

Risk in Play: and the Benefits!

Play in a Pod supports the growing trend in **risk/benefit analysis** when it comes to assessing play and playgrounds. In recent years a number of scholars, such as Tim Gill and Hugh Cunningham, have researched the possibility that in a society where risk aversion is ever growing there may well be negative implications of this growth that are being overlooked. It is not the intention to put our children and young people at *uncontrollable* risk or even in harms way. It is simply to ask previous generations to consider how the elements of risk contained within their own childhood helped shape them in positive ways also, as opposed to simply negative. If risk is presented to a child in a **controlled environment**, but one that still allows for that child to express **autonomy** and **choice**, we will hopefully be shaping **confident individuals** and **responsible citizens** who are neither overly fearful nor oblivious to risk/harm.

'Risk in Play is an often misunderstood concept, we do not want children to risk their lives and limbs, but *playgrounds that offer no excitement at all may lead to children gaining that excitement illicitly.*' (Londonplay)



'Since the 1970s, concerns about playground safety have led safety agencies, consumer groups and the media to call for ever greater use of safety measures. Yet playing on playgrounds has for decades been statistically at least as safe as many other sport and leisure activities.' (TG Summary P2)



Risk/benefit assessment template

Activity	Possible result/ Severity	Likelihood	Calculation of risk	Reasonable/ Practical steps available to avoid or reduce problem	Benefit of allowing activity	Decision (Note any restriction/ exclusion)
EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE	EXAMPLE
			Severity x likelihood = calculated risk. If above, say, 10 then minus the benefit.		Benefit on a scale of 1-5 from 'children easily bored' to 'developing and learning core skills and capacities'	

Key for benefit:

1. Children easily bored
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
5. Developing and learning core skills and capacities.

In support of your own judgement you will want to consult: risk records, experience of how children use materials, who/ how many people are supervising etc.

Value Based Risk Assessment

Some things to consider in a value based risk assessment:

1. What capacities and competencies do we want children to develop?
2. What experiences do we believe good play opportunities should prompt and allow?
3. What risks must we allow or create to enable children to gain access to the potential benefits of play?

Hazards

1. Which hazards need to be modified or removed?
2. Which hazards might be acceptable or desirable because they create opportunities for children and young people to gain access to potential benefits?
3. What hazards need to be created to enhance children and young people opportunities to gain access to potential benefits?
4. What is to be done about identified hazards, if anything?