



Regent House Preschool

Infection Prevention and Control Policy

It is important that basic infection prevention and control principles are embedded at an early age and simple procedures such as good hand hygiene should be encouraged with children in the Preschool.

Infections can spread easily in the Preschool where children come into close contact with each other.

Please see the HSC guidance on infection and control with recommended periods to be kept away from Preschool -

https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Guidance_on_infection_control_in_schools_poster.pdf

Infection prevention and control in the Preschool is a matter of great importance to:

- Parents/Carers – who want to be assured that the care their children are receiving is provided in a clean, safe environment.
- Staff looking after children – who may themselves be exposed to greater risk of infection.
- Childcare providers – who have legal responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of their staff and the children for whom they provide childcare services.

Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility and we all have an important role to play.

Although infections can spread easily in childcare settings, controlling the risk of infection requires everyone involved to follow DENI & PHA measures put in place for

our safety. Such measures include regular hand washing, adult social-distancing and the wearing of PPE when necessary e.g. intimate care. These measures can usually reduce the risks.

The Premises

- The layout, design, construction and size of the premises allows for adequate maintenance, cleaning and working spaces (increased cleaning re. Covid-19 Preschool reactivation Risk Assessment)
- The building is pest proof
- Suitably located wash hand basins are provided with running warm water, soap and disposable hand drying towels
- There is suitable lighting and ventilation (see Covid-19 Preschool reactivation Risk Assessment)
- Facilities are provided for the storage of cleaning equipment and chemicals
- Suitable arrangements are in place for the storage and disposal of waste
- External waste storage areas are kept clean and tidy and all waste receptacles have tight fitting lids (Catch it, kill it, bin it re. Covid-19)
- Surfaces are kept dry and spills should be cleaned up immediately when they occur, using appropriate cleaning materials
- See Preschool Covid-19 Policy when dealing with bodily fluid spills

Training

It is important all members of staff have a clear understanding of their role in preventing the spread of infection. Staff will receive appropriate training and supervision. They should be familiar with the policies and procedures that are in place to prevent and control infection in the Preschool. It is important that they receive training on the Infection Prevention and Control document (HSCNI) and a record of such training is kept.

The Cause of Infection

Infections are caused by microorganisms, including bacteria, fungi and viruses. There are many types of microorganisms. They are found everywhere and most are harmless. However, certain microorganisms, called germs, can cause harm in those vulnerable to infection. Children and those who care for them may be exposed to these harmful microorganisms within the Preschool.

Sources of Infection

The human body may act as a source of infection. The skin, blood and body fluids may play a key role in the spread of infection. People suffering from certain infections should, therefore, be excluded from the Preschool (please see sections on 'Exclusion of Staff' and 'Exclusion of Children' and the Preschool Covid-19 Policy).

The environment includes both the physical structure of the premises (internal and external) and the equipment provided for use. The environment must be maintained in a clean condition and all equipment used in it must be capable of being effectively cleaned and, where necessary, disinfected (please see section on 'Decontamination').

Contaminated food and water can be a source of infection in childcare settings. High standards of food hygiene are essential (please see section on 'Food hygiene').

Animals, including pets, can carry microorganisms that cause disease (please see section on 'Pets and Farm Visits').

Preventing the Transmission of Microorganisms

For infection to occur, microorganisms have to get from the source to the vulnerable person, however, microorganisms cannot move on their own; they require a vehicle to transfer from the source to the person. The most common vehicles are our hands. Coughs and sneezes are a delivery vehicle for respiratory infections. It is important, therefore, that we take appropriate precautions to prevent the transmission of microorganisms and hand hygiene is the most effective means of preventing the spread of infections (please see section on 'Hand Hygiene during Covid-19').

Reducing a Person's Vulnerability

Once microorganisms have reached a person, they must be able to enter the body to cause infection. The skin and the linings of the mouth, throat, gut and airways all

provide a barrier to infection. It is important, therefore, to cover all cuts and abrasions with a waterproof dressing.

If a microorganism does manage to cross the barrier, the next line of defence is the immune system. The outward signs and symptoms of disease, such as fevers or rashes, are a result of this contest. Immunisation is a safe and effective way of reducing the vulnerability of people to infection (please see section on 'Immunisation').

Hand Hygiene

The importance of correct hand washing must be taught and reinforced to all staff and children. Suitable and sufficient hand washing facilities should be provided for effective hand hygiene. There should be designated wash hand basins, which should not be used for any other purpose such as food preparation or cleaning of equipment.

Children need to be encouraged to wash their hands, especially before eating and after visiting the toilet. Sinks, soap dispensers and paper towel dispensers should be placed at a suitable height for children. Children will require supervision, appropriate to their stage of development, to ensure good practice.

Hands should be washed using warm water and liquid soap, and dried using a disposable paper towel. Disposable paper towels should be stored in a dispenser to avoid contamination. Cloth and cotton towels should not be used as they allow the spread of microorganisms. Liquid soap should be used rather than bar soap as bar soaps are likely to become contaminated and harbour microorganisms.

