

Continence Guidance in Early Years Foundation Stage Settings

Children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

(EYFS Statutory Framework 2014, paragraph 3.1)



Early Start and Family Services 2017



Promoting self care in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

Continence

The Equalities Act 2010, which encompasses the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), requires all education providers to re-examine all policies, consider the implications of the Act for practice and revise their current arrangements where necessary. In light of historical practices that no longer comply with new legislation, changes will particularly be required wherever blanket rules about continence have been a feature of a setting/school's admissions policy. Settings and schools will also need to work towards providing an accessible toileting facility.

The Department of Health has issued clear guidance about the facilities that should be available in each school (Good Practice in Continence Services, 2000 page 22 and 23). Achieving continence is one of hundreds of developmental milestones often reached within the context of learning in the home before the child transfers to learning in a school or pre-school setting.

In some cases this one developmental area has assumed significance beyond all others. Parents are sometimes made to feel guilty that this aspect of learning has not been achieved whereas other delayed learning is not so stigmatising.

Definition of disability in Equalities Act 2010

The Equalities Act provides protection for anyone who has a physical, sensory or mental impairment that has an adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The effect must be substantial and long-term. It is clear therefore that anyone with a named condition that affects aspects of personal development must not be discriminated against. It is also unacceptable to refuse admission to children who are delayed in achieving continence. Delayed continence is not necessarily linked with difficulties, however, children with global developmental delay which may not have been identified by the time they enter a setting/ school, are likely to be late transitioning from nappies.

Education providers have an obligation to meet the needs of children with delayed self-care 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 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.

Settings and schools should consider the following issues:

Health and Safety

Settings and schools registered to deliver the EYFS must have Hygiene or Infection Control policies as part of their Health and Safety policy. This necessarily includes a statement of the procedures the setting/school follows in case a child accidentally wets, soils him/herself or is sick while on the premises. The same hygienic precautions apply for nappy changing.

The precautions are likely to include:

- Staff wear disposable gloves and aprons while dealing with the incident
- Soiled nappies are double wrapped, or (if the number produced each week exceeds that allowed by the Health and Safety Executive) placed in a hygienic disposal unit
- The changing area is cleaned after use
- Hands are washed using hot water and liquid soap as soon as the task is completed.
- Hands are dried using paper towels or a hot air dryer.

Requiring parents/carers of a child to come and change the child is likely to be a direct contravention of the Equalities Act 2010 leaving a child in a soiled nappy or pants for any length of time pending the arrival of the parent, is a form of abuse.

EYFS Statement

The EYFS supports the gradual development of autonomy in self-care which includes the development of continence linked to age/stage as laid out in the EYFS Development Matters /Early Years Outcomes (2013) documents.

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2014 (page 28 paragraph 3.60) provides information about the premises and equipment required.

Facilities

It is not always possible to have purpose built facilities including areas for showering and changing. However a suitable place for changing children should remain a high priority in any setting/school in order to meet the self-care needs of young children. In order to meet the responsibilities of the DDA, settings and schools must make reasonable adjustments to avoid any child being disadvantaged. These adjustments may include the provision of intimate care (please see **Barnsley Child Protection and Safeguarding in Education Settings Policy** for definition of intimate care, page 31).

Suitable facilities to provide intimate care could include:

- Use of a disabled toilet cubicle
- Changing table with steps
- Changing mat on a hygienically clean floor (this could include a hygienic floor area)

The personal dignity of the individual child should be respected at all times.

All facilities should be accessible and convenient to use

Safeguarding

Schools and settings should also refer to Barnsley Child Protection & Safeguarding in Education Settings Policy and ensure that all procedures comply with the intimate care guidance. (www.safeguardingchildrenbarnsley.com)

The normal process of changing a nappy should not raise child protection concerns, and there are no regulations that indicate that a second member of staff must be available to supervise the nappy changing process.

The number of adults required to carry out procedures will depend upon individual circumstances and should be discussed with all concerned. To preserve the child's privacy and dignity one adult will normally be in attendance. Where there are concerns around child protection, previous allegations or moving and handling issues, then two adults should provide care. Knowledge of the child should be used to help assess the risk. It is essential that all staff are familiar with the Child Protection Policy and Procedures and if there are any concerns, they should be recorded and discussed with the setting's/school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and in line with Existing Injury and Cause for Concern Policies and Procedures.

