

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

Updated July 2026



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## Overview

This document offers a practical guide on aspects of nappy changing while balancing the need to reduce the risk of infection for children, staff and anyone accessing the setting.

All early learning and childcare (ELC) building-based settings (excluding childminders) that care for children who use nappies must have appropriate changing facilities. This includes a safe, clean environment with appropriate equipment. Children's privacy, dignity and, where appropriate independence, must be respected and always promoted.

Nappy changing must also be supported by staff who understand and implement current infection prevention and control good practice. This can be demonstrated by staff understanding the importance of good hand hygiene, effective cleaning of equipment and the environment to reduce the risks of transmitting any infection to children, staff and anyone accessing the setting.

All providers are expected to follow the [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education](#) (March 2024).

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.

For new registrations and variations to settings that need nappy changing facilities, the expectations in this guidance are the minimum standards that must be met. This is to support and protect the health and wellbeing of every child and staff member.

When we register, 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.

## Introduction

The 2013 Nappy Changing Guidance was introduced to the ELC sector following a serious outbreak of E. coli.

We acknowledge the diverse needs of early learning and childcare (ELC) providers. We remain committed to working in partnership with the sector to develop practical and proportionate solutions. These solutions will continue to prioritise children's health, safety, and wellbeing.

In every aspect of ELC, it is vital that staff build strong relationships with children. Children benefit from warm, responsive and sensitive interactions, and nappy changes provide a great opportunity to spend valuable one-to-one time with children. Connection supports a sense of wellbeing and belonging, and children should feel safe, nurtured, included and respected when being changed.

It is important that everyone who plans, provides, commissions or uses ELC settings is aware of the required nappy changing facilities. All providers and staff working with children in ELC settings must have a clear understanding of their responsibilities to keep children and staff safe, and to prevent the spread of infection. They should have knowledge of and understand infection, prevention and control guidance, policies and procedures.

Providers have a responsibility to consider any new guidance or research as it becomes available.

## Background

Infections are caused by microorganisms (bugs) including bacteria, fungi and viruses. There are many types of microorganisms, they are found everywhere, and most are harmless.

Gastrointestinal infections such as Norovirus, Salmonella, and E. Coli, are highly contagious and may be spread within the nappy changing area if standard infection prevention and control procedures (SICPs) are not properly followed.

The outcome 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 show any symptoms (carriers).

## Nappy changing, what you need to consider

All staff will implement changing procedures in line with standard infection control precautions (SICPs).

Nappy changing facilities will be separate from, but conveniently close to, the playrooms so these can be easily accessed in a timely manner.

Nappy changing areas will be cleaned before and after use.

All equipment needed will be readily available and cleaned before and after use where required.

Any creams and lotions will be labelled with the child's name and will not be shared or used with others.

Any potential risk associated with nappy changing (such as lifting a child into a changing area) will be suitably assessed and actions taken to reduce these to the lowest practicable level.

Hand washing will be readily available.

The environment and staff practice will maintain the privacy and dignity of the child.

The interaction will be relaxed, happy and social, providing valuable opportunities for positive interactions between staff and children.

Nappy changing facilities will only be used for that purpose and must only contain equipment to support the task.

There will be adequate space within the nappy changing area to support safe movement.

Expectations related to staff practice can be found within the [UK Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\) Preventing and controlling infections; Toileting and sanitation](#). It covers where nappy changing takes place and what staff involved in nappy changing must do.

Changing facilities may be within an accessible toilet if the toilet is only being used by children attending the setting. This means that the accessible toilet is not used by staff or visitors, and that other suitable and accessible facilities are provided if these are required.

If children's personal belongings, such as a change of clothes, spare nappies, or creams are stored within the personal care changing area, they should be clearly labelled. They should also be stored in cupboards with doors, drawers, or sealed plastic containers or bags. These storage options must be easy to clean.

## Handwashing

Hand hygiene is the most effective way to prevent and control the spread of infection. Children should be encouraged to learn about hand hygiene as early as possible, and good hand hygiene should always be promoted. As well as preventing infection, hand washing is an important part of healthy living for children and can be fun. Hand washing should be done at the right time, with the correct products, facilities and procedures.

