Kate Bowman Openshaw, Anna Cox & Branches Out CIC: January 2022
Updated: Sept 2026
Review date: Sept 2027

Health and Safety Policy

Underpinning
We recognise our legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff, children and other persons who might be affected by our activities.

Forest School includes elements of risky play and risky activities. It is the policy of Branches Out CIC to observe and manage these risks in an appropriate way, and to empower participants to complete their own risk assessments around activities. This leads for good understanding of risk for children and young people and allows people to develop in their confidence and self-esteem.

At least one Branches Out CIC member of staff on site should hold an outdoor, paediatric first aid qualification, and should be confident in the application of first aid in an emergency. A first aid kit, medical information, emergency contact details and an accident and emergency procedure should be always accessible on site.

Risk Assessments
This health and safety policy goes hand in hand with our **Risk Assessment Policy**. Risk assessments are completed on first visit to a new site.

Risk assessments identify any existing risks, identify who might be harmed by the risk and what injuries may occur, and identify any actions that can be undertaken to reduce these risks and impacts. This can be put into an action plan the ensure safety is acted upon regularly. Risk assessments are updated once a year, or more regularly if incidents occur which could have been prevented (e.g. near misses).

In the accident & incident file, we record the date and time of the incident, nature of the event, who was affected, what was done about it- or if it was reported to the police, and if so crime number. Any follow up, or insurance claim made, should also be recorded.

Branches Out CIC staff should complete an initial risk assessment. Staff can also create a 'dynamic' risk assessment, which is undertaken at the time of the activity and may change depending on the group's capabilities, leading to variety in teaching methods or activity provision.

Parental Consent
Parents and carers are asked to fill in a parental consent form before their child attends a session. This will include details of any known medical conditions, medications, or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) of a child. The parents will need to give permission for the child to take part in the session and have emergency medical treatment administered if necessary. This consent form will also detail the emergency contact details of the parents and carers, and permission to take and use photographs of the child.

Insurance
Branches Out CIC is insured to provide Forest School activities through a specialist insurance company, Birnbeck, Policy number: SALSALIA/J246208/0332/22.

Staff Training
Staff are responsible for keeping up to date with health and safety qualifications and training, such as Outdoor & Paediatric first aid, basic food hygiene and a current DBS certificate.

Employer Legislation
We ask that whilst at work ALL employees take reasonable care of the health of themselves and others in the workplace (this includes children, colleagues, volunteers and students etc.).

In addition employees must:

- Cooperate on health and safety matters.
- Not carry out any tasks that may have an effect on their health or safety.
- Report any health and safety concerns and incidents and fill out a 'risk identified' form.
- Participate in training as required.

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 attempts to provide a comprehensive system of law to cover the health and safety of people at work and it is a criminal offence not to comply with its provision.

Employers have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees by:

- Assessing all risks.
- Ensuring emergency procedures are in place.
- Providing adequate sanitary and washing facilities.
- Ensuring that all equipment is safe and in good working order.
- Providing adequate training on substances that may damage health.
- Providing protective clothing.

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR)

- Any serious injury to a child, parent, volunteer or visitor or where there is a death of a child, or adult on the premises we make a report to the local office of the Heath and Safety Executive using the format for the Reporting of injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences. Ofsted will also be notified where necessary.

Safety Procedures:

Tool use

- Tool use should only be led by a suitably qualified and trained member of staff.
- Tools should be kept in a lockable container and returned to the container when not in use.
- Tools should be used in a designated "tool area" to avoid incidents.
- Children and adults should be taught how to use tools safely and supervised when doing so if necessary.
- Knives and other tools should be regularly safety checked for damage and cleanliness. Blades can also be sharpened to promote accuracy with the knife.
- A first aid kit is available on site if required.

Fires and cooking

- Fire starting equipment should be kept in a lockable container and returned to the container when not in use.
- A fire trained member of staff should be next to the fire at all times when it is lit.
- Children and adults should be taught how to light and extinguish fires safely and be supervised when doing so if necessary.
- Fires should take place in a designated "fire area", and a perimeter should be established for safety
- A first aid kit and burns kit is available on site if required.

