

Risk management in childcare services



Adults are faced with a dilemma: on the one hand, children need opportunity to become competent risk managers; on the other, adults have the responsibility to keep them safe.

Critically assess whether this dilemma can be managed within the delivery of services for children.

Risk management has become a high concern in childcare services.

Increasing changes in policies and procedures to ensure that risks are minimized have resulted in children not being given the same opportunities that we would have had as a child when we were growing up.

Over recent years increasing attention has been focused on childcare services to reduce risk and ensure children are kept safe from danger.

In this assessment I hope to identify what is risk and looking at how society has changed over the years. I will look at both the dilemmas faced by both parents and children's services, looking at the how anxiety has changed the thinking of risk management.

The subject of risk management is causing great concern in the children's services. Practitioners face the dilemma of given children opportunities to explore while at the same time ensuring that they are safe.

When looking at risk we have to consider what is a risk? We face risks in everyday life from the moment we get up. When heading to work either in the car or walking it is a risk as we may have a car accident or get knocked down. Children from the moment of birth face risk when growing up. A baby

may choke on their bottle or a toddler may fall when taking their first steps. The severity of the risk depends on the consequence.

In our current society parents have become more anxious when allowing the children to explore and learn about risks. Today's generation have moved from allowing children the opportunity to experience risk to the extreme where children are protected from risks by not allowing them to have the same challenges and opportunities we would have had at a young age. Stover et al., 2013 evaluates a some very valid reason to why this may have come about. It has looked at how parents have become more anxious on where there child plays or goes and the quality of freedom they have, ensuring they are safe from risk and harm. Over resent years it can be seen how attitudes have changed and children are spending more time under adult supervision play area, non- risk environments or indoors in what is seen as safe and secure, replacing adventures play. Children's play has moved from the positive play also known as risk play where children developed motor skills, control through physical rick ???? , learn new skills and develop confidence. When looking at comments made during learning guide 13. 4 discussing where discussing where we played at 11 years of age it can be seen that we were given as children were given more freedom and parents did not have the same concerns about risks as they do today. With growing up in the country side it was normal to take risks and was seen as a safe place for children to develop to their full practical skills . We were rarely questioned about where we played, but rather we had more fears of being caught by our parents and getting in trouble. When looking back on my childhood and growing up with my six siblings, I can also state that we did

not have any serious accidents due to the risk play rather than the normal bumps or bruises that every child faces.

In today's society attitudes have changed due to growing changes and trends in young children today. They are not allowed to explore the fields or visit friends without adult supervision. It can be even said that children today are not as outgoing and street wise as we were but rather spend more time playing with the latest technology or game. Modern technology such as internet and influence of media has escalating fears in parents and therefore made them more cautious or is it simply of the mistakes we learned as a child and we are being over proactive? Furedi's (2001) work on paranoid parenting cited in Gladwin and Collins 2008 cover issues on how these changes result from parents lacking the confidence and rather than set boundaries being their child's best friend. Are we as parents protecting our children or is it our own fears we have of them facing risks. It can be critically argued that yes while parents are seen to lack confidence in today's society parents are under a lot more pressure with keeping up with media and how children are exposed today to media trends e. g. Through social media, Facebook, mobile phones. When I was growing my time was spent outdoor with friends creating our own play.

It was also taken to my attention the article by Stover et al., 2013 (2013) on how parental responsibility has changed from children not having freedom to protect them from risk, but also society has changed to where children today are seen as 'human capital'. Children are not given the opportunity to play but rather institutionalising children to education. It can be critically argued that while yes this has been seen over recent years but it has changed

around again, that while education is an important aspect of life studies has shown that children need play and the value of play is the developmental stone for lifelong learning. Piaget cited in Springate and Foley (2008) research has an important conclusion to this as he believes that not only the play is important but involving children in risks contributes to a child's development.

As cited in Maynard (2007) 'Encounters with forest school and Foucault article learning guide 13.3 shows how two different approaches on risk taken in play. When looking at the forest schools created by McMillians Sister and the video clip 2 on Risk both using a 'hands off' approach allows children the freedom of play and learning to risk manage. Children on the video also have the responsibility of looking after their own health and well-being. Comparing this to our schools today while there has been developments on the importance of play in the child's development and through the Plowden Report cited in Springate and Foley (2008) we have changed to a play based curriculum like Foucault suggests in learning guide 13.3, teachers still focus on the sense that we must keep our children safe from harm. In my own setting yes we use the hands off approach but will intervene before a child comes to risk for example when on balancing beams and unsteady we will help rather than allowing the child the risk of falling. While Foucault suggests that teachers like to keep power and maintain control through not being allowed to take part in risks and adventures play I have to critically disagree. As an early years leader I feel that it's not being in control but rather the pressures we have to follow. We are protecting our children from risk and not allowing them the freedom due to the extreme pressures put in

place from “ the social care trust regulations (2012) coming from the Children Order (1995) and it could be said we are keep ourselves safe. Like Power (2004) cited in Gladwin and Collins (2008) states it the uncertainty of known what is right and wrong. As practitioners we carry out risk assignments on a daily basis however we still are responsible if something goes wrong.

In my own setting children are be given the opportunity in the outdoor area we re we have adventur ous es play . We have having types of challenges where children can climb and learn how to be safe. Children make mud pies and have learned that it’s important to wash our hand after so they don’t become ill. We have had no serious injuries beyond the usual bumps and bruises which we would expect with any young child. While we do allow this type of play children are limited to the extent of risk play we can provide. We a re located beside a lovely glen where the river runs alongside the playgroup, we are unable to have logs untreated in case of infection or children being able to stand on steps to see the river in case they fall. I feel that this is a shame as it limits their ability to explore and learn thorough the natural environment.

