

RA24 - Extreme Heat and Hot Weather Risk Assessment

Area / Activity:

Nursery rooms, outdoor areas and daily routines during hot weather

Applies to: All Sites

Review Date: June 2027

1. Purpose of Risk Assessment

This risk assessment identifies the risks linked to hot weather, high indoor temperatures, poor airflow and extreme outdoor heat. It sets out the control measures the nursery will follow to reduce the risk of overheating, dehydration, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

Children in early years settings may be more vulnerable during hot weather because they may not recognise when they are too hot, may not ask for drinks and may find it harder to regulate their body temperature.

2. Risk Rating Key

Risk Level	Meaning
Low	Risk is controlled through normal procedures
Medium	Additional monitoring and precautions required
High	Significant changes required to keep children safe
Very High	Activity, room use or session must be stopped or reduced

3. Main Hazards and Control Measures

Hazard	Who may be harmed	Risk before controls	Control measures	Risk after controls

High outdoor temperatures	Children and staff	High	Monitor weather forecasts and UKHSA / Met Office weather-health alerts. Avoid outdoor play during the hottest part of the day. Keep children indoors or in shaded areas. Reduce physical activity.	Medium
High indoor temperatures	Children and staff	High	Monitor room temperatures throughout the day. Use the coolest rooms available. Keep blinds or curtains closed where direct sun enters. Open or close windows depending on whether this improves indoor temperature and airflow. Use fans safely where appropriate.	Medium
Poor airflow in nursery rooms	Children and staff	High	Check ventilation regularly. Open internal doors where safe to support air movement. Avoid overcrowding in rooms with poor airflow. Move children to cooler spaces where available.	Medium / High depending on conditions
Dehydration	Children and staff	High	Ensure drinking water is always available. Offer regular drinks. Encourage children to drink even when they do not ask. Monitor children who need support to drink. Record concerns and inform parents if a child drinks very little.	Medium
Heat exhaustion	Children and staff	High	Staff to monitor for dizziness, fatigue, nausea, headache, vomiting, excessive sweating, thirst, weakness, irritability, hot red skin, pale clammy skin, fast breathing or unusual tiredness. Take immediate action if symptoms appear.	Medium
Heatstroke	Children and staff	Very High	Staff to call 999 immediately if a child becomes confused, unconscious, has a seizure, is very drowsy, has hot dry skin, abnormal breathing or does not improve after cooling measures.	Medium

Sun exposure / sunburn	Children	High	Parents to provide suitable clothing, sun hats and sun cream. Staff to encourage shade. Avoid direct sun during peak heat. Reapply sun cream where agreed and in line with nursery procedures.	Medium
Outdoor area with minimal shade	Children and staff	High	Outdoor play will be limited or stopped when shade is not sufficient. Children will not remain outside in extreme heat where there is minimal shade. Calm indoor activities will be provided instead.	Low / Medium
Hot outdoor surfaces or equipment	Children	Medium / High	Staff to check equipment before use. Do not use hot slides, climbing equipment, artificial grass, paving or other surfaces that may burn or cause discomfort.	Low
Increased tiredness, distress or unsettled behaviour	Children	Medium / High	Provide quieter activities, rest opportunities and calm spaces. Reduce expectations for physical activity. Monitor children closely and contact parents if a child is struggling.	Medium
Food safety during hot weather	Children and staff	Medium	Ensure food is stored safely and refrigerated where required. Avoid leaving food in warm rooms. Follow food hygiene procedures. No lunch on site if sessions are reduced to morning-only.	Low
Staff fatigue or reduced concentration	Staff and children	Medium / High	Ensure staff have access to water. Rotate duties where possible. Reduce physically demanding tasks. Ensure staff report if they feel unwell.	Medium
Emergency response delay	Children and staff	High	Staff know heat illness procedures. First aid supplies, cool cloth, cold packs and contact details are available. Emergency services called immediately when required.	Low / Medium

4. High-Risk Scenario: Full Nursery Room, Poor Airflow and Extreme Heat

Identified Scenario

A nursery room is full, with 20 or more children present, there is limited airflow, outdoor temperatures are extremely high and outdoor space has minimal shade.

