COVID – 19 Information and Support for Nurseries, Playgroups and Childminders

We are aware that many nurseries, playgroups and childminders have included enhanced infection control measures and social distancing due to COVID-19 in their emergency contingency plans and in day to day routines, policies and procedures in their setting if open. We hope that this guidance supports current practices and is useful for those early years settings who are not operating at the moment but are planning for the future when they choose to re-open.

How does COVID-19 spread

Based on The World Health organisation (WHO) information, the virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face. The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces from a few hours up to 72 hours but simple disinfectants can kill it.

Public health measures are critical to slow the spread of the virus which include:
- Staying home when sick
- Covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing which is disposed of immediately and hands washed for at least 20 seconds
- Washing hands more often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects.

Hand Washing Approaches

- Handwashing on arrival and prior to departure of the premises which includes everyone.
- Staff and children should wash their hands in between activities, before and after meals and before and after using the toilet.
- Alcohol based hand rubs i.e. hand sanitisers, (recommended by WHO and Public Health IOM) and tissues readily available in areas of the provision if hand washing facilities are not available.
- Information posters displaying hand washing sequences
Enhanced Cleaning

Enhanced cleaning helps reduce transmission during any outbreak.

- Information displaying the areas that will need additional cleaning to reinforce the requirements.
- A minimum of **twice daily** cleaning of areas, paying particular attention to door handles, handrails, light switches, tables and desks, toilet flushes, taps and all other communal areas where surfaces can easily become contaminated.
- Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often than usual using standard cleaning products. Resources can easily become contaminated so it is important to implement a written schedule for regular cleaning. The cleaning schedule should identify who, what, when and how resources and equipment should be cleaned and monitored. Evidence should be available and monitored regarding the completion of this schedule and any problems identified.
- Hard resources and equipment are preferred, as these can be wiped clean after play.
- Soft toys, dressing up clothes, modelling and playdough, water play troughs or containers, sandpits should be avoided.

Nurseries, Playgroups and Childminders will be reviewing their policies and procedures to ensure that these actions are implemented effectively, educating children as part of these strategies and approaches for the health and safety of all present during the day. Reinforcing new expectations of personal hygiene is inevitably challenging, in particular with young children who want to interact. Therefore, adults should always monitor how children are learning to wash hands so that they become proficient in this routine (age appropriate). Where children are unable to complete this routine themselves adults should ensure that measures are taken to ensure enhanced hygiene standards are maintained for all children.

Other routines to consider

- Nurseries, playgroups and childminders are now receiving children at the door, with parents remaining outside.
- To reduce the risk, keep visitors out and make arrangements for deliveries to be left at the door. Social distancing should be promoted at all times.
- Where possible, staggering the times that parents are dropping off and picking up their child/children enable staff to receive or say goodbye to the children, have time
to chat with parents whilst social distancing themselves and ensuring the child or children are settled.

- Children wash their hands on entry prior to joining the play and learning. Children also wash their hands before leaving the setting.
- Settings wipe down packs of nappies and wipes which remain in the setting so that limited amounts of belongings are being transported between home and the setting.
- Lunch boxes are wiped down with disinfectant wipes or sanitising sprays and disposable kitchen paper towels before being stored in the fridge.
- Lunch and snack times are staggered so that large groups of children are not sat together. Consideration is given regarding table and chair groupings to establish social distancing where possible.
- Staff reinforce the importance of not sharing food and drinks. Named, personal water bottles are kept at the setting and cleaned ready for the next day instead of being taken home each day.
- Where possible children arrive in clean clothes and if uniform is used, a relaxation of the need for uniform every day to allow parents time to wash clothes.
- Linen used during sleep times are washed after a single use at 60°C.
- As always good ventilation and outdoor play wherever possible lowers the risk of infections and therefore, should be incorporated into the day’s routines.

The above routines that apply to nurseries and playgroups also apply for childminders

**Staff Personal Care at the end of a shift**

- Staff at the end of their shift should consider changing into alternative clothes and place work clothes in a plastic bag for transporting home. It is also worth considering having a pair of shoes at work (easy to wipe down with a disinfectant wipe) and having a pair of shoes to travel home in.

**Staff arrival at home**

- Take any outdoor shoes off before entering your home
- Place your uniform/clothes in the washing machine and wash separately from household laundry. Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Use the warmest water setting and dry items completely
- Wipe down any door handles or furniture you have touched on the way in
- If you have been to a location that has confirmed or suspected Covid 19, it is advisable to take a shower or bath to self-clean.

**Childminder’s Personal Care**

- Consideration given regarding the work clothes worn within the home environment, with designated clothing and easily wiped down shoes (using disinfectant wipes).
- At the end of the day place your uniform/clothes in the washing machine and wash separately from household laundry. Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Use the warmest water setting and dry items completely.

**Social Distancing**

The term ‘social distancing’ is commonly used in today’s media, but it can be difficult to know precisely what it means and how to ensure it takes place in early years settings. Social distancing refers to measures being taken to restrict gatherings of people in order to slow
the spread of infectious disease. In general, 2 metres of separation is the distance that should be kept between people interacting within the community.

Early years practitioners are acutely aware of the need for young children to have cuddles, hold hands and play and learn together. Nonetheless, all practitioners have an important role to fulfil in considering best practice and approaches that can be used effectively to minimise the contact. Actions taken when close contact between children and adults occurs, such as washing hands and cleaning equipment more regularly than usual will reduce the risk.

Other routines to consider

- If numbers of children are low, some areas of the nursery or playgroup provision are closed. If numbers of children are higher, staff organise times through the day for children to play indoors and outside so that large groups of children are not together. Using all areas of the environments available with smaller groups of children reduces the number of children and adults in one room at a given time.
- Staff teams organise themselves into groups so that there is less whole staff team and children interacting together.
- Childminders rotate resources and equipment, cleaning resources using the enhanced cleaning guidance through the day. Where available, children are spending less time in one room and longer in the garden.
- Toileting – this depends on individual venues and homes. As much as possible social distancing should be practiced, but may not always be possible. Consideration to the use of PPE such as gloves, disposable aprons, face and eye protection.

What should I do if a child starts displaying symptoms of Covid-19?

If a child starts showing symptoms of Covid-19 while at your setting, they should be collected as soon as possible by a parent/carer.

While they are awaiting collection if possible, they should be put in a separate room with a closed door - depending on the age of the child - with appropriate adult supervision if required.

Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least two metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

You should increase the frequency of handwashing and cleaning surfaces, toys and other equipment in your setting.

If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in a setting they must be sent home and advised to follow the staying at home guidance.

In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.
If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves.

They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell.

Cleaning with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

Please be aware that this guidance will continue to be updated and shared with you as the COVID-19 situation changes in line with advice from Public Health.

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