As part of a school's/setting's safeguarding duty and nappy changing policy reference should be made to the *Home Office Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation - Procedural Information (2015)*. There are no circumstances in which you should be examining a girl for signs of FGM. It is possible that a practitioner, perhaps assisting a young child in the toilet or changing a nappy, may see something which appears to show that FGM may have taken place. In such circumstances, the practitioner must make a report under the duty, but should not conduct any further examination of the child.

A student on placement should not change a nappy unsupervised.

Setting/school managers are encouraged to remain highly vigilant for any signs or symptoms of improper practice, as they do for all activities carried out on site.

You may wish to consider a statement in your Mobile Phone/Photographic equipment policy with regard to toilets/changing areas. For example you may wish to state that the use of these photographic devices is strictly prohibited within changing areas.

Agreeing a procedure for personal care in your setting/school

Settings/schools should have clear written guidelines for staff to follow when changing a child, to ensure that staff follow correct procedures and concerns about false accusations of abuse are minimised. Parents/carers should be aware of the procedures the setting/school will follow should their child need changing during their time in the setting/school.

Your written guidelines should specify:

- Who will change the nappy
- Where nappy changing will take place
- The resources that will be used (cleansing materials or cream that maybe applied)
- The measures in place for the safe disposal of nappies
- The measures in place for infection control
- The measures in place for dealing with spillages of bodily fluids e.g. diarrhoea
- What the staff member will do if the child is unduly distressed by the experience
- What the staff member must do if they notice marks or injuries on the child (www.safeguardingchildrenbarnsley.com)
- The agreement between the home and the setting/school (see working in partnership with families)

Settings/schools also need to consider the possibility of admitting a child with complex continence needs. In such circumstances the appropriate health care professional will need to be closely involved in forward planning. Personal care arrangements should be outlined in the Individual Healthcare plan

Resources

If several children wearing nappies enter EYFS provision of a school, there could be clear resource implications. Within a school, the EYFS teacher or co-ordinator should speak to the SENCO to ensure that additional resources from the notional SEND budget are allocated to the foundation stage to ensure that the children's individual needs are met. With the enhanced staffing levels within the private, voluntary or independent sector, allocating staff to change the children is not normally a challenge. However early years practitioners should consult with the setting SENCO to ensure the individual needs of each child are met.

Job descriptions

Where intimate care is **not** detailed in a job description, only staff members who have indicated a willingness to do so should be required to perform such tasks. All staff carrying out these tasks should be properly trained and supported.

Partnership working

There are many reasons why a child may not be fully continent, often linked to their age and stage of development or to delays in other areas of learning and development. A child may benefit from a planned programme of support, created in partnership with the child's parents/carers. This may involve other professionals such as the school nurse or health visitors, who have expertise in supporting parents to implement toilet training programmes with their children. Local Children's Centres also have a variety of information available to support with continence issues. You can find your local children's centre by visiting www.fsd.barnsley.gov.uk

Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence (**ERIC**) has many helpful publications which you may send for (see further information and guidance) to get additional information on continence issues.

Working in partnership with families

In some circumstances it may be appropriate for the setting/school to set up a home-setting/school agreement that defines the responsibilities that each partner has and the expectations each has for the other. This could include:

The parent/carer:

- Agreeing to ensure that the child is changed at the latest possible time before being brought to the setting/school
- Providing the setting/school with spare nappies and a change of clothing
- Understanding and agreeing the procedures that will be followed when the child is changed at setting/school - including the use of cleansing materials and the application of cream
- Agreeing to inform the setting/school should the child have any marks/rashes
- Agreeing to a 'minimum change' policy i.e. the setting/school would not undertake to change the child more frequently than if s/he were at home
- Agreeing to review arrangements when necessary

The setting/school:

- Agreeing to change the child should the child soil themselves or become wet
- Agreeing to monitor the number of times the child is changed in order to identify progress made
- Agreeing to follow appropriate procedures should the child be distressed or if marks/rashes are seen (www.safeguardingchildrenbarnsley.com)
- Agreeing to review arrangements should this be necessary.

This kind of agreement should help to avoid misunderstandings that might otherwise arise, and help parents/carers feel confident that the setting/school is taking a holistic view of their child's needs.

Useful Sources of Further Information

Barnsley Child Protection & Safeguarding in Education Settings Policy
www.safeguardingchildrenbarnsley.com

Families Service Directory Barnsley Council Online fsd.barnsley.gov.uk

Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence (**ERIC**)
www.eric.org.uk

Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation – procedural information (Home Office -October 2015)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/469448/FGM-Mandatory-Reporting-procedural-info-FINAL.pdf