

**Nappy changing facilities for early learning and childcare services:
information to support improvement**

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Introduction

Services caring for young children who use nappies, or who may need help with continence aids, must have appropriate facilities. These facilities must provide children with a safe, clean environment and appropriate equipment, while promoting privacy, dignity and, for older children, independence.

Appropriate nappy changing and personal care facilities are essential for the health and wellbeing of children and of staff. If you are applying for a new registration or a variation of an existing early learning and childcare setting, this guidance tells you about the standards when providing nappy changing or personal care facilities for young children.

It is important that everyone who plans, provides, commissions or uses early learning and childcare settings is aware of the expected nappy changing facilities they must have. Providers must take into account new guidance or research as it becomes available.

This guidance will help providers and staff to take into account the relevant [Health and Social Care Standards](#) (1):

1.0 I experience high quality care and support that is right for me

1.4 If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected.

4.11 I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice

5.4 If I require intimate personal care, there is a suitable area for this, including a sink if needed.

It also takes into account [Space to Grow](#), the design guidance for early learning and childcare and out of school care settings (2).

Background:

Gastrointestinal illnesses including Norovirus, Salmonella, or E Coli O157 are highly infectious and can potentially be transmitted in the nappy changing area if good standard infection prevention and control precautions (SICPs) are not adhered to. Hygienic nappy changing practice and effective cleaning of equipment and the environment is vital to reduce the risks of transmitting infection to children and staff.

[Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings](#) (October 2016) (3) was published by Health Protection Scotland and gives guidance on infection prevention and control for staff working within nurseries, daycare centres, playgroups, crèches, children's centres, childminders, after-school clubs and holiday clubs.

It is important that all members of staff and providers of childcare settings have a clear understanding of their role in preventing the spread of infection. They should be familiar with guidance, policies and procedures that are in place to prevent and control infection in childcare settings.

Infections are caused by microorganisms including bacteria, fungi and viruses. There are many types of microorganisms; they are found everywhere and most are harmless. However, certain microorganisms, often called germs, can harm those vulnerable to infection. Children and those who care for them may be exposed to these harmful microorganisms within childcare settings, more than children cared for in their own homes. Minor coughs, colds and respiratory infections are relatively commonplace, especially at certain times of the year.

Outbreaks of more serious infections such as E.coli can cause severe illness and potentially affect the longer-term health of children. While it is not common, E.coli O157 outbreaks have been reported in Scottish early learning and childcare settings resulting in infections in children and staff (4) (5). Outcomes of such infections can have serious effects for those affected, with children aged under five years most susceptible. It is important to be aware that some people can be infected but don't get or show any symptoms.

Hygienic nappy changing practice and effective decontamination of equipment and the environment is vital to reduce the risks of transmitting infection to children and staff.

This guidance aims to help reduce the potential for infection in both children and staff. Any early learning and childcare setting that cares for children who use nappies, must have appropriate changing facilities. Nappy changing areas should be designated for that use only and should be separate to play areas, food preparation areas, serving areas and laundry areas.

Children aged under two years are especially vulnerable to infection due to an immature and developing immune system and are totally dependent on staff to meet all their care needs. Children under two years must have a self-contained designated nappy changing room.

For children older than two years, nappy changing can happen within a children's toilet area for example, in a partitioned area with appropriate nappy changing and hand washing facilities or within a toilet cubicle that has space for the required facilities including a hand-washing sink. It may be suitable for changing facilities to be within an accessible toilet if the toilet is designated for the children's use only.

More information on building standards for nappy changing facilities is available in the Scottish Government's [building standards handbook](#) (6).

Common features for nappy changing areas

Provision: there should be a minimum of one nappy changing facility for every 10 children using nappies.

Location: nappy changing facilities must be separate but conveniently close to the playrooms, so staff can easily change children's nappies in a timely manner.

Space: there should be enough space for staff and children to manoeuvre safely. Where nappy changing facilities are within a toilet cubicle, the changing unit should not cover or block the toilet.

Surfaces: walls, ceiling, door and flooring must be of a suitable material that can be easily cleaned as necessary.

Lighting: this can be natural or artificial but must be enough to allow safe practice and provide reassurance to the child.

Heating: should be maintained an acceptable temperature for the comfort of the child in a form that eliminates the risk of burns or scalds.

Ventilation: could include

- a window that opens and complies with Scottish building standards and takes account of any health and safety warnings
- an extractor fan that does not directly vent into another room and is on while the room is being used and stays on for a period of time after the room has been vacated (where an extractor fan is necessary, it must be fit for purpose, adequate for the size of the room and maintained according to manufacturer's instructions).

