47. COVID-19 Infection Control Policy

**Review date: 13/07/2020**

Links Childcare’s Infection Control Policy has been reviewed in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with HPSC and TUSLA’s Early Years Inspectorate Guidance and Information on how to plan for re-opening and operating as safely as possible at this time. What is set out below is the additional enhanced procedures and should be read in conjunction with the service’s standard policy. Refer to Links Childcare COVID-19 Response Plan for further details.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:
- Cough - this can be any kind of cough, usually dry but not always
- Fever - high temperature over 38 degrees Celsius
- Shortness of Breath
- Breathing Difficulties

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to appear. Some cases are asymptomatic, meaning there are no symptoms, however the individual is still infected with Covid-19.

How it is transmitted or spread
- COVID-19 is transmitted in breath, sneeze or cough droplets
- The virus is transmitted through bodily fluids from an infected person’s nose or mouth coming in contact with your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Transmission can be directly from person to person, however it is more commonly transmitted indirectly, when you touch surfaces or objects where the virus is present, followed by touching your face, where the virus enters through the mucous membranes
- Children are not more likely than adults to spread the virus

How to reduce the risk of transmission

**Hand hygiene**
Refer to the Links Childcare Hand Hygiene Policy

**Coughing Etiquette**

Respiratory hygiene practice, good respiratory hygiene, that is, when coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately into a closed bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub (for adults) and for children
soap and water for 40-60 seconds (or hand sanitiser if soap and water not available) and in line with the WHO and HSE recommendations.

- Educarers and children must adopt good respiratory hygiene and etiquette
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or into a tissue
- Links Childcare ensures that tissues are readily accessible throughout the crèche with a dedicated pedal operated bin provided in each of the rooms and in the outdoor areas for easy disposal of used tissues.
- Educarers and children should wash their hands after coughing or sneezing

**Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth**
The virus enters the body through eyes, nose and mouth so, refraining from touching your face drastically reduces the chances of contracting the virus.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
Links Childcare will have an adequate supply of PPE for use when required by Educarer including disposable single use plastic aprons and non-powdered, non-permeable gloves e.g. when there is a risk of coming in contact with bodily fluids.

**Social distancing**
- **Maintain social or physical distancing**, that is, leave at least 2 metres distance between adults
- As part of social distancing a ‘no handshaking policy’ will be implemented
- Links Childcare recognises that it is not possible for Educarers to observe physical distancing when caring for young children and it is not practical nor recommended that young children should physically distance from each other in their play pod.

**Specific measures to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in our setting**

**Play Pods**
Where possible the Links Childcare will implement the DCYA recommendation to organise children and Educarers into ‘play pods’ which comprise of a group of children and Educarers, who remain with that group of children as key Educarers each day and throughout the day as far as possible. The purpose of the ‘play pods’ is to limit the number of people a child and a staff member have contact with, to facilitate contact tracing and to support close, positive interactions between children and their adult caregivers. As far as possible, there will be no contact between two or more play pods (children and Educarers). Within a play pod social distancing between young children is not recommended and, therefore, we will not expect children to social distance in their pods.

In the event that an Educarer has to move between play pods e.g. to cover for staff members absences/breaks, they must wash hands on entry and leaving a play pod and a record should
be kept of this movement. They will also wear visors as an extra precaution when covering in a Pod.

Links Childcare will manage the circulation and movement of children in their play pod between their room, the toilets, the outdoor area and any other areas of the crèche so as to ensure no physical contact with children or Educarers in other play pods in as far as possible.

A record will be retained of the people (children and carers) in each pod on each day to facilitate contact tracing in the event of an episode of the infection.

**Educarer’s physical contact with children**

- Links Childcare requires Educarers in the same play pod to implement social distancing of 2 meters between them while they are working with children in as far as possible, whilst ensuring children are kept safe and well cared for.
- Links Childcare recognises that babies and young children need physical contact and comfort from Educarers for their safety, their wellbeing and to attend to their personal care needs and that Educarers will have close contact with children in their play pod.

