

Guidance on Continence and Intimate Care in Early Years Settings and Schools

Introduction

There are increasing numbers of younger children entering many pre-school settings and schools than before. Many more children with developmental delay or more complex needs now attend a mainstream setting. Some of these children may have delayed continence, however this is not necessarily linked with learning difficulties. Legislation states that all children have a right to mainstream education and is part of Enfield's inclusion agenda.

Intimate care includes all aspects of personal toileting care, not just nappy changing. The following guidance is based upon good practice and draws on information contained within the Equality Act (2010) and the DfE document "Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions" (December 2015). Early Years settings and schools should develop their own Intimate Care policy and must consider the individual needs/circumstances in their own provision, to meet their statutory duties as set out in the below legislation.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equalities Act 2010 which encompasses the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires all education providers to review their policies, consider the implications of the Act for practice and revise their current arrangements.

Schools and settings should develop an action plan which outlines how they are working towards providing an accessible toileting facility if this has not previously been available. Education providers have an obligation to meet the needs of children with delayed personal development (including incontinence) in the same way as they would meet the individual needs of children with delayed language, or any other kind of delayed development.

Children should not be excluded from normal early years/schools' activities solely because of incontinence. Any admission policy that sets a blanket standard of continence, or any other aspect of development, for all children is discriminatory and therefore unlawful under the Act. All such issues have to be dealt with on an individual basis and settings/schools are expected to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of each child.

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage Sept 2021

3.61. states Providers must ensure there is an adequate number of toilets and hand basins available. Except in childminding settings, there should usually be separate toilet facilities for adults. Providers must ensure there are suitable hygienic changing facilities for changing any children who are in nappies and should ensure that an adequate supply of clean bedding, towels, spare clothes, and any other necessary items is always available.

Child Development

Enuresis (wetting) is very common and incontinence common amongst pre-school children and at school entry. Some children may have a physical condition that hinders continence, and some children may develop secondary enuresis or encopresis (soiling) as a behavioural response to emotional difficulties. Schools and early years settings should be able to care effectively for children with these

conditions, children **must not** be excluded from normal educational activities solely because of a manageable condition.

‘Accidents’

Toileting accidents are to be expected where children who are otherwise toilet-trained wet or soil themselves. There are many possible reasons for this – the child may be absorbed in an activity, may be anxious about asking to use the toilet, may have an upset stomach or may simply fail to get to the toilet and undo their clothing in time.

Where children have accidents, they should be changed in the same way as a child who is incontinent. Clearly, children should not be reprimanded or otherwise made to feel upset or embarrassed that they have had an accident. Asking parents of any child to come and change their child is unacceptable (unless parents have requested such an arrangement) and, in some cases, is likely to be a direct contravention of the Equality Act. Leaving a child in soiled clothing or a soiled nappy for any length of time pending the return of the parent can be seen as neglect.

All children should have a spare set of clothes, supplied by parents, which are kept in the setting. Settings may have their own supply of spare clothes, but many children do not like being dressed in unfamiliar clothes, and some parents may object to their child being dressed in clothes which are not their own.

Older children may wish to change their own clothes, but they should always be supervised/assisted by a member of staff to ensure that they are clean and dry before putting on the new clothes. Wet or soiled items of clothing should be rinsed, securely wrapped and kept in an appropriate place until they can be given to parents at the end of the day.

Health and Safety

Settings and schools registered to deliver the EYFS must already have Hygiene or Infection Control policies as part of their Health and Safety policy. This is a statutory requirement that procedures are in place in case a child accidentally wets or soils him/herself or is sick while on the premises. The same precautions will apply for nappy changing.

This should include:

- Staff to wear disposable gloves and aprons while dealing with the incident
- Soiled nappies to be wrapped in nappy sack, and placed in a hygienic disposal unit
- Changing area to be cleaned after every use
- Hot water and liquid soap available to wash hands as every nappy change is completed
- Hot air dryer or paper towels available for drying hands

Staffing

Depending on the accessibility and convenience of a setting/school’s facilities, it could take five minutes or more to change an individual child. This is not dissimilar to the amount of time that might be allocated to work with a child on an individual learning outcome

If several children wearing nappies enter a setting or school, there could be resource implications. Within a school, senior leaders should ensure that resources are allocated from the school’s delegated SEN budget to ensure that the children’s individual needs are met.

