



25. PREPARING FOR A PANDEMIC POLICY

Background

It is impossible to predict when the next pandemic might occur or how severe its consequences might be. On average, three pandemics per century have been documented since the 16th century, occurring at intervals of 10 - 50 years. In the 20th century, pandemics occurred in 1918, 1957 and 1968. The pandemic of 1918 is estimated to have killed more than 40 million people in less than a year, with peak mortality rates occurring in those aged 20 - 45 years. The pandemics of 1957 and 1968 were milder with 1 - 4 million estimated deaths primarily in traditional groups such as the elderly, but many countries nevertheless experienced strains on health-care resources. If an influenza pandemic virus were to appear again unparalleled tolls of illness and death could be expected. Air travel would hasten the spread of the virus and decrease the time available for preparing intervention. Although it is not considered feasible to halt the spread of a pandemic virus, it should be possible to minimize its consequences through advance preparation. This note, which will be reviewed and re-issued annually, sets out guidelines in the event of a pandemic, together with the Pre-School's policy in relation to the control and prevention of flu-like symptoms as a matter of routine.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)

The WHO constantly monitors the various flu-type viruses that emerge each year and categorises the development of each within five defined phases, with particular concern where there is evidence that a virus that emanated in animals or birds has become adapted to humans. Advice will also be issued through the Medical Officers of Schools Association (www.mosa.org.uk) and the Pandemic Influenza Planning Group established in the Health Protection Agency.

Planning Assumptions

Advice to all sectors is that they should seek to continue operating as normally as possible during a pandemic, but should plan for higher than usual levels of staff absence as for other possible disruption resulting from the impact on other services. However, early years settings are potentially different from other settings. Children are highly efficient "spreaders" of respiratory infections, amongst themselves and to adults. There is some evidence that such infections spread less amongst children in holiday periods than in term-time. Thus, closing Pre-School for a period might reduce significantly the number of children infected. Once the nature of any future pandemic is detected, the Government may advise schools to close for a stated period. Our

response to any pandemic should cover both closure and the Pre-School remaining open.

The Pre-School's response

The Supervisor and chair of the management committee will be responsible for coordinating the Pre-School's response, which will be graduated according to what may be a quickly changing scenario. Unless advised to close, or forced to through staff absences, the aim will be to continue to operate Pre-School as normal:

- Staff feeling unwell or displaying symptoms such as a high temperature will be sent home immediately
- Bank staff will be contacted where possible to cover staff absences to try to ensure the setting is able to remain open where it is appropriate
- Staff may need to take on different roles where necessary, in the case of staff absences. The appropriateness of such action will be checked with relevant bodies (i.e. Ofsted and East Sussex County Council). Where staff are taking on unfamiliar tasks it may be appropriate for additional risk assessments to be undertaken
- Staff and children deemed to be at high risk due to pre-existing conditions should be advised to stay at home
- Central Government, through the local authority, will advise on any mandatory closure of the Pre-School. In the event of difficult local conditions, such as general shortages of food, the disruption of power supplies, or insufficient staff, the Supervisor will inform the chair of the committee and will order closure.
- If it proves necessary for Pre-School to close, a designated person will work through a list of all registered children on the role, and make contact to inform them of the impending closure.

Infection Control

As a matter of course, staff follow good hygiene policies to ensure infection, including potential influenza transmission, is minimized. These practices are already encouraged for the children and during an influenza pandemic the staff will stress the importance to parents of teaching good hygiene. These measures include:

- Encouraging thorough and frequent hand-washing
- Encouraging covering the nose and mouth with single-use tissues when sneezing, coughing, wiping and blowing noses
- Disposing of used tissues in the nearest bin and then washing hands
- Providing any information requested by the Pre-School's local authority (e.g. absence rates)

Cleaning and Waste Disposal

- Any cleaning should be undertaken with non-latex gloves
- All bins should contain sealable plastic bags and emptied daily
- All nappies should be bagged and disposed of immediately in the designated nappy bin

- All sanitary wear to be disposed in the designated sanitary bin.

Pre-stocking

The Pre-School is to hold three months' stocks of non-latex gloves, medicated facemasks and suitable plastic bags. Perishable stocks are to be turned-over on a regular basis.

Conclusion

It is difficult to determine in advance the likely consequences for the Pre-School in the event of a major pandemic. The Pre-School should continue to function unless instructed to close or in the event of local conditions making continuation impossible or unsafe. Flexibility would be required of all staff, with due emphasis at all levels being given to minimising the risk through good and responsible personal and general hygiene.

Date Updated	Reviewed	Next Review
	December 2015	December 2016
	July 2016	July 2017
	November 2017	November 2018

Chair of the Committee's signature:

Supervisor's signature:

Deputy's signature:

Date: