

Contingency planning

To safeguarding children effectively, it is important to have a contingency plan in place, detailing what you would do and how you would respond if you needed to take any temporary actions in the event of an emergency.

Step 1: The risk factor

The first step is to identify potential areas that could cause problems.

Examples:

- An unplanned long-term staff absence.
- Sudden unexpected staff absence on the day of the session/activity
- Problems with the building used
- Public health incidents (e.g. a significant infectious disease incident)
- Severe weather (e.g. flooding)
- Serious injury to a child or member of staff

Step 2: Prioritise the risks

After identifying potential risks, prioritise them based on their likelihood and impact.

Step 3: Create a contingency plan

With prioritised risks in mind, create a detailed contingency plan.

Step 4: Maintain the contingency plan

Finally, ensure the plan remains relevant and up to date.

Don't just write a plan that never gets looked at.

Ensure you check and update it as you do with your other policies.

Adult to child ratios for working with children (guidance from the NSPCC)
<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/recommended-adult-child-ratios-working-with-children>

It's your responsibility to decide how many staff you need to deliver a safe, effective and responsive service and ensure you plan your staffing to maintain this. **Contingency plans should be prepared in the event of a shortfall in staffing levels.** There's no one solution to doing this – it'll depend on the activities you offer and the ages of children you work with, and it might change over time. When working with children, you must make sure you have enough staff and volunteers to keep children safe. An example to consider, what if a member of staff had to leave to accompany a child to hospital.

Adult to child ratios are different depending on the children and young people in your group, your organisation and the activities you're carrying out. You must also ensure adults are suitable to undertake the tasks you need.

What to consider:

Ratios will vary depending on the children's age, behaviour and the abilities.

How many adults you need also depends on:

- the nature and duration of activities
- the competence and experience of staff involved
- location or organisational requirements
- any special medical needs
- any specialist equipment needed.

Deciding appropriate levels of supervision

Carry out a risk assessment of the activities you are planning, taking the issues above into consideration. This will help you decide how many adults you need and what skills and experience they should have.

Who is suitable to supervise children?

You should carry out a range of safer recruitment processes and checks to ensure you employ the right people to work or volunteer in roles that have contact with children. The types of checks needed will depend on the nature of the work being carried out, and whether or not the work will be supervised by other staff members.

It's important to make sure:

- all adults who have contact with children understand and agree to follow your safeguarding policy and procedures
- any staff or volunteers who have only had the checks required to work with children while supervised aren't left alone with a child.
- If you work in performing arts you should make sure chaperones have the relevant licences.

What adults supervising children need to know

Staff and volunteers need to have:

- an understanding of their responsibility to keep children and young people safe
- clear procedures to follow if they have a concern about a child's wellbeing
- insurance for certain activities
- codes of practice which they understand and agree to follow.

Parents who attend activities with their children should not be used to supervise other children unless they have been recruited into the role, undergone the necessary checks and had the relevant child protection training.

Early years and childcare settings

The Department for Education (DfE) publishes [guidance for early years providers](#) which sets out statutory requirements about adult to child ratios (DfE, 2023). The required adult to child ratios vary depending on the setting and the age of children.

Adult to child ratios for other organisations/settings

There is no specific guidance about supervision ratios for organisations that are not in the education or early years sectors. We've put together some best practice guidance to help other organisations work out how many adults are needed to supervise children safely.

The NSPCC recommend having at least two adults present when working with or supervising children and young people. We recommend the following adult to child ratios as the minimum numbers to help keep children safe:

- **under 2 years** - one adult to three children
- **2 - 3 years** - one adult to four children
- **4 - 8 years** - one adult to six children
- **9 - 12 years** - one adult to eight children
- **13 - 18 years** - one adult to ten children

Depending on the needs and abilities of the children, and the nature of the activity, you may need to have more adults than the minimum.

We recommend having at least two adults present, even with smaller groups.

If young people are helping to supervise younger children only people aged 18 or over should be included as adults when calculating adult to child ratios.

Children who have special educational needs, additional needs and disabilities

If you are working with children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or additional needs, you may need more supervision than the minimum ratios above.

You should carry out a risk assessment for each activity to help you decide on supervision ratios. This should take account of children and young people's behaviour, ability and mobility. As far as possible, include input from children and young people and their parents and carers in risk assessments to ensure children's needs are met.

Toilet ratios

Adults who haven't previously volunteered and haven't had the necessary vetting checks shouldn't be left alone with children or take them to the toilet unaccompanied.

In larger groups of children, encourage groups to take a comfort break together with one responsible adult while the other adult(s) supervises the remaining children and keep a head count.

First aid ratios

We recommend that at least one adult is trained in first aid.

Contingency Arrangements for Staff Absences and Emergencies

The provider must ensure that suitable arrangements are made so that there is appropriate cover during both planned staff absences and emergencies. These could include:

- using "bank" staff, drawn from a pool of suitable adults (safer recruitment procedures must be followed when recruiting "bank" staff); bank staff should be regarded as part of the staff team, with full induction training and attend training- including safeguarding
- using an employment agency to obtain suitably qualified staff; where agency staff are used, the provider should ensure that there are suitable arrangements for inducting these staff so that the children at the provision have consistent experiences, it is also important that checks are made either by the agency or the childcare provider re safer recruitment, DBS, etc
- reorganising the children into different groups, while continuing to maintain the appropriate ratios and group sizes
- reorganising rooms and activities and redeploying other suitable staff from within the existing staff team whilst continuing to maintain the appropriate ratios for all the children within the provision.

During any disruption to the normal staffing routines, there should continue to be a consistent experience for the child and the provider should ensure that their safeguarding procedures take into account unfamiliar adults working with the children.