Fingernails, in between fingers, thumbs and wrists are the most frequently missed areas of the hand. The seven step technique of hand washing is displayed at wash hand basins.

To facilitate effective hand hygiene while working in childcare settings, staff should do the following:

- Wear sleeves above the elbow. If wearing long sleeves, these should be rolled up to the elbows.
- Remove any hand or wrist jewellery with the exception of one plain band.

- Keep nails short and clean. False nails and nail varnish should not be worn.
- Do not use nail brushes
- Keep cuts and abrasions covered with a waterproof dressing.

When should hands be washed?

- After arriving at work.
- Whenever they are visibly dirty.
- After using the toilet.
- Before preparing, serving and eating food.
- After touching any potentially contaminated surfaces.
- After sneezing or blowing your nose.
- After handling pets.
- Before and after messy play.
- After handling soiled clothing.
- After dealing with waste.
- After handling any body fluids.
- Before and after nappy changing.
- At the end of the working day.
- After removing personal protective equipment.
- At any other appropriate times throughout the day.

Staff Exclusion from Work

Staff with infections can place children at risk, therefore staff suffering from particular conditions must be excluded from their work.

Staff who present with a high temperature/vomiting and/or diarrhoea should be excluded until they are free from symptoms for a period of 48 hours, with at least one formed motion during this time.

Staff with infected wounds or skin infections on exposed parts of their body should be similarly excluded until the lesions have healed or they have been advised by their GP that it is safe for them to return to work.

Staff with minor respiratory conditions, where there is potential to spread infections such as colds, must exercise good respiratory cough etiquette including good hand hygiene.

Staff with influenza, however, should be excluded from work until their symptoms have resolved.

Exclusion of Children

Infections are common among children, and childcare settings often present ideal situations for infections to spread. It is important that an exclusion policy is in place.

- Children who are ill should not attend Preschool. If a child becomes ill while in the Preschool, a Parent/Carer will be contacted and asked to take the child home as soon as possible. The child should be isolated from other children and closely monitored by a member of staff until they are collected by a Parent/Carer.
- Children with a high temperature/diarrhoea and/or vomiting illnesses should not be present in the Preschool. Concerned Parents/Carers should contact their GP for advice regarding the child's illness and, if possible, submit a faecal/vomit sample for testing. The exclusion period should last until the child has been free of symptoms of a high temperature/diarrhoea and/or vomiting for **at least 48 hours**, and has had at least one normal motion.
- Parents/Carers should be advised if there are known cases of infection within the Preschool.

Confidentiality of cases should be maintained at all times. It is particularly important that the Parents/Carers of children whose immunity may be impaired due to illness or treatment (e.g. leukaemia, HIV, those on steroid therapy) are provided with this information.

- It is also important that mothers and staff who are pregnant are made aware of the following infections: chickenpox, measles, rubella and slapped cheek syndrome (Fifth disease). They should consult with their GP if they have any concerns.
- It is good practice if a child requires antibiotics, he/she should be excluded from the childcare setting until he/she has completed at least 48 hours of the treatment.

It may take the child much longer to recover from some infections and feel well enough to attend childcare.

Other infections are subject to specific exclusion advice e.g. Covid-19. PHA guidance must be adhered to where a child or family member becomes symptomatic.

Decontamination

A clean environment is essential in preventing the spread of infection. It is important that the environment is well maintained and any damaged surfaces are replaced.

Detergent and warm water are adequate for most cleaning. A detergent is a chemical that breaks down dirt and grease and facilitates cleaning. Occasionally, disinfection is also required.

Disinfection is the process of reducing microorganisms to a safe level. Disinfectant chemicals or steam may be used for this purpose. To be effective, surfaces that are to be disinfected must be thoroughly cleaned first. Disinfectants must be applied for the correct period of time (contact time) and at the correct strength (concentration). Check the label for the manufacturer's instructions. It is recommended that childcare settings use a hypochlorite (bleach) solution and dilute as per the manufacturer's instructions.

Keeping it Clean

- Carpeted areas and mats are regularly vacuumed and periodically steam cleaned.
- Furniture should be maintained in a clean condition.
- To prevent cross-contamination, use separate cleaning equipment for all areas e.g. play areas, toilets, kitchens.
- In the event of children vomiting or having diarrhoea, it is important to clean and disinfect the affected area. Cloths used for cleaning may become vehicles for contamination and should be disposable. They should be discarded after use. Staff must wear PPE to complete this task.
- If non-disposable cloths are used, these should be machine washed on a hot cycle at the end of each day.
- Mop heads should be detachable and machine washable and they should be replaced regularly. They should also be stored inverted to allow for drying. Mop buckets should be cleaned following use, then dried and stored upside down in a designated area.

Cleaning of Blood and other Body Fluids

Blood and other body fluid spillages (e.g. vomit and faeces) may pose a risk of infection to children and staff and, therefore, must be cleaned up immediately. Staff must wear PPE to complete this task.

