

# Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders)

Publication date: July 2023 (updated February 2024)

## The updates we made to this guidance in February 2024

Following feedback on the previous update to nappy changing guidance, published in July 2023, we made some amendments to the second paragraph on page 6.

### **Previously**

“Children’s personal belongings - nappies, wipes and other items - should be stored in cupboards with doors, drawers, sealed plastic containers or bags that can be cleaned easily.”

### **Now**

“If children’s personal belongings - nappies, wipes and other items - need to be stored within the changing area, they should be stored in cupboards with doors, drawers, sealed plastic containers or bags that can be cleaned easily.”

### **Previously**

“Storage arrangements for bagged and used non-disposable nappies and soiled clothing awaiting collection by parents may be necessary. This should be outside the nappy changing area.”

### **Now**

“Storage arrangements for bagged and used non-disposable nappies and soiled clothing awaiting collection by parents may be necessary.” \*

\*We removed the last sentence and the need for soiled clothing to be stored outside of the nappy changing area. Settings are diverse and arrangements for where soiled items are stored can vary.

To ensure safety and wellbeing for everyone, services should align their storage of children’s personal or soiled items with the guidance in this document and the guidance on [Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings \(Day Care and Childminding\)](#) which was published by Health Protection Scotland and available on our knowledge and improvement website, The Hub.

## Introduction

Settings caring for young children who use nappies 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.

In every aspect of early learning and childcare, it is vital that staff build strong relationships with children. Children benefit from warm, responsive and sensitive interactions and nappy changes are no different. Nappy changing provides a great opportunity to spend valuable one-to-one time with children. Connection supports a sense of wellbeing and belonging, and adults should ensure children feel safe, nurtured, included and respected when being changed.

All early learning and childcare settings that care for children who use nappies must have appropriate changing facilities. Alongside good infection prevention and control practices, these are essential for the health and wellbeing of children and staff.

It is important that everyone who plans, provides, commissions or uses early learning and childcare settings is aware of the nappy changing facilities they must have. All providers and staff working with children in early learning and childcare must have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to keep children and staff safe and to prevent the spread of infection. They should be familiar with infection, prevention and control guidance, policies and procedures. Providers have a responsibility to consider any new guidance or research as it becomes available.

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

This guidance aims to help reduce the potential for infection in both children and staff.

## Background

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 more exposed to these harmful microorganisms within childcare settings than children cared for in their own homes. Minor coughs, colds and respiratory infections are commonplace, especially at certain times of the year.

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. Outcomes of such infections can be serious for those affected, with children aged under five years most susceptible. It is important to be aware that some people can be infected but do not get or show any symptoms.

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, with children and staff infected. These outbreaks, alongside covid and other potential infections, impact on the health and wellbeing of children and staff. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a greater focus on the importance of good infection

prevention and control practices in early learning and childcare settings to keep children and staff safe.

## How the Care Inspectorate will use this guidance

For all new registrations and variations for settings that need nappy changing facilities, the expectations in this guidance represent the minimum requirements.

Nappy changing facilities should meet best practice guidance. When we inspect, undertake a complaint investigation or consider a variation to your setting, we will review the facilities and outcomes for children. We may identify areas for improvement or make requirements where improvements are needed to ensure positive outcomes for children.

## General principles

Nappy changing should respect children's privacy and dignity. It should be a relaxed, happy and social routine that provides valuable opportunities for positive interactions between staff and children.

The environment should be organised in a way that promotes those positive interactions while also supporting positive learning opportunities.

Nappy changing policies should consider best practice, including this guidance, and be reviewed regularly.

Providers should consider safety and any potential risks of injury when staff are lifting children.

It is good practice to allow children, including babies, to wash their hands after nappy changing.

## Requirements for nappy changing facilities

There must be a minimum of one nappy changing facility for every 10 children using nappies. This is consistent with the minimum number of toilets required for older children.

Nappy changing facilities must be separate from, but conveniently close to, the playrooms so staff can easily change nappies in a timely manner. Nappy changing facilities should be designated for that use **only**. They should be separate from play areas, food preparation areas, serving areas and laundry areas and should not be used as cupboards to store resources.

There should be space for staff and children to manoeuvre safely, clear of any obstruction.

Walls, the ceiling, doors and flooring must be of a suitable material that can be easily cleaned.

There must be suitable lighting. This can be natural or artificial but must be enough to allow safe practice and provide reassurance to children.

There must be suitable heating. This should be an acceptable temperature for the comfort of the child in a form that eliminates the risk of burns or scalds.

