

British Association of Play Therapists

BAPT Health & Safety Policy for Sand Trays, Toys and Creative Equipment

Date: 14/08/25

Date of Review: 13/08/26

Introduction

BAPT recognises and accepts its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and all relevant legislation including the Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011.

We are committed to providing a clear policy communicating how members can provide a safe and healthy environment for therapists, children, parents/carers and visitors.

This policy clarifies responsibilities and sets out procedures for ensuring health and safety within play therapy sessions, with particular attention to toys, equipment and sand trays. This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if legislation or circumstances require.

Part One: Policy Statement

BAPT will take responsibility for communicating practicable steps for members adhere to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of therapists, children and visitors.

This policy covers minimum standards that BAPT expects our members to practice under:

- Provide adequate working conditions and safe systems of work.
- Ensure equipment is safe, maintained and compliant with UK safety standards.
- Promote infection control through regular cleaning and hygiene practices.
- Encourage reporting of hazards and incidents.
- Provide appropriate training, supervision and first aid facilities.
- Maintain safe arrangements for handling, storage and use of materials.
- Prevent risks from hazardous substances, manual handling, electrical or fire hazards.
- Report injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences as required by RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations)
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/reporting/index.htm>

Part Two: Organisation of Health and Safety

2.1 Responsibilities

BAPT: Responsible for providing a clear policy communicating how members can provide a safe and healthy environment for therapists, children, parents/carers and visitors.

Members: Must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others, report hazards, accidents, or defective equipment and follow infection control procedures.

Visitors/Clients: Expected to cooperate with reasonable safety instructions.

2.2 Health & Safety Rules

Accident Reporting:

- All accidents and near misses must be recorded in the Accident Book (stored securely in line with GDPR).
- Serious incidents reported under RIDDOR.

Fire Safety:

- Therapists must familiarise themselves with fire exits and evacuation procedures.
- Exits must remain clear at all times.

Clearways & Maintenance:

- Corridors and play spaces must remain unobstructed.
- Defective equipment must be reported and removed from use immediately.

Hygiene & Waste:

- Waste disposed of safely in line with infection control guidance.
- Materials contaminated by bodily fluids must be double-bagged and disposed of appropriately.

Part Three: Play Therapy Equipment & Procedures

3.1 Risk Assessment – Toys & Sand Trays

Hazards:

- Infection (E. coli, viruses) via shared toys/sand.
- Sand irritation (skin, eye, respiratory).
- Hand-to-mouth contamination.

Risks:

- Stomach upset.
- Skin or eye irritation.
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Controls in Place:

- Washable toys disinfected with antibacterial wipes after sessions.
- Non-washable toys sanitised as thoroughly as possible.
- Sand trays regularly sieved, cleaned termly and fully replaced annually.
- Children encouraged to wash/sanitise hands before and after play.

Eating and Drinking:

Eating and drinking are permitted within sessions, but children are encouraged to wash or sanitise their hands before returning to play activities.

Any snacks or drinks provided by the therapist must be agreed in advance with parents/carers to ensure allergy and dietary needs are respected.

To minimise risks of contamination, food and drink should be kept separate from sand trays and creative materials.

Residual Risk Rating: Low

Review: Annually or earlier if guidance, equipment, or risk changes.

3.2 Safe Working Practices – Toys, Equipment & Sand Trays

Cross-infection risks: Toys and equipment may transfer bacteria/viruses. Regular disinfection reduces this risk.

Mouthed toys: If a child places a toy in their mouth, remove it after the session for thorough cleaning.

Sand trays:

Risk of contamination is low, but trays must be cleaned, sieved regularly and sand changed at least annually.

Children should sanitise hands before use.

Parents encouraged to support handwashing after sessions.

Cleaning cycles:

- Clean toys/equipment before and after each session with approved antibacterial wipes or sanitisers effective against viruses and bacteria.
- Toys wiped, sand sieved if needed, spillages cleared.
- End of term (approx. 3 times per year depending on setting): all toys checked/cleaned; trays emptied, cleaned and refilled.
- End of academic year: deep clean and replacement of sand/equipment where needed.
- Soft toys: Washed regularly in hot soapy water/machine-washed where instructions allow.
- Storage: Toys and sand equipment stored in clean, dry cupboards to prevent contamination.

