy, healthy and competent individual.

"Children exhibit many traits in their play, particularly if adult providers are clear in their own minds what different opportunities actually provide for children in terms of learning.

- To play effectively, children need:
- playmates, play spaces or areas, play materials, play time, play to be valued by those around them.
- Opportunities to play in pairs, in small groups, alone, alongside others, with adults.
- Time for exploring, through language, what they have done and how they can describe the experience.
- Time to follow through what they begin (so often time is not made for this and much valuable work is left unfinished and uncherished).
- Experiences to broaden and deepen what they know already and what they can already do.
- Stimulation and encouragement to do and learn more: planned and spontaneous play opportunities."

(Janet Moyles, *Just Playing*)

We aim to provide children with a rich and stimulating learning environment, where playing and learning go hand and hand. The environment should be an inclusive one catering for the needs of all children. A varied selection of materials and activities will be provided in response to children's interests and needs, throughout the day, using both indoor and outdoor activities.

Toys and activities are not just for fun: most toys and materials help to encourage children's development in different areas so that even when children seem to be 'just playing', they are learning at the same time. All the materials and activities provided in nursery have been planned to cover certain areas of a child's development. During the structured day the staff interact with all the activities to encourage the planned learning outcome.



Staff continually observe the children and use the information gained to assess each child's development and to plan next steps for all children.

"If we accept that for young children to take part and enjoy their world, they need to acquire a wide range of knowledge, understanding and skills. If we believe that a young child's concern is to be an active busy learner, trying to make sense of the world around them to take part and enjoy it, we can say they are learning all the time from all their experiences."

(Realising the Ambition – Being Me)