Cleaning of Toys

Toys are very important for the social and educational development of a child however they can become contaminated with microorganisms from unwashed hands and body fluids. Safety should be one of the main considerations when choosing toys and play equipment the Preschool.

Do:

- ✓ Ensure that all toys and play equipment in the preschool can be easily cleaned/decontaminated.
- ✓ Have a clear cleaning schedule in place explaining when and how toys and play equipment should be cleaned, what cleaning products are required and who is responsible for cleaning.
- ✓ Refer to the manufacturer's instructions when cleaning toys and play equipment.
- ✓ Check toys regularly for damage and discard them if required.
- ✓ Hard/plastic toys should be cleaned and disinfected. They should be thoroughly rinsed and dried.
- ✓ Wash soft toys in a washing machine at the highest possible temperature, as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ Store all toys in a closed cupboard or in clean washable containers.
- ✓ Toys that are visibly soiled should be removed from the play area and cleaned and disinfected immediately as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ Water play pools should be emptied after every use, cleaned with warm soapy water, disinfected and thoroughly dried.

- ✓ Sand pits should be covered when not in use, cleaned regularly and the sand replaced as necessary (at least every three months). Sand that spills onto the floor should be discarded and sand should be sieved regularly.
- ✓ Ensure hands are washed and skin lesions are covered before and after using play dough/plasticine. Ideally, play dough should be prepared and discarded on the day of use.

Don't:

- x Put toys back into storage if they are visibly dirty.
- x Keep toys with sharp edges or rough surfaces that are difficult to clean.

Toilets

Children will only develop good hygiene practices when using the toilet if they are provided with the appropriate advice and adequate facilities.

- Toilet areas should be kept clean at all times as they are likely to be contaminated with microorganisms. Toilet areas should be checked regularly throughout the day and cleaned and disinfected as required (this includes door handles, taps and flush handles).
- Young children should be supervised when using the toilet and washing their hands.
- Child-size toilets should be available for young children and all toilets should be fitted with a toilet seat and lid to minimise aerosol spread of contents when flushing.
- There should be adequate supplies of toilet tissue in all toilets.
- Wash hand basins should be at a suitable height for children.

Pupil friendly (age-appropriate COVID-19 posters will be displayed in corridors and toilets).

Children's Personal Clothing

- When handling soiled children's clothing, staff should always wear PPE: gloves and a disposable apron.

- Soiled items should be placed into a plastic bag and sealed. Bags should be stored in a safe place, away from food preparation and eating areas and children's play areas.

Explain to Parents/Carers that washing clothes in childcare settings can expose children and staff to microorganisms, which can cause infection. Advise Parents/Carers that while receiving soiled clothes is unpleasant, this policy protects the health of both children and staff.

Food Hygiene

Food hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of gastrointestinal infections.

Staff who prepare food for the children in the Preschool should hold a minimum of level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate and follow the guidelines.

Any disinfectant or sanitiser used in the food preparation area must meet the official standards of BS EN1276: 1997 or BS EN13697: 2001.

Animals

While children can get much pleasure and educational benefit from animals, touching or feeding farm animals can be a source of life-threatening infection, particularly in young children. The only way to eliminate this risk entirely is for children to avoid contact with animals and their faeces. It is the Parent/Carer's choice whether the child is allowed to touch or feed the animals. Written permission must be obtained before children come into contact with animals.

Staff should supervise the washing of children's hands immediately after leaving the animal contact area, before eating or drinking, and after removing footwear.

Sanitising hand gels do not provide adequate protection alone. They are not a substitute for thorough hand washing with soap and water.

Reporting an Outbreak

FOLLOW PRESCHOOL COVID-19 RISK ASSESSMENT & POLICY

DOCUMENTS

An outbreak is defined as “**having two or more children or staff with an infection, caused by the same microorganism, at the same time in the same place**”.

However, a single case of a serious disease may also require an outbreak response, e.g. E. coli O157, diphtheria or measles.

If you suspect there is an outbreak of infection, you should contact the health protection duty room at the PHA.

Examples of when this would be appropriate are:

- a sudden increase in the number of absent children or staff with symptoms of a high temperature/diarrhoea and/or vomiting;
- more than one Parent/Carer advising the childcare setting that their child has symptoms of a high temperature/diarrhoea and/or vomiting;
- more than one member of staff advising the childcare setting that they have symptoms of a high temperature/diarrhoea and/or vomiting;
- more than one child or staff member exhibiting similar symptoms of an undiagnosed rash;
- more than one child or staff member exhibiting similar symptoms of any other kind.

Health Protection Duty Room

Public Health Agency
4th Floor, 12–22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS
Open 9am–5pm Monday to Friday
Tel: 028 9055 3994 or 028 9055 3997
Fax: 028 9055 3930
E-mail: pha.dutyroom@hscni.net

Out of hours (evenings, weekends and bank holidays): contact Belfast Ambulance Control on 028 9040 4045 and ask them to page the first on-call public health doctor.

Monitoring and evaluation

This policy will be reviewed and monitored in line with the Preschool’s policy review schedule.

Reviewed:

14/05/23

Approved by BOG:

21/09/23