Why This Is High Risk

This creates a high-risk environment because:

- body heat from a full group can raise the temperature of the room
- poor airflow makes it harder for heat to disperse
- children may become hot, tired, distressed or dehydrated more quickly
- staff may find it harder to monitor every child closely in a full and uncomfortable room
- children cannot safely be moved outside for long periods if outdoor conditions are also extremely hot with minimal shade
- there may be no suitable cooler alternative space available
- children may be at increased risk of heat exhaustion or heatstroke

Possible Consequences if Children Remain in These Conditions

If children remain in a full, poorly ventilated and hot nursery room for a prolonged period, possible consequences include:

- overheating
- dehydration
- heat exhaustion
- heatstroke
- increased irritability, distress or crying
- fatigue and reduced ability to engage safely in play
- nausea, dizziness or vomiting
- children becoming unusually sleepy or difficult to settle
- staff becoming fatigued or less able to respond quickly
- increased risk of medical emergency

Required Action

If the nursery room is full, airflow is poor, outdoor heat is extreme and there is minimal shade, this must be treated as a **High to Very High risk** situation.

The nursery will take one or more of the following actions:

- reduce the number of children in the room where possible
- move children to a cooler room or safer area if available
- combine or separate groups only where this improves safety and remains within ratios
- reduce physical activity immediately
- offer frequent drinks and rest
- monitor children continuously for signs of heat-related illness
- contact parents for early collection where children are becoming uncomfortable or unwell
- move to half-day sessions during the cooler morning period

- cancel lunch on site where afternoon temperatures are expected to be unsafe
- close the affected room or nursery session if the environment cannot be kept safe

Children will not be expected to remain in a full, poorly ventilated, extremely hot room for a full nursery day if staff cannot keep them cool, comfortable and safe.

5. Temperature and Environmental Monitoring

During hot weather, the manager or designated senior staff member will monitor:

- indoor room temperatures
- outdoor temperatures
- airflow and ventilation
- availability of shade
- children's comfort and wellbeing
- staff wellbeing
- weather forecasts and official alerts

Room temperatures should be checked regularly during the day, particularly late morning and afternoon when indoor spaces may become hotter.

Decisions will not be based on temperature alone. The nursery will consider the overall environment, including airflow, room occupancy, shade, children's wellbeing and whether safe alternatives are available.

6. Actions During Hot Weather

Staff will:

- encourage children to drink regularly
 - provide calm and low-energy activities
 - avoid vigorous physical activity
 - avoid outdoor play during the hottest part of the day
 - use shaded areas only when outdoor play is safe
 - keep children away from hot surfaces and equipment
 - keep blinds or curtains closed where needed
 - use cooler rooms where available
 - monitor children closely for changes in behaviour or signs of illness
 - inform senior staff immediately if a child appears affected by the heat
-

7. Recognising Heat-Related Illness

Staff must be alert for symptoms such as:

- dizziness

- fatigue or unusual tiredness
- nausea
- vomiting
- headache
- hot, red or flushed skin
- pale, cool or clammy skin
- excessive sweating
- thirst
- weakness
- irritability
- fast breathing
- rapid heartbeat
- confusion
- drowsiness or difficulty waking
- seizures
- unconsciousness

Any child showing signs of heat-related illness must be treated seriously.

8. Emergency Response: Heat Exhaustion

If a child shows signs of heat exhaustion, staff will:

1. Move the child to the coolest available room or shaded area.
 2. Remove unnecessary clothing.
 3. Encourage the child to drink cool water if they are awake, alert and able to drink safely.
 4. Sponge the child with cool water.
 5. Place cold packs or cool cloths around the neck and armpits.
 6. Keep the child calm and closely supervised.
 7. Inform the manager or senior staff member immediately.
 8. Contact the child's parent or carer.
 9. Continue to monitor the child closely.
 10. Seek medical advice if symptoms do not improve or staff are concerned.
-

9. Emergency Response: Heatstroke

Heatstroke is a medical emergency.