Nappy changing units:

- must be of a suitable size and strength appropriate to the age and weight of the child
- should include a changing mat or surface that is waterproof, easy to clean and in a good state of repair so it can be cleaned and decontaminated thoroughly as required

- must conform to relevant safety standards, particularly in relation to wall mounted units, if used (7)
- could have steps up to the unit depending on age of the child
- must have some form of separation if there are multiple units within the same area, either by a clear space or a cleanable partition between each nappy changing unit.

Hand washing facilities:

- there must be a designated sink for hand washing only, which must be located within the nappy changing area; it may have a step for children who are able to use it
- the hand washing sink must be of a suitable size to allow hand washing and have running hot and cold water (8)
- dispensers for non-antibacterial liquid or foam soap and paper towels or hand dryers must be provided (3)
- children and staff must never share hand washing water in communal basins (5) (3).
- Hand sanitisers are not a substitute for handwashing (9)

Waste bins:

- should be used for disposable nappies and equipment; this could be a foot operated, lined, lidded bin or a specific bin designed for used disposable nappies (3).
- there should also be a general waste bin for used paper towels and other waste.

Storage:

- A storage facility for bagged, used, non-disposable nappies or soiled clothing awaiting collection by parents may be necessary.
- for nappies, wipes and children's personal belongings must be provided; for example, cupboards with doors, storage drawers, sealed plastic containers or cleanable bags
- best practice is for all nappy changing products to be taken directly to the nappy changing unit for each child on each occasion (3).
- store personal protective equipment (PPE) so it is easy to access when staff need it.

Cleaning products:

- all cleaning products, including general purpose detergent or non-antibacterial surface cleaner used for cleaning of surfaces and nappy changing unit including mat (8) must be kept out of reach of children and prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions(10)

Use of potties:

- if a service uses children's potties, it is essential that facilities for cleaning and storage are available; staff should not wash potties in a designated hand wash sink and must store potties out of reach of children when not in use
- If a separate sink for potties is not available, the sink used must be disinfected after use.

Important

- The nappy changing experience should be a relaxed, happy and social routine that provides valuable opportunities for interactions between staff and children on an individual basis. The environment should be organised in a way that promotes those positive interactions while also supporting positive learning experiences.
- Nappy changing policies should consider best practice and be reviewed regularly.
- Service providers should consider staff safety when they are lifting children.
- It is good practice is to allow children including babies to wash their hands after nappy changing.

References, useful links and further reading:

(1) Health and Social Care Standards, Scottish Government, June 2017.

(2) Space to Grow: Scottish Government, June 2017.

(3) Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day Care and Childminding Settings) Health Protection Scotland, NHS National Services Scotland, October 2016 and subsequent amendments:

<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resourcedocument.aspx?id=5761>

(4) E.coli O157 Outbreak at Careshare Nursery, Lauder Dunfermline in May 2006. Report from the Outbreak Control Team. Fife Health Board 2007.

(5) Outbreak of E. coli O157 infection at Rose Lodge Nursery, Aboyne, May 2012 Report of the Incident Management Team:

www.nhsgrampian.org/grampianfoi/files/Item10.4.1CGCReportIMTRReport.doc

(6) Building standards Non-Domestic Technical Handbook 2007 Section 3.12.12 Baby Changing facilities:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/217736/0117139.pdf>

(7) Standards which relate to nappy changing units can be purchased from www.standardsuk.com. This includes British Standards (BS) European Standards (EN) and International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO).

BS EN 12221-1:2008 and BS EN 12221-2:2008 refer to the maximum weight of a child that can be supported by a nappy changing unit.

BS EN 71 – 3:1994 covers installation by a professional tradesman who understands the product appropriately and is able to determine suitability of wall or panel the device is attached to.

(8) Information about types of sinks and associated equipment that reflects the key principles to help prevent infection can be found in Scottish Health Facilities Note 30:, Version 3 Infection control in the built environment: Design and planning, NHS National Services Scotland, January 2007.

[http://www.infectioncontrol.co.nz/uploaded/file/downloads/Scottish%20Health%20Facilities%202007shfn-30-v3\[1\].pdf](http://www.infectioncontrol.co.nz/uploaded/file/downloads/Scottish%20Health%20Facilities%202007shfn-30-v3[1].pdf)

(9) Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions; Industry Code of Practice, June 2012

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/visitor-attractions.htm>

(10) Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH):

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/>

Other available information:

Health and safety regulations and guidance are available at www.hse.gov.uk

Hand washing information is available in Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day Care and Childminding Settings) October 2016 and subsequent amendments. Available from www.hps.scot.nhs.uk

<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resourcedocument.aspx?id=5761>

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