**Physical environment**

- The premises will be cleaned thoroughly both indoor and outdoor prior to the crèche re-opening, including all toys and equipment
- Links Childcare will ventilate the environment as much as possible and within temperature requirements e.g. through opening windows in advance of children being in the room or while they are outside. COVID-19 thrives more in an indoor environment.
- Links Childcare will use the outdoor space as much as possible when the weather permits. This increases the space for activities to be set up and increases the space between children.
- Child friendly signage will be displayed including physical distance markings in communal areas and at drop and collection points to encourage social distancing and to prevent groups congregating
- A notice at the entrance to the crèche stating that children and staff may not attend if a child/parent/household member or staff member has
  - ✔ signs or symptoms of respiratory infection, such as a cough, shortness of breath and/or fever
  - ✔ temperature of 38C or over
- Children’s personal items (e.g. clothing and bags) will be separately stored for each child
Physical environment – Educarer areas
- Staff will not share equipment such as pens, cups and plates but have these items for their own personal use.
- Staff must ensure social distancing of 2 meters in the staff room at all times
- Staff are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting their tables and chairs after use for the next person.
- Cutlery and crockery should be removed from the staff room after use. Staff are responsible for their own cutlery and crockery.

Toys and equipment
- Links Childcare will offer toys that can be easily cleaned, disinfected (where necessary) and dried on a daily basis
- Links Childcare will limit the use of playdough, gloop and similar materials, and where being used should not be shared between the children and should be replaced daily
- Links Childcare will limit food preparation activities (on a temporary basis during this Covid-19 emergency) where children take turns in preparing and later eating the food
- Toys, jigsaws and puzzles used by babies and young children, which have been placed in their mouths, will need to be capable of being washed before reuse by another child in their play pod.

Food provision
- Chefs should not be moving between rooms. Food should be brought to the individual care rooms and served by the Educarers working in the ‘play pod’ in the room.
- Links Childcare actively discourages the sharing of food between children and between Educarers.

Sleep/rest
- Sleeping cots will be arranged so that there is physical distance of 2 meters between groups of cots for children from different pods
- Where children cannot be provided with their own named cot, children can use the same cot at different times subject to strict infection control practices being undertaken between use
  - ✔ Cleaning of the cot frame
  - ✔ Cleaning of the mattress
  - ✔ Changing of the bed linen
  - ✔ Labelling of the sleep equipment with the name(s) of the children who use the cot
  - ✔ Record of when the bed linen was changed
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- Daily cleaning of mattresses and sleep mats must take place with additional cleaning required when visibly soiled.
- The provision of individual sheets and bed linen is required, and Educarers must be vigilant in the safe removal and laundering of soiled linen and the appropriate storage of clean bed linen.

**Children’s personal care**

- Links Childcare uses the following procedure: when providing personal care to babies such as nappy changing or supporting toddlers with toileting: Educarer should wear disposable single use plastic aprons and non-powdered, non-permeable gloves as well as washing hands before and after use of gloves.

**Enhanced COVID-19 Cleaning Schedules**

We will use enhanced cleaning schedules which specify:

- The areas to be cleaned, particularly frequently touched surfaces, e.g. light switches, door handles, taps, toilet flush handles, tables
- The method of cleaning, frequency of cleaning, and the cleaning product to be used
- All toys, in particular mouthed toys, and also outdoor toys and equipment
- Each care room will have an adequate supply of cleaning agents stored safely so that Educarers do not have to leave the care room to retrieve them. The manager will ensure that there are adequate supplies of cleaning agents, liquid soap, hand gel/rub, paper hand towel.

**Cleaning of Toys**

- All toys (including those not currently in use) will be cleaned on a regular basis, i.e. weekly. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs.
- Toys that are used by very young children will be washed daily.
- Toys that children put in their mouths will be washed after use.
- All toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or body fluids will be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal. Toys waiting to be cleaned will be stored separately.

**Cleaning Procedure**

- Wash the toy in warm soapy water, using a brush to get into crevices.
- Rinse the toy in clean water.
- Thoroughly dry the toy.
- Hard plastic toys may be suitable for cleaning in the dishwasher.
- Toys that cannot be immersed in water i.e. electronic or wind up will be wiped with a clean damp cloth and dried.
Disinfection procedure
- In some situations, toys/equipment may need to be disinfected following cleaning. For example:
  - Toys/equipment that children will place in their mouths.
  - Toys/equipment that have been soiled with blood or body fluids.

