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Epidemic and Pandemic Policy

Adopted March 2023

Statement of Intent

Toad Hall Nursery Limited intend to use this policy to provide precautionary measures to minimise transmission risks of disease in the setting during an epidemic or pandemic. It also states ideas for continuity of business if allowed.

Legislation and leading authorities which have guided and influenced this policy are: Coronavirus Act 2020, Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Government Briefings, Public Health England (PHE) and World Health Organisation (WHO). Advice from but not limited to, The Secretary of State, The Chief Medical Officer, Local Authority (LA) and Department for Education (DfE). The policy also has regard to Ofsted and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) guidance where appropriate.

Aim of Policy

This Policy defines and assists the operating arrangements in place within the nursery that assures compliance to the Government and leading bodies requirements with relation to the outbreak of a pandemic such as Covid-19. This information builds upon our current procedures for areas such as Safeguarding, Child Protection and Equality and Diversity, however new practices may emerge as the situation continues. The policy and considerations may evolve and be built upon as the situation deepens and new precautionary measures have been introduced and practices have been reflected upon.

Method

As early years providers we ensure to offer a continuum of very high standards of practice of childcare and education. The fundamental principles to be outlined in this policy are set out to ensure physical distancing is enabled and implement good hygiene practices as well as avoiding meeting infected children and adults or anyone displaying symptoms. It states the protective measures put in place for children, parents, and staff as best as possible to ensure the risk of transmission is reduced. We will continue to follow our other policies if they do not conflict with this policy and be guided by the EYFS as best as we can. The main areas we will be considering are:

- Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell.
- Maintaining personal and respiratory hygiene (handwashing, catch it, kill it, bin it)
- Ensuring cleanliness of the environment (especially frequently touched surfaces)
- Minimising general contact and mixing (creating bubbles and limiting numbers)
- The use of Protective and Personal Equipment (PPE)
- Testing - Using both Lateral Flow tests (LFT) & Polymerase chain Reaction tests (PCR)

Focus/ Areas of Consideration / Recommendations

Children

Attendance

- Only children who are symptom free or have completed the required isolation period should attend the setting.

Wellbeing and education

- Children should be supported in age-appropriate ways to understand the steps they can take to keep themselves safe including regular hand washing, coughing into an elbow, using a tissue and adopting a catch it, kill it, bin it regime.
- Children should be supported to understand the changes and challenges they may be encountering as a result of the pandemic and staff need to ensure they are aware of children's attachments and their need for emotional support at this time.
- EYFS framework will continue to be delivered through play and adult led activities.

Workforce

Attendance

- Staff should only attend nursery if they are symptom free, have completed the required isolation period or achieved a negative test result. All staff are eligible for testing if they display symptoms.
- Consideration should be given to limiting the number of staff in the nursery at any one time to only those required to care for the expected occupancy levels on any given day.
- Staff hours, days they work, and length of day may change to meet childcare demands and considerations within this policy.

Physical distancing/ grouping /safety

- Staff will complete a risk assessment before opening to address any risks from the virus, ensure sensible measures are in place to control risks.
- Staff to be informed of measures in place and sign a disclaimer to state they have read and understood the nursery's policies and procedures.
- Emergency revisions to the EYFS may have been implemented which provides some flexibility on ratios and qualifications to make this feasible.
- Staff have been advised by the government not to wear PPE such as facemasks during their day but should continue to wear PPE at the usual times such as intimate care and wear disposable gloves.
- All PPE should be removed and disposed of following current government guidelines, the staff member should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds.
- The staff member who supported the unwell child does not need to go home unless they are developing symptoms themselves.
- Staff will be responsible to ensure appropriate cleaning takes place and enough ventilation is in the room such as opening windows. If doors are open, ensure the safety of the children is maintained. Air quality monitors are also used in the units which were provided by the department of education.
- Staff members should avoid physical contact with each other including handshakes, hugs etc.

Training

- Where possible, meetings and training sessions should be conducted through virtual conferencing.

- All staff members must receive appropriate instruction and training in infection control and the standard operating procedure and risk assessments within which they will be operating.
- Online training may be available to allow their training levels to be maintained if appropriate.

Parents

Physical distancing

- Only parents who are symptom free and or have completed the required isolation periods will be able to drop off or collect their child.
- Aim to minimise the 'pinch points' during the day and limit drop off and pick up to one parent per family.
- Arrange drop off and pick up at the entrances to avoid parents entering the buildings unnecessarily.
- When parents are waiting to drop off or collect their child, physical distancing should be maintained in a safe area sticking to government social distancing policies.
- Consider allowing some parents to enter the nursery for the purpose of a settling in session if not doing so would cause a child distress, this could take place in the outdoor environment. The provider should consider measures to minimise contact between the parent and other children and staff members.
- If the child is too distressed perhaps a delayed start to the nursery may be preferred or half hour settling in sessions without their parent.

