



Risk Benefit Assessment

Subject of Risk Assessment:	Fires and Cooking on Fires
Description of activities, location and equipment	<p>Lighting, maintaining and putting out of small, contained fires. All our fires are contained – that is in some form of (purpose built or re-purposed) container or fireplace. Cooking of simple meals and heating of water. This is undertaken on our woodland site or in the Community Centre garden.</p> <p>Children and adults are engaged with all aspects of the fire, from collection of tinder and fuel, to preparation, ignition, maintaining and putting out of fire. Children and adults are engaged with all aspects of the food cooking, from preparation to heating/cooking, serving and eating.</p>
Our approach to risk	<p>Gargunnock Playgroup recognises that all risks cannot be reduced to nil, therefore this risk assessment prioritises the significant risks. Significant risks are those which pose risk of serious injury, chronic injury, disability or death, or risks that are overly common in interrupting normal work and play. For all activities, our staff will dynamically assesses risks and put in place control measures and record as required, but always within agreed and recorded RBAs. Concerns, changes in risk management practice or minor injuries that are deemed by staff to be significant should be reported to the playgroup committee.</p> <p>This RBA should be read in conjunction with Gargunnock Playgroup’s Health and Safety Policy, other relevant Risk Benefit Assessments and our Outdoor Play Policy.</p>
Benefits	<p>Enjoyment, excitement and spiritual reflection.</p> <p>In managing a fire, participants will learn risk management, responsibility and organisation.</p> <p>In using fire as a (cooking) tool, children learn to respect it and use it wisely.</p> <p>Participants will learn simple science lessons (fire triangle) including the suitability of materials to ignite and keep a fire going, how to balance the right amount of oxygen and heat loss.</p> <p>Participants will also learn about simple food preparation, meals and food types. They will also learn food hygiene basics, in a challenging practical environment.</p> <p>Putting a fire out, clearing up and taking items away will teach environmental responsibility and personal respect.</p> <p>In preparing, cooking and eating simple foods on an open fire groups will connect with food production, and enjoy social time.</p> <p>Simple meals will also show variety of food types available, and signpost healthy food choices.</p>

Who will be at risk

Children
Parents
Staff
Members of the public

Local factors affecting risks or controls

Area used for recreation, dog walking
Abilities and experience of attending children
Weather, particularly dry weather, may increase risk of fire spreading
Nearby stream provides additional source of water

Potential Hazards:

Precautions and Controls used to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring or the severity of the risk

***All staff members hold a current first aid qualification and a first aid kit is always available.**

* Burns or scalds from the sparks or items placed on the fire or recently removed from the fire (e.g. saucepans or sticks).

Good group control and suitable activities (i.e. not running around) are the foundation of our fire safety.

Hair, long clothing or hats should be kept away from flames, especially when tending a fire.

Scalds from boiling water, liquids or fats used in cooking, following a spill or steam escape.

Fires should be in containers, restricting sizes of fire, and allowing stable placing of pans and cooking implements.

Group member falling into fire

Areas around fires should be marked and restricted according to group size. Seating should be the normal posture around a fire, unless working on or with it, in which case a 'safe position' for working can be adopted, again suitable to the groups. Implements, such as sticks will be used where appropriate to group to keep further back from fire when cooking or heating.

Fires should always be put out before leaving the site, and sufficient water should be carried or available in the event of having to put a fire out suddenly. Staff should be confident that the fire has not spread to ground, and sand, rocks or logs may be used to space containers off the floor if needed on peaty or rooted soils.

Hot cooking items should be kept within the marked fire area. Cooking fats should be used with care.

Hot water should be poured carefully, with hands kept away from cups or other containers. Bungs or whistles should not be used with any Kelly/Ghillie/Storm kettles, or any other vessel used for heating water. It will not be appropriate to boil water with some groups, merely heat it.

A set of gloves (or similar) will be carried with fire resources to facilitate lifting hot items.

Fire specific first aid kit available

* Uncontrollable spread of fire. Great awareness of atmospheric and environmental conditions, such as dry summer, high winds or peat based soils, and choosing when not to have a fire. Use of sand base, rocks or similar to be considered. Water available (ported and from adjacent burn)

* Toxins or poisons contained in scavenged food or rubbed off onto consumed food
Illness from dirty water or unclean containers
Food poisoning or illness from poorly prepared food.

Staff to apply food hygiene controls in line with Food Standards Agency guidance and good practice outdoors. This will include:

- hand and personal hygiene of a good standard;
- clean implements and containers,
- working on containers or chopping boards to prevent contamination;
- clear working areas with no walking through, covering food before, during and after cooking when not being consumed
- ensuring all products are fresh and consideration given to preserving or chilling them on hot days.
- All foods will be in-date and stored appropriately to prevent spoiling or contamination, both long term and when outside.
- Simple clean up measures to prevent re-use of implements or bowls where needed
- Good washing up technique, likely back in a kitchen or using dishwasher.

* Cuts from knife use when preparing food.

Food preparation also involves use of knives, both sharp and cutlery. All implements will be managed well, with a limited number available and good storage so that knives are not left lying around. Staff will make judgements as to the competence of the group cooking, and employ suitable group management or reduced tasks as appropriate.

Precedents and Comparisons

The Forest School Association has good protocols and proven history of using fire with a wide variety of groups, including pre-school. It also asserts qualifications are not needed.

The Play Safety Forum highlights that fire is a play tool and learning tool, in their publication 'Managing Risk in Play Provision'.

Education Scotland highlights fire as a suitable context for learning many things, and they have advice and videos on the subject.

Organisations such as Grounds for Learning and Learning Through Landscapes have for many years used fire in schools, rural and urban settings with children as a learning tool.

We have used information from

Grounds for Learning (risk benefit assessments)

Education Scotland (information and videos - eg Fire as a Context for Learning, Conversations about Learning for Sustainability)

Play Safety Forum (Managing Risk in Play Provision)

The Scottish Government (Better Eating, Better Learning)

Outdoor and Woodland Learning (Fire as a Learning Tool)

Forest Schools Scotland - an Evaluation

to inform our assessment process

Judgement

Fire does have some challenges, due to small incidents having potentially unacceptable consequences. However, good group management and vigilance can reduce the likelihood of these risks to an acceptable level.

Cooking on an open fire requires good skills and responsibility, and can be a life-long memory and skill.

The positive benefits outweigh the serious risks, in light of reduced likelihood.