***This cycle is intended as a structured guideline, not an additional daily burden. The aim is proportionate, consistent hygiene rather than unnecessary over-cleaning.**

All cleaning processes to align with 'Standard Infection Control Precautions' (SICPs) as outlined by NHS England

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2021110-Standard-infection-control-precautions-national-hand-hygiene-and-personal-protective-equipment-policy-.pdf>

Hand hygiene practices should follow the 'National Infection Prevention Manual' (NIPCM) and NICE standards

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/national-infection-prevention-and-control-manual-nipcm-for-england/>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/QS61>

3.3 Equipment Safety Standards

All toys must comply with the Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011 and carry UKCA/CE marking.

Preference is given to toys carrying the Lion Mark, indicating compliance with BS EN 71 standards.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/toys-safety-regulations-2011/toys-safety-regulations-2011-great-britain>

Equipment is checked before each session for breakages and removed immediately if unsafe.

3.4 Children and Creative Materials

- Children may choose whether to wear protective aprons. Therapists support children in minimising risk of soiling.
- If a child becomes distressed due to soiled clothing, the therapist will stop the activity.
- Children may remove shoes, jumpers or jackets during sessions if comfortable.

3.5 Sand Safety Data Sheet (Summary)

Substance: Silica play sand, specially washed and graded.

Hazards: Dust inhalation, eye irritation.

First Aid:

Skin: wash with soap and water.

Eyes: rinse with water for 10 minutes.

Inhalation: move to fresh air.

Storage: Keep dry and well ventilated.

Disposal: Sweep/vacuum, damp down to minimise dust.

Part Four: Safeguarding & Additional Policies

4.1 Photography:

- No photographs of individual children.
- Sand trays/artwork may be photographed for therapeutic reflection only.
- For training or educational purposes, anonymised images may only be used with the child's informed consent.

This can be explained simply to the child, for example:

“Would it be okay for me to show this to some grown-ups, to help them understand how children use play to make sense of their lives? It's always okay to say no.”

Some children may also request a photograph of their sand tray or creative work, particularly if it has been made with sensory materials that cannot be stored (e.g. water play, foam, or mixed materials).

In these cases, the therapist should seek the child's agreement and explain how and where the photo will be stored or shared.

4.2 Safeguarding:

All practice follows BAPT Child Protection Safeguarding Policy in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023). <https://www.bapt.info/bapt/professional-practice/>

- Monitoring and Review
- Reviewed annually by the Health & Safety Lead.
- Interim reviews following incidents, outbreaks, or new guidance.
- Cleaning/maintenance logs kept for audit purposes.

4.3 Risk Assessment – Sand Tray & Toy Use in Play Therapy

Task / Activity:

- Use of sand trays, miniatures, toys, creative materials and play equipment during play therapy sessions.
- Who is at risk?
- Therapists and children using the equipment; parents and guardians should be informed.

Hazards Identified:

- Infection risk (E. coli, viruses) via cross-contamination
- Skin, eye, respiratory irritation from sand dust or residues
- Potential Outcomes / Risks:
- Gastrointestinal upset (stomach pain, diarrhea)
- Skin rash or eye irritation

Existing Controls:

- Washable toys wiped with antibacterial sanitiser
- Other toys cleaned between sessions
- Regular sand replacement and sieving between terms and annually
- Children discouraged from hand-to-mouth contact and encouraged to wash hands
- Allergy screening for sand sensitivity
- Staff follow dedicated Safe Working Practices and abide by Safety Data Sheet (SDS) guidance

Incident Management

- If child is injured, becomes ill, or allergic reaction occurs, follow standard first-aid procedures.
- Record incident in the therapy incident log, note any equipment involved, and notify parents/guardians.
- Thoroughly clean affected equipment before re-use.

Part Five: Review & Audit

Annual via Health & Safety Lead or Play Therapy Director

Interim reviews: after any session incident, change of materials, or updated guidance

Documentation: Keep audit logs of cleaning, maintenance, silicone inspections and training records.

Summary

This policy integrates UK legal requirements and best practices:

Toy compliance with 'Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011', EN 71, UKCA/ CE, and Lion Mark

Rigorous infection control via SICPs, hand hygiene, and sanitisation procedures

Use of Safety Data Sheet for sand handling

Allergy screening, incident protocols and ongoing audits

Clear cleaning cycle: sessional wipe-downs, termly checks, annual deep clean.

Allergy screening, incident management, child consent for anonymised training use.

Ongoing review and audit for safe practice.



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