

Health & Safety Risk Assessment: Play Therapy



Mulberry Play Therapy endeavours to comply with all relevant legislation and Play Therapy UK (PTUK) guidance. This risk assessment will be implemented in conjunction with the relevant policies of the school/organisation in which the Play Therapy is taking place.

Business name: Mulberry Play Therapy **Name of assessor:** Constance Bedingfield-Lowe

Date of risk assessment: June 2023 **Date of next review:** June 2024

Hazard identified	At risk groups	Measures implemented to mitigate risk	Further action required to control risks	Actions to be completed by	Risk value (likelihood x severity)
HAZARDS	WITHIN	THERAPEUTIC	ENVIRONMENT		
Injury caused by slips, trips, falls or collision with items in the room	Clients Play Therapist	<p>Play Therapist to ensure the room is free from obvious risks prior to each session.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure the room is free from obstructions during sessions as far as possible, whilst leaving room for messy play which can be part of the recognised therapeutic process.</p> <p>Play Therapist to continually assess safety of the child's chosen style of play within the space provided and wherever possible provide boundaries for safety as required e.g. energetic play.</p> <p>First Aid support to be provided by school or organisation where Play Therapy is taking place, if required.</p>	Ongoing monitoring of risk.	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe	1 x 2 = 2 Low

<p>Injury caused by manual handling of equipment</p>	<p>Play Therapist</p>	<p>Wheeled storage used to transport equipment wherever possible.</p> <p>Heavy objects to be kept in situ or stored low level where possible.</p> <p>Play Therapist to have an awareness of correct manual handling techniques.</p> <p>First Aid support to be provided by school or organisation where Play Therapy is taking place, if required.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 2 = 2 Low</p>
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<p>Injury caused by use of therapy equipment e.g. scissors, glue, balloons e.g. equipment breaking e.g. sharp edges, splinters e.g. sewing needles or pins e.g. trapped fingers e.g. client placing small items in nose/ear/mouth</p>	<p>Clients Play Therapist</p>	<p>Play Therapist to check the condition of all equipment weekly.</p> <p>Play Therapist to make an assessment of the client's frame of mind and presenting risk in relation to use of scissors or other items which may carry higher risk. Only children's safety scissors will be used. The toolkit can be adapted according to the risks or needs of each individual client as needed.</p> <p>Play Therapist to supervise client's use of the toolkit and wherever possible ensure appropriate use, e.g. small items not placed in the client's nose/ear/mouth.</p> <p>Play Therapist to supervise all clients' use of balloons; supervision is recommended for use of balloons by children under the age of 8. Any pieces of broken balloons will be disposed of by the Play Therapist.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure needles/pins and equipment for sewing are only used as appropriate to the individual client's age and level of maturity.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure clients are not left unsupervised with materials that may pose a risk of injury e.g. sewing equipment.</p> <p>First Aid support to be provided by school or organisation where Play Therapy is taking place, if required.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 2 = 2 Low</p>
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<p>Risk of choking/ suffocation e.g. small items placed in mouth e.g. food lodged in mouth</p>	<p>Clients</p>	<p>Play Therapist to ensure supervision of clients in relation to risk of placing small items in their mouths.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure supervision of clients in relation to risk of choking on food.</p> <p>First Aid support to be provided by school or organisation where Play Therapy is taking place, if required.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 3 = 3 Medium</p>
<p>Injury caused by fire</p>	<p>Clients Play Therapist</p>	<p>No candles or naked flames will be used within Play Therapy sessions.</p> <p>Play Therapist and clients to follow the school/organisation's procedures in the event of fire.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure safe evacuation of client's in session in the event that a fire is identified or the fire alarm sounds.</p> <p>Play Therapist to remain vigilant to the risk of fire and report any concerns to the school/organisation without delay e.g. potentially faulty electrical equipment.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 3 = 3 Medium</p>

<p>Risk of burning/ scalding e.g. hot tap e.g. glue gun</p>	<p>Clients Play Therapist</p>	<p>Play Therapist to supervise client's use of hot tap where appropriate.</p> <p>Play Therapist to assess individual client's therapeutic needs alongside their individual risks when deciding if glue gun is appropriate to use as part of the therapeutic toolkit.</p> <p>Play Therapist to only use the glue gun with older children who have demonstrated an appropriate level of maturity and have shown they are able to listen to boundaries within the therapeutic relationship.</p> <p>Play therapist to ensure clients are not left unsupervised with the glue gun and that it is unplugged and placed on an appropriate surface when it is not in use.</p> <p>First Aid support to be provided by school or organisation where Play Therapy is taking place, if required.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 3 = 3 Medium</p>
<p>Risk of drowning, water is sometimes used as part of the therapeutic toolkit</p>	<p>Clients</p>	<p>Play Therapist to assess individual client's therapeutic needs alongside their individual risks when deciding if water is appropriate to use as part of the therapeutic toolkit.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure that when water is used as part of the therapeutic toolkit this will be in a plastic tray and not more than 10cm deep.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure clients are not left unsupervised with the water tray.</p> <p>First Aid support to be provided by school or organisation where Play Therapy is taking place, if required.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 3 = 3 Medium</p>