Communications

- Parents should receive clear communication regarding the role they play in the safe operating procedure and all measures being taken to ensure the safety of their children and themselves.
- Parents should inform nursery of their circumstances and if they plan to keep their child away, this helps nursery to conform to our safeguarding policy.

Visitors

- Attendance to the setting should be restricted to only children and staff as far as practically possible and visitors should not be permitted to the nursery unless essential (e.g., essential building maintenance).
- Where essential visits are required, we will endeavour for this to happen outside of the usual nursery operational hours where possible or during quieter periods of the day.
- As far as possible parents and carers should not enter the premises.

Travel

- Wherever possible staff and parents should travel to nursery alone, using their own transport.
- Parents should be encouraged to ensure they do not leave travel accessories including buggies, car seats, scooters in the setting premises or grounds.
- Outings from the nursery into the local community should be restricted to ensure mixing with members of the general public does not happen.

Hygiene and Health & Safety

Hand Washing

- All children and staff must wash their hands upon arrival at the nursery for at least 20 seconds.
- Children and staff members should be encouraged to wash their hands frequently, this includes before and after eating food, after visiting the toilet or playing outdoors,

after sneezing, blowing their nose or coughing into their hand and dealing with unwell people.

- Bodily fluid spills should follow the correct procedures as normal.

Cleaning

- An enhanced cleaning schedule must be implemented that includes furniture, surfaces and children's toys and equipment and all staff are responsible in their area of work.
- Communal area, touch points and hand washing facilities must be cleaned and sanitised regularly and cleaned thoroughly every night.
- A deep clean may be needed after a child has become ill in the area they were waiting.

Waste disposal

- All waste must be disposed of in a hygienic and safe manner following government guidelines.
- Tissues must be immediately disposed of and placed in a bin with a bag and a lid.
- Bodily fluids must be double bagged and disposed of in a bin with a bag, and a lid.

Laundry

- All items within the setting requiring laundering must be washed at a high temperature.
- Items such as towels, flannels and bedding must not be shared by children.

PPE

- Government guidance is that PPE is not required for general use in early years settings to protect against transmission.
- PPE should continue to be worn and disposed of as normal for nappy changing, one to one care and the administration of first aid.

Premises Building

- Where premises have been temporarily closed during the lockdown period or where they may need to temporarily close during future lockdowns appropriate Health & Safety checks should be conducted prior to reopening including legionnaires checks.
- Keep windows open where possible to ensure good levels of ventilation. If doors are opened ensure the children safety is maintained with locked gates.

Resources

- Children should not be permitted to bring items from home into the setting unless absolutely essential for their wellbeing. Anything that is brought in from home should remain in the child's bag on their peg.
- All resources required for play and learning experiences of children should be regularly washed and/or sterilized. Any resources which are difficult to clean should be removed.
- Equipment used by staff such as stationary, tablets etc. should be allocated to individual staff members where possible and cleaned regularly.

Supplies Procurement & monitoring

- The nursery should ensure an adequate supply of essential supplies and contingency plans such as additional suppliers are in place to minimise the impact of any shortages of supplies.
- The nursery will not be able to operate without essential supplies required for ensuring infection control.
- A monitoring system for the usage of PPE is essential to ensure that a supply of stock is available to all who require it as and when required to meet the operational needs of the setting. When stocks are low, other options may be considered, such as the use of washable tabards and facemasks. These items will be washed at a high temperature in accordance with relevant guidelines and separate to any other preschool washing.
- In case the supply of food is interrupted, procedures must be implemented to ensure the appropriate food alternatives are sourced and normal food safety and hygiene processes are followed.

Responding to a suspected case

- In the event of a child developing suspected symptoms whilst attending the setting, they should be collected as soon as possible and isolate at home in line with the current NHS guidance.
- The person responsible for cleaning ideally should be the person dealing with the unwell child and should continue to wear their PPE. This should then be disposed of according to current government guidelines.
- In the event of a staff member developing suspected coronavirus symptoms whilst working at the nursery, they should return home immediately and isolate at home in line with the NHS guidance. They should also follow current testing advice for themselves and their household.

Monitoring of this policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the setting manager/director, new government legislation and policies will be incorporated appropriately as and when required or informed.