



Guidance for Policy on Infection Control in Pre-school and School Age Services

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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide early years (pre-school and school age) services with the regulatory requirements on the specific policy of Infection Control. These requirements are as set out in the [Child Care Act \(1991\) Early Years Service Regulations \(2016\)](#) and the [Child Care Act \(1991\) Registration of School Age Services \(2018\)](#). This document provides core regulatory requirements for this policy area, as well as prompts and considerations that will support registered providers to ensure that their policy and procedures are fully developed and are reflected in the practices in their service.

The information in this document should be applied to the specific policy on Infection Control, and the accompanying procedures of the early years service. This document should be read in conjunction with the [A Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services](#).

Note: *This policy is required for both pre-school and school age services. This document will provide the reader with policy considerations for their service type, the children, young people and staff members within it. Unless specified, the policy considerations within this document apply to both pre-school and school age services.*

This document is for reference only. It should not be assumed that the guidance provided is comprehensive or that it provides a definitive answer in every situation.

Further resources are available in [Appendix 1](#).

Regulatory Requirements

Pre-school service

Child Care Act (1991) Early Years Service Regulations (2016), Schedule 5 1 (d)

A policy on infection control, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the procedure to be followed in the service to protect persons in the service and pre-school children attending the service, from the transmission of infections

School age service

Child Care Act (1991) Registration of School Age Services Regulations (2018), Schedule 6 1 (c)

A policy specifying the procedure to be followed in the service to protect persons working in the service and school age children attending the service from the transmission of infections.

2.0 Core Policy requirements

A Policy Statement is recommended for this policy alongside the core requirements as set out further in this document. The policy statement confirms that the service aims to provide an environment in which children, young people and adults are protected, by taking measures to minimise the risks of infection.

The policy statement should also make clear that the service upholds its legislative and regulatory responsibilities relating to infection control in the service and that all relevant best practice guidelines are implemented in the service.

Requirement 1

The policy sets out the hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene practice and procedures for staff and children.

Prompts and considerations *(not an exhaustive list):*

The policy specifies:

- The hand hygiene practices and procedures for staff and children, including access to thermostatically controlled hot water and liquid/foam soap dispensers/ hand sanitisers.
- The measures to be taken to ensure that the management of respiratory and transmissible/infectious illness in the service is understood by staff, and that respiratory hygiene procedures are in place and implemented.
- The measures to be taken to ensure that the management of outbreaks of infectious diseases is understood by staff, and procedures are in place and implemented.

Requirement 2

The policy sets out specific measures for the prevention of cross-contamination; infection control and managing outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Prompts and considerations *(not an exhaustive list)*

The policy specifies:

(a) Measures for the prevention of cross-contamination and infection control. These measures must include, but are not limited to the following:

- The environmental measures in place in the service to reduce cross-contamination and the spread of infection, including general hygiene, cleaning (specifying the frequency, items and method of cleaning) and if required, laundry to include but not limited to bedding, and fabric items such as cushions.
- The management of poultry, animals, and fish and other animals which children have access to, as appropriate.
- The steps taken to prevent exposure to and manage a spill of blood and/or body fluids, to include appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Ventilation procedures.
- Measures to protect from environmental contaminants to include but not limited to rodents and litter.
- Waste management and disposal measures.
- Records which are completed within the service, to include cleaning schedules, and record keeping procedures that are in place.
- Any other specific measure required in the service (e.g. if service operates outdoors).
- How the service communicates and informs parent or guardians, children, staff and other persons involved in the service of the infection control policy.

(b) Specific measures on managing outbreaks of infectious diseases. These may include, but are not limited to;

- The measures to be taken to ensure that the management of outbreaks of infectious diseases is understood by staff, and procedures are implemented.
- Procedures to fully document immunisation records for children attending are in place, to include provision for this information to be collected on the enrolment form.
- Procedures to update immunisation records (where appropriate) are required.
- Details of the procedures to be followed when a child is identified by parents as unvaccinated for specific infectious diseases such as Measles.

Pre-school services

Pre-school services should consider the following;

- The procedures for reporting notifiable infectious diseases to Tusla.
- Sterilisation procedures to include toys, equipment, soothers, bottles (where required),
- Cleaning and disinfection procedures to include but not limited to sleep mats, mattresses and floor beds.
- Infection control measures to be taken during outings.

School age services

School age services should consider the following;

- The measures to ensure the non-sharing of personal items such as lip gloss, lip balm, water bottles and hairbrushes.
- The measures to provide suitable bins for girls to dispose of sanitary protection products as required.