Unfortunately due to the minimum standards (2012) and regulations we are unable to experience the adventures play in our local woodland where children can experience climbing trees and explore in the natural environment. This is seen as a high risk to children and the safe ratio is seen as too low. I have to critically disagree as it is a rural area and it’s a safe environment but children are being neglected from the experience like the forest schools these risks gain where children learn about keeping safe

through the natural environment. It also defines the legal framework of the UNCRC(1989) cited in Foley (2008) where children have the right to play.

As pre-school teacher we are inclined to put away the sharp edge object, not allowing children to run and ensuring that benches and tables are bleached to reduce risk. We have to ask ourselves are we preceding the children or ourselves. Do children learn from protecting them or would it not be better to turn risk into a learning experience for children? Lindon (2003) cited in Gladwin and Collins (2008) studies believes that involving children in risk allows the child to understand why we can't do something and allows them to value the harm it can cause, giving children the values of life and making their own decisions. I feel that while this is vitally important and we should allow our children more risks again it relates back to adults protecting themselves in case of serious injuries.

While we are restricted to how much risk we allow our children and have an implication on practice it can be critically argued like Power 2004 cited in Gladwin and Collins (2008) in maintained has come from failure within the health services. While Both social workers failing the system causing deaths to children e. g. Victoria Climbié (2003) and Baby P cited in Blewett and Foley (2008) and other high profile cases, but also hospitals where deaths have accrued due to lack of services has affected the freedom of our childcare service like playgroup, after schools etc.. and what was seen as good risks have been come into the classification of putting children at danger.

These high profile cases have led to government relooking at Legislation. Government published green papers “ Every Child matters” (2003) Lord Laming report identified changes needed introducing the children’s Act (2004) cited Blewett and Foley (2008) in which made developed the child protection register. UNCRC give children the right to grow up in a safe environment free from abuse and neglect. In 1997 New Labour government relooked at the health services and while child protection was still a nd main concern it also came into play the identification of children ‘ at risk’. Through the Assessment framework (DH et AL... 2000) cited in Blewett and Foley (2008) give more responsibility on practitioners to report any concerns on child protection issues. While this has been a break in the system for safe guarding children and has joined together multi agencies it has left increased concern for childcare services. Practitioners are worried about getting it wrong or likewise missing something. This again results to adult reducing risk to children in their care to not only protect the children but themselves.

While this is the case it has been equally as important for these changes to happen as children today are more aware of what is right and wrong.

Stanger danger has become a focus in child education Scott et al. (1998), cited in Gladwin and Collins, (2008), points out " it is such a big worry when the objective risk is so tiny clearly demonstrates the distortions of popular risk perceptions. While this has had great impact on making children more aware the NSPCC have campaign on ‘ underwear rules’ has been of great impact in terms of abuse as it also someone makes children aware that a person we know can also cause use harm. Therefore as adult we have to

empowering children to speak out about abuse whenever it is within the family or by people they know and trust.

In conclusion to looking at risks and what is seen as risk management it can be seen that while society today has left more concern for both parents and practitioners there has been tremendous work done in this area. While we still face the challenges of known how fear we can provide opportunity for children to be confident learner, creative and learning from their mistakes and being able to explore freely under supervision but without the direction of the adult, we have to also look at our work as practitioner. Sandseter & Hansen (2012) identifies some relevant points where it is seen how practitioners look at how risk decisions are made by the adult as they are managing their own anxieties rather than the risk. Policies and procedures preducces are in place to help safeguard ourselves, but as practitioner we have to be able to define what is a safe risk and when does it become a danger.

It can be seen that a lot more work is done with children through different school programmes like the school bus in learning guide 13. 3 it gives children the opportunity to learn about risk taken and making the right decisions in life. As disused earlier this will help with parent's anxieties about their children. Professionals working in partnership with other agencies and organisations will help to ensure the safe guarding of children.

Bibliography

Springate D & Foley P (2008) ' Play Matters' in Collins, J and Foley P (eds), Promoting Children's Wellbeing' Bristol, The Policy / Milton Keynes, The Open University.

Gladwin M & Collins J (2008) ' Anxieties and Risks' in Collins, J and Foley P (eds), Promoting Children's Wellbeing' Bristol, The Policy / Milton Keynes, The Open University.

Blewett J & Foley P (2008) ' Staying Safe' in Collins, J and Foley P (eds), Promoting Children's Wellbeing' Bristol, The Policy / Milton Keynes, The Open University.

KE312 Working together for children Activity 13. 3

KE312 Working together for Children Video clip 2

Journals

Stover, S. (2013) ' Odd alliances: Working theories on 'unintended consequences' of early childhood education in Aotearoa, New Zealand' . Australasian of Early Childhood' vol. 3, no p4-8. 5p.

Available at <http://www.open.ac.uk/>

Sandseter, Beate E, Hansen.(2012) Restrictive Safety or Unsafe Freedom? Norwegian ECEC Practitioners' Perceptions and Practices Concerning Children's Risky Play. *Child Care in Practice.* , Vol. 18 Issue 1, p83-101. 19p.

Available at <http://www.open.ac.uk/>

Internet

<https://assignbuster.com/risk-management-in-childcare-services/>

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/help-and-advice/for-parents/keeping-your-child-safe/the-underwear-rule/the-underwear->

Sinead Bartley (C6449275)Page 1