Fire Evacuation
- Fire evacuation will be carried out per room rather than the entire building during the period of COVID-19

Waste Management
All personal waste, including used tissues and all cleaning waste, will be placed in a plastic rubbish bag.
The bag will be tied when it is almost full and then placed it into a second bin bag and tied. Once the bag has been tied securely, it should be left somewhere safe.
Foot-operated bins are available in all rooms and accessible to Educarer and children.
In the event of a suspected case or confirmed case of COVID-19 occurring at the crèche, the following waste management system will be used:
  - There is a supply of refuse bags available for the double bagging and disposal of contaminated waste to be used only if a case of COVID-19 is suspected in the crèche.
  - A designated area for the storage of possible contaminated COVID-19 waste for 3 days must be available after which time it can be placed with normal waste.

Ventilation
Rooms will be kept well ventilated

Outdoor Play
We will maximise the use of the outdoors. Outdoor times will be staggered according to pod formation.
Educarer and Children will wash hands on entry to and exit of outdoor area.
Sinks have been installed in the gardens to facilitate hand washing.
Actions to prevent adults and children with symptoms of COVID-19 from entering the crèche

Educarer: Health and Safety Authority return to work protocol

● Before returning to work all Educarers must complete a pre-return to work form at least three days in advance of returning to work. This form should seek confirmation that the Educarer member to the best of their knowledge has no symptoms of COVID-19, that they are not self-isolating, that they are not a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days or awaiting results of a COVID-19 coronavirus test.

● On the day of arrival at work after Annual Leave or when commencing employment all staff are asked to sign a declaration that they have quarantined for 14 days if they have travelled abroad. This will apply as long as the Government of the Republic of Ireland is recommending restricted movements on arrival in the country.

● If an Educarer is identified as being in the “at risk or vulnerable category”, the crèche will carry out a risk assessment with the Educarer member and identify what controls can be put in place to support the Educarer member’s safe return to work. It is recommended in the Return to Work Safely Protocol that vulnerable or at-risk Educarers should be preferentially supported to maintain a physical distance of 2 meters, however while this may be possible between Educarer, this will be challenging if not impossible to implement while working with young children.

Educarer: After returning to work

● After a return to work, any Educarer who is unwell with a fever, has a cold, influenza or infectious respiratory symptoms of any kind or displaying any of the symptoms\(^1\) of the coronavirus, they need to stay at home, contact their GP and seek their guidance on referral for coronavirus testing.

● Any Educarer with symptoms of coronavirus or who tests positive should quarantine at home for 14 days and only return to the Links Childcare when the symptoms have fully resolved and with a doctor’s certificate stating that the Educarer member is no longer infectious.

● Any Educarer member who is a close contact of a person who has COVID-19 should stay at home and quarantine\(^2\) for 14 days even though the Educarer member feels well but it is possible that they are also infected. It can take 2 – 14 days to show symptoms, so it may take up to 14 days to know if they are infected or not. They should only return to the crèche with a doctor’s certificate to say they do not have coronavirus and are not infectious.

\(^1\) https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html
\(^2\) http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/docs/COVHomeQuarantine.pdf
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- An Educarer must adhere to all public health travel restrictions that are in place e.g. quarantine for 14 days on return from non-essential travel abroad or any other travel restrictions that are put in place

Children: Child return to Links Childcare
- Before returning to the Links Childcare parents will be asked to complete a pre-return to Links Childcare form for their child. This form will seek confirmation that the child, to the best of the parent’s knowledge, is well, has no symptoms of COVID-19, that they are not a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days or awaiting results of a COVID-19 coronavirus test, and that they are not in a risk category.

Children: After returning to Links Childcare
- Any child who is unwell with fever, cold, influenza or infectious respiratory symptoms of any kind or displaying any symptoms of coronavirus, needs to stay at home, contact their GP and seek their guidance on referral for coronavirus testing.

Any child with symptoms of coronavirus or who tests positive should quarantine at home for 14 days and only return to the crèche when the symptoms have fully resolved and with a doctor’s certificate stating that the child is no longer infectious.

Any child who is a close contact of a person who has or is suspected to have COVID-19 should stay at home and quarantine for 14 days even though the child feels well but it is possible that they are also infected. It can take 2 – 14 days to show symptoms, so it may take up to 14 days to know if they are infected or not. They should only return to crèche with a doctor’s certificate to say they do not have coronavirus and are not infectious.