Tree climbing

- Participants should only climb as high as they feel safe to do so
- We will not lift participants in or out of trees, as if you lift a child up they may not know how to get down safely
- Participants will be encouraged to clear a landing zone (of debris, and people) before they climb, and to inspect the tree for any weakened branches
- Participants can be instructed on safe climbing procedure (e.g. 3 points of contact) if necessary
- A first aid kit and burns kit is available on site if required.

Lone working

- It may be necessary for a staff member to work alone in a remote location
- Always carry a mobile phone and let someone know where you are and what your plan for the day is
- Have a first aid kit nearby and follow emergency procedures
- Avoid taking unnecessary risks whilst working alone
- Leave site immediately or find a suitable safe place to refuge if feeling threatened by another person. Call 999 if required.

Adverse Weather

The safety and wellbeing of children and staff is the priority. The **Met Office forecast and weather warnings** will be checked before each Forest School session and conditions monitored throughout the session.

Forest School may be **cancelled** where:

- **High winds:** forecast wind gusts exceed **40 mph**.
- **Extreme heat**: forecast temperature exceeds **35°C**.
- **Extreme cold:** forecast temperature falls below **-5°C** and it is deemed that we are not able to keep children safe.
- **Flooding:** the site, access routes or surrounding area are flooded or there is a significant risk of flooding, including where a relevant Met Office warning indicates unsafe conditions.
- **Other severe weather:** including lightning, dangerous storms, heavy snow/ice or any Met Office warning where the Forest School Leader considers the conditions unsafe.

The Forest School Leader may cancel, postpone, shorten or relocate a session at any time where **local conditions present an unacceptable risk**, regardless of the forecast or stated thresholds.

Parents/carers will be informed of cancellations as soon as reasonably practicable. Unfortunately no refund will be offered in case of cancellations due to adverse weather.

Emergency Procedures:

Accident and Emergency Policy

1. Ensure the **safety** of the rest of the group
2. Administer **first aid** if it is safe to do so. **Call 999** if emergency treatment is required. Establish a meeting point at the nearest road access.
3. **Reassure** the child. Call the parents at the earliest opportunity and ask them to come and collect their child or to meet you at hospital if going via ambulance.
4. **Record** any details of the accident and obtain a parent's signature at the earliest opportunity.

Missing Child Policy

1. Ensure the **safety** of the rest of the group. Reassure the children.
2. Immediately make a **search** of the surrounding area.
3. **Request help** from people around me. People involved in the search will be given a description of the child and what the child is wearing.
4. If the search is unsuccessful, within a short space of time (10 or 15 minutes) I will ring the **police on 999,** provide a description and keep searching the area.
5. **Call the parents** at the earliest opportunity.
6. **Record** any details of the incident and obtain a parent's signature at the earliest opportunity.

Uncollected Child Policy

1. Children can only be collected by a **named caregiver**, or using secure **passwords** if necessary, in an emergency
2. If a child is not collected, **reassure** the child, and attempt to **contact** the main parent or carer using the phone number provided
3. If there is no response, contact the **emergency contact** number on the child's details and ask them to collect the child
4. If there is no response after 30 minutes, call **First Response** on 0117 903 6444 and follow their instructions.

Health Procedures:

Sickness policy

In general, I cannot care for a child with, for instance: temperature; sickness; diarrhoea; breathing difficulties; eye, nose or ear infections; or a rash etc.

1. **Use a thermometer** to take a temperature, and monitor this whilst completing the rest of the steps.
2. **Call** the parents to discuss the symptoms and ask them to collect the child as soon as possible
3. Children to **stay at home** for 48 hours after sickness and diarrhoea ends.

Medication policy

1. The medication must be prescribed by a doctor and must be stored according to storage instructions in a safe place. If this cannot happen, the medication cannot be administered.
2. I need to have **written parental consent** prior to administering any medication, detailing the name of the medicine, the dosage and the interval, and including…

3. Details of any medicine which was given to a child before they arrived for the session - **this must also have the signature of the parent.**
4. Keep note of what dose was given at what time. Obtain the **parents signature** at pick up and provide a copy for both.

Staff Member Print Name	**Staff Member Signature**	**First Read Date**
Sian Dimond		04/08/26
KATE BOWMAN-OPENSHAW		13/09/25
Georgina Hardy		02/10/24

Gemma Gear		19/3/24
Anna Cox		14/09/25