Risk of electric shock	Clients Play Therapist	<p>It is rare for electrical items to be used in Play Therapy sessions, e.g. CD player, glue gun. If electrical items are used the Play Therapist will ensure they plug this in/out at the wall.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure supervision of children in relation to risks of electrical sockets and electrical equipment.</p> <p>All electrical equipment within schools/organisations should be PAT tested regularly.</p>	Ongoing monitoring of risk.	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe	1 x 3 = 3 Medium
Allergic reaction e.g. to food or creative materials used	Clients Play Therapist	<p>Play Therapist to ensure non-toxic paint is used within the therapeutic toolkit and that all creative materials used are appropriate and safe for use by children.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ask parents about any allergies (food or otherwise) a client may have within the parent interview which takes place before commencing therapy. A snack is sometimes part of the celebration of therapy during the final session, where appropriate.</p> <p>In the case of a client presenting with an apparent allergic reaction additional support will be sought immediately within the school/organisation where the Play Therapy is taking place.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure their own allergies are not triggered by anything in the therapeutic toolkit.</p> <p>First Aid support to be provided by school or organisation where Play Therapy is taking place, if required.</p>	Ongoing monitoring of risk.	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe	1 x 3 = 3 Medium

Risk of contracting COVID-19	Client Play Therapist	<p>The Play Therapist will ensure sessions are conducted in line with the school/organisation's COVID-19 procedures and relevant government guidance.</p> <p>The Play Therapist may choose to use PPE (face covering) during sessions if required.</p> <p>The Play Therapist will ensure regular antibacterial cleaning of all areas of the therapeutic toolkit.</p> <p>The Play Therapist will encourage hand washing as required or use of alcohol gel if required.</p>	Ongoing monitoring of risk.	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe	1 x 2 = 2 Low
HAZARDS	ARISING	WITHIN	THERAPY	SESSIONS	
Risks associated with working 1-1 e.g. inappropriate behaviour from client, sexualised behaviour from client, physical assault by client	Client Play Therapist	<p>Play Therapist to ensure a thorough handover of each client's presenting risks prior to commencing therapy sessions, from teachers, parents/carers or others as appropriate.</p> <p>If the client's presenting risks differ from those usually expected an individual risk assessment will be completed prior to commencing therapy.</p> <p>The Play Therapist will respond to any inappropriate behaviour, sexualised behaviour or physical assault with a calm manner, understanding language and clear boundaries, moving further away from the client if required or gently guiding the client (or their limbs) away from the therapist as required. The Play Therapist will seek additional support if required from the Pastoral Support Team or other available member of staff.</p>	Ongoing monitoring of risk.	None	1 x 2 = 2 Low

<p>Risk of injury to client through carelessness or self-harm</p>	<p>Clients</p>	<p>Play Therapist to ensure a thorough handover of each client's presenting risks prior to commencing therapy sessions, from teachers, parents/carers or others as appropriate.</p> <p>If the client's presenting risks differ from those usually expected an individual risk assessment will be completed prior to commencing therapy.</p> <p>The Play Therapist will respond to any careless or self-harming behaviours with a calm manner, understanding language and clear boundaries, moving further away from the client if required or gently guiding the client (or their limbs) away from potential injury. The Play Therapist will seek additional support if required from the Pastoral Support Team or other available member of staff.</p> <p>First Aid support to be provided by school or organisation where Play Therapy is taking place, if required.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 2 = 2 Low</p>
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<p>Risk of child absenting themselves during a session or not returning to class</p>	<p>Clients</p>	<p>Play Therapist to ensure a thorough handover of each client's presenting risks prior to commencing therapy sessions, from teachers, parents/carers or others as appropriate.</p> <p>If the client's presenting risks differ from those usually expected an individual risk assessment will be completed prior to commencing therapy.</p> <p>In the case of a client absenting themselves from a session the Play Therapist will watch them at a distance back to their class and handover to a member of teaching staff.</p> <p>If the client runs off elsewhere the Play Therapist will make a visual assessment of safety and if no second adult is nearby to call for support, they will leave the child briefly to inform a member of the Pastoral Support Team. If it is not assessed as safe to leave the child the Play Therapist will remain close by, trying to keep a visual on the child, offering verbal support and waiting until it is possible to call for or get some additional support.</p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 1 = 1 Low</p>
<p>Risk of confidentiality of session being breached e.g. interruptions</p>	<p>Clients</p>	<p>The Play Therapist will ensure the play room provides acceptable levels of confidentiality for clients and will communicate to staff within the school/organisation that sessions are confidential and should not be interrupted unless it is an emergency.</p> <p><i>See Mulberry Play Therapy Data Protection Policy; Mulberry Play Therapy ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) Registration number: ZB290343</i></p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 2 = 2 Low</p>