Requirement 3

The policy sets out the procedures for exclusion from the service due to illness.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list):

The policy specifies:

- (a) The exclusion periods for infectious diseases as set out by [Public Health guidance](#).
- (b) Details of the procedures to be followed to protect children who are unvaccinated for specific infectious diseases such as Measles, should there be an outbreak of that infectious disease in the service. In these circumstances, Public Health advice should always be sought and implemented.
- (c) The way in which information on exclusion periods is shared with parents/guardians.

Requirement 4

The policy describes the safe management of perishable food.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list):

The policy specifies:

- (a) The measures in place regarding the safe preparation, storage and serving of perishable foods.
- (b) That perishable foods are stored in a refrigerator at temperatures between 0 - 5°C when not being served to children or being transported to and from the service.

Requirement 5 – Preschool services only

It specifies the infection control measures for nappy changing and toileting procedures to be followed in the service.

Prompts and considerations (not an exhaustive list):

The policy specifies:

- (a) The measures for nappy changing and toileting procedures to be followed in the service. These are clearly detailed and displayed in sanitary areas. See [Appendix 2](#) for a sample procedure.
- (b) The steps taken to prevent exposure to and manage a spill of blood and/or body fluid to include the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- (c) That toys and play equipment are not allowed in/ not stored in the sanitary area.
- (d) The records that are maintained, which should include nappy changing and cleaning schedules.
- (e) The cleaning and disinfection procedures to include but not limited to sanitary equipment and facilities.
- (f) Infection control measures to be taken during outings (including nappy changing/toileting).
- (g) Waste management and disposal measures.

3.0 Best Practice in developing and implementing an Infection Control Policy

In addition to the regulatory requirements for this policy as set out in this document, service providers can enhance the quality of practice in the implementation of the infection control policy in the service. In this section, best practice in this policy area is outlined and further information is signposted where available.

- The [HPSC guidance](#) should underpin the policy for infection control.
- There should be regular training and re-engagement with the policy. It may be on the full policy, or particular aspects of practices for example, handwashing. Re-engagement with the policy may be planned and/or occur at various times of the year, for example winter months when cases of respiratory viruses and gastrointestinal illnesses increase.
- Consider visual displays of procedures. This will provide accessible information for staff members, parents, young people and children. for example, vaccination schedules, handwashing techniques, nappy changing procedures.
- Personal items belonging to children and young people should be clearly labelled for example, combs, brushes, toothbrushes, water bottles and creams.

- Changing mats must be waterproof, have an easily cleanable cover and be in a good state of repair – that is, no breaks or tears.
- Children's enrolment forms and any other information relating to the child should be reviewed regularly to ensure that all information is up to date, including details on vaccinations.
- If the service's holds details of staff vaccinations, this is considered in the policy.
- For school age services, the policy should consider the procedure in place in the event that a child becomes unwell while attending an extra-curricular activity.

4.0 Appendices

4.1 Appendix 1 - Supporting Information

- Barnardos; [Critical Incidents in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Services](#)
- Food Safety Ireland; [Information](#)
- HSPC; [Pets and other animals](#)
- HPSC; [Management of Infectious Disease in Childcare Facilities](#)
- HPSC; [Management of Infectious Diseases in Schools](#)
- HSE; [List of Notifiable Diseases](#)
- HSE; [National Healthy Childhood Programme](#)
- HSE; [National Immunisation Office](#)
- Food Safety Ireland; [Information](#)
- Safe Food; [Storing Food Safely](#)

4.2 Appendix 2 - Sample Nappy Changing Procedure (Based on HPSC/HSE Guidelines)

- Wash your hands.
- Place lining paper on the change table.
- Use a new pair of disposable gloves and a new apron for each child's nappy change
- Remove the child's disposable nappy and put it in a [foot-operated, lined, lidded bin that is leak proof](#), sealable and easy to clean. Double-bag non disposable nappies and store appropriately until removed from the service.
- Remove and bag any soiled clothing
- Clean the child's bottom and put on a clean nappy. If using creams, powders or lotions, ensure they are clearly labelled and not shared between children.
- Remove the paper and put it in a foot-operated, lined, lidded bin that is leak proof, sealable and easy to clean.
- Remove disposable gloves by peeling them back from the wrists, turning them inside out as you go. Put the gloves and apron in the appropriate bin and wash your hands.
- Dress the child.
- Wash and dry the child's hands.
- Take the child away from the change table.
- Clean the change table with disinfectant, rinse with warm water and dry after each use.
- Wash your hands.

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