**INVOLVING CHILDREN IN RISK ASSESSING**

**'It is not a question of just keeping children safe,' says Shelly Newstead, managing director of consultancy Common Threads and author of The Busker's Guide to Risk. 'If you just keep children safe they will never do anything. Life is full of risks and children have to learn how to take risks.'**

If you are a member of staff working directly with children, it is important that you encourage them to analyze their ‘risk taking’ behaviour. Children will want to explore and they will want to take risks, this is a feature of childhood that should be encouraged. Children will however need to make informed choices and be supported in understanding consequences of risk taking.

Strategies to support children in identifying and understanding risks:

1. Talk to the child about the risk they are going to take, without using negative language. ‘This looks exciting, what are you going to do next?’
2. Have a discussion with the child about consequences. ‘What do you think may happen if you were to put that pebble in your mouth?’
3. If there is a new piece of equipment or a child that is new to the setting, ensure that there is training in place. Don’t forget that you needed showing how to do things once. A child may need to be shown how to stop a bicycle or how to get down from a climbing frame.
4. If the resource poses a higher risk, monitor closely and do not leave unattended, risk assess the situation, but continue to encourage independence with support.