

Continence Guidance in Early Years Foundation Stage Settings.



Introduction

There are more younger children now entering many pre-school settings and schools than before. Many more children with developmental delay or more complex needs now attend a mainstream setting.

Delayed continence is not necessarily linked with learning difficulties. By virtue of their immaturity, health or personal development, some children may still be in nappies or have occasional accidents especially in the first few months after admission.

Early years settings and schools must make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of each child and children should not be excluded nor treated less favourably because of their incontinence.

Hertfordshire County Council adopted guidance that was developed by The Council for Disabled Children and Leicester City LEA. This guidance was previously published on the Sure Start website.

This guidance is available to all settings, as well as to parents and carers through Hertfordshire County Councils website www.hertsdirect.org/childhoodsupport and through the Parent Partnership Service.

The following text is from the Council for Disabled/Leicester City LEA document with a small number of minor alterations or footnotes relevant to Hertfordshire.

We have also published a short leaflet "Supporting children who are in nappies - advice for early foundation stage settings", that seeks to answer some frequently asked questions. This can also be found on Hertfordshire County Council Website www.hertsdirect.org/childhoodsupport. We hope you find both publications helpful.



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. 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 set in motion action that ensures they provide an accessible toileting facility if this has not previously been available. 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 usually reached within the context of learning in the home before the child transfers to learning in a setting/school. 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 other children who are delayed in achieving continence. Delayed continence is not necessarily linked with learning 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 coming out of 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 will already have Hygiene or Infection Control policies as part of their Health and Safety policy. This is a necessary statement of the procedures the setting/school will follow 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 is likely to include:

- Staff to wear disposable gloves and aprons while dealing with the incident
- Soiled nappies to be double wrapped, or placed in a hygienic disposal unit if the number produced each week exceeds that allowed by the Health and Safety Executive's limit
- Changing area to be cleaned after use
- Hot water and liquid soap available to wash hands as soon as the task is completed
- Hot air dryer or paper towels available for drying hands.

Asking parents/carers of a child to come and change a child is likely to be a direct contravention of the Equalities Act and leaving a child in a soiled nappy for any length of time pending the return of the parent is a form of abuse.

EYFS Statement

The revised EYFS supports the gradual development of autonomy in self-care which includes the development of continence and is linked to age and stage as laid out in the revised EYFS development matters document. Card 1.4. Health and wellbeing gives principles into practice advice around a number of issues including those related to continence. Statutory Framework for EYFS 2012 (page 25 paragraph 3.59) provides information as to the premises and equipment required.

Facilities



Early years settings/schools are now admitting younger children, some of whom, by virtue of their immaturity, are likely to have occasional accidents, especially in the first few months after admission. Department for Education recommendations for purpose built EYFS units include an area for changing and showering children in order to meet the self care needs of young children. There is also evidence that there is a trend for the parents of children with more complex needs to request a place for their child in a mainstream school. A suitable place for changing children therefore, should have a high priority in any setting's/school's Access Plan. The Department of Health recommends that one extended cubicle with a wash basin should be provided in each school for children with disabilities. If it is not possible to provide a purpose built changing area then it is possible to buy a changing mat and change the child on the floor or on another suitable surface. A 'do not enter' sign (visually illustrated) can be placed on the toilet door to ensure that privacy and dignity are maintained during the time taken to change the child. Clean, fresh water drinking facilities should be available at all times.

Child protection

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 to ensure that abuse does not take place. Few settings/schools will have the staffing resources to provide two members of staff for nappy changing and CRB checks are carried out to ensure the safety of children with staff employed in EYFS settings. If there is known risk of false allegation by a child then a single practitioner should not undertake nappy changing. 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 can find more advice on Child Protection on the Hertfordshire Safeguarding website www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk

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 are not worried about false accusations of abuse. Parents/carers should be aware of the procedures the school will follow should their child need changing during school time.

Your written guidelines will specify:

- Who will change the nappy
- Where nappy changing 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?
- 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 (visit www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk)
- What the agreement is between the home-setting/school (see partnership working)

Settings/schools may also need to consider the possibility of special circumstances arising should a child with complex continence needs be admitted. 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 care plan.

Resources

Depending on the accessibility and convenience of a setting/school's facilities, it could take 10 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 target, and of course, the time spent changing the child can be a positive, learning time.

If several children wearing nappies enter EYFS provision of a setting/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 school's delegated SEN budget are allocated to the foundation stage group to ensure that the children's individual needs are met. With the enhanced staffing levels of provision within the private, voluntary or independent sector allocating staff to change the children should not be such an issue. However early years practitioners should be consulting with the setting SENCO to ensure the individual needs of children are met.

Job descriptions

Occasionally a setting/school will say that offering personal care is not in the job descriptions of their staff. It is hard to believe how this could be the case for any early years practitioner working with young children, and we would recommend that this be included at the next review of job descriptions. Certainly any new posts should offer personal care to promote independent toileting and other self-care skills as one of the tasks.

Keys to Success

It is not helpful to assume that the child has failed to achieve full continence because the parent/carer hasn't bothered to try. There are very few parents/carers for whom this would be true. In the unlikely event this is the only reason why the child has not become continent then continence achievement should be uncomplicated if a positive and structured approach is used in partnership with the parent/carer.

Remember that delayed continence may be linked with delays in other aspects of the child's development and will benefit from a planned programme worked out in partnership with the child's parents/carers.

There are other professionals who can help with advice and support. The school nurse or health visitors have expertise in this area and can support parents to implement toilet training programmes in the home. Health care professionals can also carry out a full health assessment in order to rule out any medical cause of continence problems. Local Children's Centres will have a variety of information available to support with continence issues.

You can find your local children's centre by visiting the children's centre website www.hertsdirect.org/childrenscentres

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.

Parents are more likely to be open about their concerns about their child's learning and development and seek help if they are confident that they and their child are not going to be judged for the child's delayed learning.

Partnership working

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 their child is changed at school - including the use of any cleanser or the application of any cream
- Agreeing to inform the setting/school should the child have any marks/rash
- 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 should this be necessary

The setting/school:

- Agreeing to change the child during a single session should the child soil themselves or become uncomfortably wet
- Agreeing how often the child would be changed should the child be staying for the full day
- 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
(visit www.hertssafeguarding.org.uk)
- 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.



Further information and guidance

Education and Resources for Improving Childhood Continence (ERIC),
34 Old School House, Britannia Road, Kinswood, Bristol, BS15 8BD.
Telephone: 0117 960 3060 Helpline 0845 3708008
Website www.eric.org.uk

Good Practice in Continence Services, 2000.

Available free from Department of Health, PO Box 777, London SE1 6XH or
www.doh.gov.uk/continenceservices.htm

Managing Medicines in Schools and Early Years Settings 2005 you can download a pdf copy of this document from the Department of Health website publications page. www.dh.gov.uk

Including Me - managing complex health needs in schools and early year settings. You can download a copy from www.hertsdirect.org/childhoodsupport and visit the information and updates page.

If you require further support please contact your Inclusion Development Officer (IDO) or Early Years Consultant

**Download copies of this leaflet at:
www.hertsdirect.org/childhoodsupport
and visit the Information and Updates page.**

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