<p>Risk of allegation against Play Therapist</p>	<p>Play Therapist</p>	<p>Play Therapy sessions usually take place 1-1 or in small groups, without the presence of another adult. If a child makes an allegation against the Play Therapist, the therapist will end the session immediately and the therapist will cease working 1-1 with the child as soon as possible i.e. they will leave the room to find another adult who can support the child.</p> <p>The Play Therapist will ensure that any allegation made against the therapist is reported to the school/organisation's DSL without delay, and an assessment will be made as to whether sessions with other children will continue, depending on the nature of the allegation.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure a thorough handover of each client's presenting risks prior to commencing therapy sessions, from teachers, parents/carers or others as appropriate.</p> <p>If a client has a history of making allegations the Play Therapist will ensure a thorough risk assessment is produced in partnership with the school/organisation prior to deciding together whether it is safe to commence sessions. It is also important to note that children may at times make allegations about others in preparation for making a disclosure.</p> <p><i>See Mulberry Play Therapy Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.</i></p>	<p>Ongoing monitoring of risk.</p>	<p>Constance Bedingfield-Lowe</p>	<p>1 x 2 = 2 Low</p>
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Risk of loss of emotional safety	Client Play Therapist	<p>Play Therapy works with the client's unconscious, it is therefore possible that in connecting with the child's experiences through play the child may lose their sense of emotional safety.</p> <p>Play Therapist to use the therapeutic relationship to support the child to return to a place of emotional safety. Play Therapist to support the client in utilising techniques for physical regulation in order to support emotional regulation and a felt sense of safety.</p> <p>Play Therapist to remain self-aware throughout each session and support their own connection to emotional safety in order to support the client.</p> <p>Play Therapist to use supervision to process and plan support strategies for clients who are frequently feeling a loss of emotional safety in sessions.</p>	Ongoing monitoring of risk.	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe	2 x 1 = 3 Medium
OTHER	HAZARDS				
Risks relating to client's medical needs	Clients	<p>Play Therapist to ensure a detailed account of client's medical needs is noted prior to commencing therapy sessions.</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure an individualised risk assessment is produced where appropriate to the client's needs, ensuring all reasonable accommodations and arrangements are made to ensure the child's medical needs are met and their safety if prioritised at all times.</p>	Individual risk assessment to be proceed as required.	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe	Risk to be calculated as appropriate to individual client

Risk of data breach or loss	Clients Clients' families/carers Play Therapist	<p>Play Therapist to ensure all data is carefully handled and securely stored through the use of encrypted digital storage and Play Therapy UK's online data management system (Fortuna).</p> <p>Play Therapist to ensure that any documents requiring sending via e-mail will be done with password protection.</p> <p>Play Therapist will ensure that any paper copies are scanned and uploaded to digital storage as soon as reasonably possible and originals then destroyed. Any paper copies awaiting scanning and uploading will be stored in a locked backpack and then moved to a locked filing cabinet.</p> <p>Play Therapist will ensure that any paper copies requiring long term storage are kept in a locked filing cabinet.</p> <p><i>See Mulberry Play Therapy Data Protection Policy.</i></p>	Ongoing monitoring of risk.	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe	1 x 2 = 2 Low
Risk of stress	Play Therapist	<p>Play Therapist to ensure they have regular supervision to process the emotional impact of the work.</p> <p>See Play Therapy UK Ethical Framework: https://playtherapy.org.uk/ethical-framework/</p>	Ongoing monitoring of risk.	Constance Bedingfield-Lowe	1 x 1 = 1 Low

This risk assessment will be reviewed annually or as required.

Risk Assessment Matrix

Severity → Likelihood ↓	1	2	3
1	Low 1	Low 2	Medium 3
2	Low 2	Medium 4	High 6
3	Medium 3	High 6	High 9