There must be suitable ventilation. This 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. The fan should be on while the room is being used and should stay on for a period of time after the room has been vacated. The extractor fan must be fit for purpose, adequate for the size of the room and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions.

There must be a designated sink for hand washing only, which must be located within the nappy changing area. The hand washing sink must be of a suitable size to allow hand washing and have running hot and cold water. Children and staff must never share water for hand washing in communal basins. It is good practice to support children including babies to wash their hands after nappy changing.

Dispensers for non-antibacterial liquid or foam soap and paper towels or hand dryers must be provided. Hand sanitisers and wipes are not a substitute for handwashing.

Waste bins must be provided. There should be a separate waste bin for disposable nappies. This could be a foot-operated, lined, lidded bin or a specific bin designed for used disposable nappies. There should also be a general waste bin for used paper towels and other waste.

Nappy changing units must:

- be a suitable size and strength appropriate to the age and weight of the child
- conform to relevant safety standards
- 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
- 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.

Providers should consider staff safety when staff are lifting children onto changing units and may consider if steps to the unit would be useful.

For children older than two years, nappy changing can happen within a children's toilet area. For example, where there is:

- a partitioned area within the toilets, with appropriate nappy changing and hand washing facilities
- sufficient space within a cubicle of a child's toilet for a suitable changing unit and a hand washing sink to be provided – in these circumstances, the changing unit should not cover or block the toilet.

In some instances, it may be suitable for changing facilities to be within an accessible toilet if the toilet is used only by children attending the setting. This means the accessible toilet is not used by staff or visitors (other facilities are provided for them).

### **Children aged under two years**

Children under two years are especially vulnerable to infection due to an immature and developing immune system and they are dependent on staff to meet their care needs. Children under two years **must** have a self-contained designated nappy changing room. This means a room with floor-to-ceiling walls and a full-sized door that closes securely.

## **Other areas that must be considered**

All cleaning products used for cleaning surfaces and nappy changing areas, including changing mats and units, must be kept out of reach of children and prepared and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

It is best practice to take all nappy changing products directly to the nappy changing facility for each child on each occasion. If children's personal belongings need to be stored within the changing area - nappies, wipes and other items should be stored in cupboards with doors, drawers, sealed plastic containers or bags that can be cleaned easily. Storage arrangements for bagged and used non-disposable nappies and soiled clothing awaiting collection by parents may be necessary. Storage of personal protective equipment (PPE) should be easy for staff to access.

If potties are used, facilities for cleaning and storage must be available. Staff should not wash potties in a designated hand wash sink and they 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.

## **This guidance helps providers and staff take account of other guidance, standards and quality frameworks**

### **[Health and Social Care Standards](#)**

- 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.

### **[A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare](#)**

- 2.2 Children experience high-quality facilities.

### **[Space to Grow](#)**

Design guidance for early learning and childcare and out of school care.

### **[Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings \(May 2018\)](#)**

Guidance on infection prevention and control practice for staff working within nurseries, daycare centres, playgroups, crèches, children's centres, childminders, after-school clubs and holiday clubs.

## References, useful links and further reading:

Health and Social Care Standards, my support, my life: Scottish Government, June 2017. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-social-care-standards-support-life/>

A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare: Care Inspectorate, November 2022.

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/5044/quality-framework-for-children-and-young-people-in-need-of-care-and-protection-nov-2022.pdf>

Space to Grow: Scottish Government, June 2017.

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/how-we-support-improvement/care-inspectorate-programmes-and-publications/space-to-grow/>

Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings (Day Care and Childminding Settings): Health Protection Scotland, NHS National Services Scotland, May 2018.

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1538/infection-prevention-and-control-in-childcare-settings.pdf>

Hand hygiene guidance, information to support improvement: Care Inspectorate, November 2014. <https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1523/hand-hygiene-information-to-support-improvement.pdf>

E. coli O157 Outbreak, May 2006. Report from the Outbreak Control Team: Fife Health Board 2007. Contact the Health Protection Team to access the report.

E. coli O157 Outbreak, May 2012. Report of the Incident Management Team: NHS Grampian Health Board. Contact the Health Protection Team to access the report.

E. coli O157 Outbreak, East Lothian, 2022. [NHS Lothian](https://www.nhs.uk/lothian). Contact the Health Protection Team to access the report.

Health Protection Teams contacts. <https://publichealthscotland.scot/contact-us/general-enquiries/health-protection-team-contacts/>

Preventing or controlling ill health from animal contact at visitor attractions; Industry Code of Practice, November 2021. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/visitor-attractions.htm>

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH). <http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/>

Health and safety regulations and guidance are available at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

Public Health Scotland <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/>

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