Job Descriptions

All staff in settings and schools, with the exception of qualified teachers, should have intimate care included in their job description, as personal care is one of the core duties of all those who work with children. All prospective new staff should be made aware that this is an expectation during interview. While teachers cannot be required to change nappies, some may choose to do so at times if this is in the interests of the child and the efficient running of the class.

Child Protection

The normal process of intimate care should not raise child protection concerns and there are no regulations that indicate a second member of staff must be available to supervise the intimate care process to ensure abuse does not take place. If there is a known risk of false allegations by a child, then a single practitioner should not undertake nappy changing. Staff in all settings and schools should be encouraged to remain highly vigilant for any signs or symptoms of abuse or improper practice, as they would for all activities carried out on site. There should already be procedures in place for staff members when they notice that a child is unduly distressed and/or has unexplained marks or injuries or makes a disclosure.

Policy Guidelines:

Settings/schools should have clear written guidelines for staff to follow when changing a child, to ensure that staff follow correct procedures. Parents/carers should be aware of the procedures the setting/school will follow should a child need to be changed and what the Settings/School Complaints procedure is.

Written guidelines should specify:

- Who will carry out the intimate care?
- Where intimate care will take place
- What resources will be used (cleansing agents used or cream to be applied)
- What measures are in place for the safe disposal of nappies and/or storage of wet/ soiled clothing?
- What measures are in place for infection controls?
- What the staff member will do if the child is unduly distressed by the experience or if the
- staff member notices marks or injuries on the child
- What the agreement is between the home and setting/school
- What the Settings/School Complaints procedure is?

Nurseries and other settings that care for babies and toddlers will already have a dedicated changing area. However, a suitable place for changing children should have a high priority in any setting's/school's Accessibility Plan.

- If it is not possible to provide a purpose-built changing area, then it is possible to purchase a changing mat and change the child on a suitable surface. Ideally, the changing should be carried out on a raised surface, as changing children on the floor may place strain upon staff's backs. Older children may be changed standing up.

- The Key person should be encouraged to change their key children where possible. This supports continuity for the child and enables their preferences in relation to changing to be followed. In schools, intimate care should be carried out by a member of staff familiar to the child.
- Staff should meet with parents/carers to discuss the child's needs and their approach to intimate care. Wherever possible, to avoid distress or confusion to the child, practice should be the same at home and in the setting or school.
- Staff should be mindful of the need to preserve the dignity of the child. For example, a 'do not enter' visual can be placed on the door to ensure that privacy and dignity are maintained during the time taken to change the child.
- It is important that parents are aware that all staff have been through the enhanced DBS vetting and recruitment process which ensures that children are safeguarded.
- Each child should have his/her own named bag/container for nappies/spare clothes.
- When changing children staff should wash their hands with hot water and an appropriate soap/hand cleaner both before and after nappy changing. Gloves (and aprons where necessary) should be worn while carrying out intimate care. The changing table should be cleaned after each use and the nappy should be disposed of hygienically in an appropriate container. Any spillages must be cleaned up immediately.
- Where needed staff should record times/frequencies of nappy changing and note any concerns (for example unusual bowel movement), which should be reported to parents/carers when the child is collected.
- An adequate supply of nappies should be kept on the premises at all times. Where parents/carers provide the nappies, staff should notify them well in advance when the stock is depleting.
- If barrier creams are used this should be discussed with the Key person, the cream labelled with child's name, logged on their records and kept in a safe place.
- Settings should consider strategies for supporting children in developing independence through toilet training in partnership with parents when this is developmentally appropriate for the child.

Useful links:

NHS guidance: How to potty train.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/babys-development/potty-training-and-bedwetting/how-to-potty-train/>

ERIC template documentation and policies

<https://www.eric.org.uk/Listing/Category/education-professionals>