- Parents/guardians must adhere to all public health travel restrictions that are in place e.g. quarantine for 14 days on return from non-essential travel abroad or any other travel restrictions that are put in place

Parents
- Only parents or carers who are well and have no symptoms of COVID-19 or who have served the required quarantine time of 14 days where advised should be allowed to drop off and collect children.
- Parents are asked to wear face covering at drop –off and collection time.
Visitors and contractors

- Where at all possible, we will limit access to the service to Educarer and children only.
- Visitors or contractors will only be permitted to enter the service on essential business e.g. essential maintenance and they should be asked to make these visits outside of the usual operational hours.
- Where external deliveries are required, practices will be put in place to ensure that delivery staff remain outside the premises and adhere to social distancing and good infection control practices.
- All visitors and contractors will be required to sign the Service's Visitors' Book giving their name, date of visit, contact details and reason for them being at the service.
- People who are in high risk or vulnerable categories will be asked not to attend.

The incident plan where a child or Educarer member has or is suspected of having COVID-19 while attending the service

To safely manage a situation whereby a Educarer member or a child becomes unwell while in the Service and may be presenting as a suspected case of COVID-19 the Service has an incident plan in place including:

- The Service has an Infection Control Officer.
- The Service has appointed a COVID-19 lead Educarer representative.
- Management has identified a designated isolation room or area in the Service and the route to the isolation area.
- The purpose of moving a Educarer member or child who is presenting as unwell and maybe a suspected case of COVID-19, is to move them away from other Educarer and children thereby reducing the risk of transmission of the virus to others.
- We will ensure that the Educarer or child who is presenting with symptoms of COVID-19 is at least 2 meters distance from other Educarers and children.
- Management will ensure that the isolation room or area will contain Personal Protective Equipment i.e. disposable aprons, gloves, face masks; tissues, hand sanitizer, disinfectant, dedicated pedal bin to dispose of any waste material.

Review

Management, in consultation with staff, monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy yearly or as required.

Issue date: 26th June 2020
If a staff member becomes unwell and presents as a suspected case of COVID-19 while at work in Links Childcare

The staff member will be accompanied to the isolation area via the isolation route by a designated person so as to reduce the risk of transmission to children and staff in other ‘play pods’. The accompanying staff member must maintain a distance of at least 2 meters from the staff member who is unwell.

A mask will be provided for the staff member, tissues if required, and to use the dedicated waste bin, as necessary.

The staff member should be advised not to touch surfaces, people or any objects.

Assess whether the unwell staff member can immediately be asked to go home and contact their GP. This assessment may include temperature testing.

Arrange transport home or to hospital for medical assessment if necessary. Public transport of any kind should not be used.

The staff member should only return to the Service with a doctor’s certificate to say they do not have COVID-19 and are not infectious.

The Staff member should notify the manager as soon as possible.

An assessment of the incident will be carried out at the end of the process, which will form part of any follow-up actions.

Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning and disinfection of the isolation area or any other area.
FOLLOW-UP: If COVID-19 is confirmed Links Childcare will notify Tusla.
CHILD

If a child becomes unwell and presents as a suspected case of Covid-19 while at work at Links Childcare

The child should be brought to the isolation area via the isolation route by a designated person so as to reduce the risk of transmission to children and Educarers in other ‘play pods’. The Educarer member should keep at least 2 meters apart from the child if at all possible and should wear a Visor or face covering.

Where a child is unable to walk or is too young to walk to the isolation area, the Educarer will wear protective equipment, i.e. disposable apron, gloves and face mask, and carry the child to the isolation area using the isolation route.

It is not recommended that children under 13 years of age wear a face mask. Provide tissues if required and use the dedicated waste bin, as necessary.

The Educarer caring for the child in isolation can wear personal protective equipment, i.e. face mask, disposable apron and gloves.

The child should be encouraged not to touch surfaces, people or any objects.

The child’s parents will be contacted immediately and asked to collect the child and to contact their GP. Public transport of any kind will not be used.

The child should only return to crèche with a doctor’s certificate to say they do not have COVID-19 and are not infectious.

An assessment of the incident will be carried out at the end of the process, which will form part of any follow-up actions. Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning and disinfection of the isolation area or any other area.
FOLLOW-UP: If COVID-19 is confirmed Links Childcare will notify Tusla.