Staff must call **999 immediately** if a child:

- becomes confused
- becomes unconscious
- has a seizure
- is very drowsy or difficult to wake
- has hot, dry skin
- has abnormal breathing

- appears seriously unwell
- does not improve after cooling measures

While waiting for emergency help, staff will continue cooling the child by moving them to a cool area, removing unnecessary clothing, sponging with cool water and placing cold packs or cool cloths around the neck and armpits where safe to do so.

Parents will be contacted as soon as possible.

10. Decision to Reduce Sessions, Cancel Lunch or Close

The nursery may reduce sessions, cancel lunch on site, request early collection or close for part or all of the day where:

- indoor rooms cannot be kept at a safe and comfortable temperature
- rooms are full and airflow is poor
- outdoor temperatures are extreme
- outdoor space has minimal shade
- children cannot safely access cooler areas
- children are becoming distressed, overly tired or unwell
- staff are unable to safely manage the environment
- official weather warnings indicate increased risk
- the manager judges that children's health and welfare may be compromised

During periods of extreme heat, the nursery may move to half-day sessions during the cooler morning period. This may include cancelling lunch on site where afternoon temperatures are expected to become unsafe or where the lunchtime routine would increase risk.

Cancelling lunch on site may be used as an additional risk-reduction measure during periods of extreme heat. Lunchtime usually falls later in the morning or early afternoon, when indoor and outdoor temperatures may be rising and children may already be becoming tired, hot or less able to regulate their body temperature.

Cancelling lunch reduces risk because staff can remain fully present with the children rather than stepping away from direct supervision to prepare lunch areas, set up tables and chairs, organise food, manage dietary requirements, support handwashing, serve meals and complete the additional cleaning routines that follow. During extreme heat, children need closer observation, regular drinks, calm support and prompt action if they show signs of overheating or distress. Keeping staff focused on direct care and supervision helps ensure children's comfort, safety and wellbeing remain the priority.

Where lunch is cancelled, snack will still be provided as usual. Drinking water will remain available throughout the session and children will be encouraged to drink regularly.

Where possible, the nursery will provide parents with as much notice as possible. However, decisions may need to be made quickly if conditions change during the day.

11. Parent Responsibilities

Parents are asked to:

- dress children in light, loose and comfortable clothing
 - provide a named sun hat
 - apply sun cream before nursery where appropriate
 - provide named sun cream if staff are required to reapply it
 - ensure children have suitable footwear
 - collect promptly if contacted by the nursery
 - keep children at home if they are already unwell or appear affected by the heat
-

12. Staff Responsibilities

All staff must:

- follow this risk assessment and the Extreme Heat and Hot Weather Policy
- monitor children carefully
- report concerns immediately
- encourage regular fluids
- adapt activities to reduce overheating
- know the signs of heat exhaustion and heatstroke
- know when to call 999
- record concerns, incidents and actions taken in line with nursery procedures

The Manager or Director must:

- review weather warnings and forecasts
 - monitor the indoor and outdoor environment
 - decide whether sessions need to be reduced or adapted
 - ensure staff are clear on procedures
 - communicate with parents
 - review this risk assessment after any significant heat event or incident
-

13. Overall Risk Rating

Situation	Risk Rating	Action Required
Warm weather with manageable indoor temperatures and good airflow	Medium	Follow hot weather precautions
High outdoor temperatures but rooms remain cool and shaded areas are available	Medium	Monitor closely and adapt activities

High indoor temperatures with limited airflow	High	Move children, reduce activity, increase monitoring and consider early collection
Full room of 20+ children, poor airflow, extreme outdoor heat and minimal shade	High / Very High	Reduce numbers, move to half-day sessions, request early collection or close affected area/session
Child showing signs of heat exhaustion	High	Immediate cooling measures and parent contact / medical advice if needed
Child showing signs of heatstroke, confusion, seizure or unconsciousness	Very High	Call 999 immediately

14. Monitoring and Review

This risk assessment will be reviewed:

- annually
- during periods of extreme heat
- following changes to UKHSA or government guidance
- after any heat-related illness or incident
- if the nursery environment or room capacity changes