Hand hygiene facilities should meet the guidance detailed within [space-to-grow-and-thrive](#) which outlines what suitable facilities for staff and children should include.

More information on handwashing, including useful resources can also be found in the links below.:

- [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education](#) (Public Health Scotland)
- [National Infection Prevention and Control Manual – Handwashing Children’s Pack](#) (NHS Education for Scotland)
- [Happy Hands](#) (Food Standards Scotland)

## Potties

The UK Health Security Agency [UKHSA guidance](#) for staff on nappy changing, potty use and management of continence aids within children and young people settings, provides useful guidance and information that should be referred to in relation to toilets, sanitation and use of potties.

If potties are used, facilities for cleaning and storage must be available.

Some highlights from the UKHSA guidance.

- Designate a sink for cleaning potties (not a hand wash basin). This should be in the area where potties are used.
- Wear disposable gloves to flush contents down the toilet.
- Wash the potty in hot soapy water and dry.
- Store potties upside down. Do not stack potties inside each other.
- After removing your disposable gloves, wash your hands using soap and warm water and dry.

Staff must not wash potties in a designated handwash sink and they must store potties appropriately. If a separate sink for potties is not available, the sink used must be disinfected after use. Consideration must be given to the accessibility of potties for children who are learning to use the toilet.

## Safe management of the environment

The [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education, Preventing and controlling infections, Standard infection control precautions \(SICPs\), Safe management of the environment](#) highlights good practice related to how to keep the environment clean, including toilet areas.

In toilet areas with nappy changing, toilet lids must be closed before flushing to reduce the risk of spray coming back into the room.

Areas around the nappy changing facilities, toilet and hand wash sinks must also be cleaned after each use to reduce splash risk and cross contamination. Cleaning of high touch points is also important to reduce cross contamination in toilet areas.

### **Waste management**

Nappy waste can sometimes be produced in large quantities in places such as nurseries. Although considered non-hazardous, it can sometimes be offensive and cause handling problems. The nappy changing area must be free from intrusive smells in line with the [Health and Social Care Standards](#). Within the setting, waste bins must be provided. There should be a separate bin for disposable nappies, which should be foot-operated, lined, and lidded. There should also be a general waste bin for used paper towels and other waste.

Please refer to the [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education, Standard Infection Prevention and control Precautions, waste management section](#), and [UK Health Security Agency, Safe management of waste \(including sharps\)](#) for further information.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

PPE can protect individuals from contamination with blood or bodily fluids, which may contain germs that spread infection.

Before doing any procedure or activity, staff should always risk-assess any likely exposure to blood and/or bodily fluids. If PPE is required, individuals should ensure this is used and provides adequate protection against the risks associated with the procedure or task being undertaken.

More information can be found with the Health protection in children and young people settings, including education, Preventing and controlling infections. [Standard infection control precautions \(SICPs\), PPE](#)

Please also refer to [appendix 5](#) of the [National Infection Prevention control manual \(NIPCM\)](#) for information on glove use and selection.

## Safe management of soiled clothing

If clothing is contaminated with blood or bodily fluids:

- PPE, such as gloves and aprons, must be worn at all times when handling soiled linen or clothing
- all contaminated items must be removed as soon as possible and placed in a named and sealed plastic bag or container
- if clothes are laundered in the setting, contaminated items must be washed separately using a pre-wash cycle, at the hottest temperature that the clothes will tolerate
- after removing PPE, wash hands thoroughly.

Soiled clothing should be discreetly kept in a sealed waterproof bag/container for collection by parents or carers. Any clothing being stored must be for the minimum time necessary and should not be accessible by children. Storage of these items must also consider the possible impact of odour. Action should be taken to address this if the issue arises, such as double bagging of contaminated clothing and storing it in a designated area.

A risk assessment outlining the actions that must be followed for the management of contaminated clothing and linen must be in place.

More information on the management of linen can be found within the UK Health Security Agency guidance Preventing and Controlling Infections – Safe Management of Linen and Soft Furnishings.

## References, useful links, and further reading

Health and Social Care Standards, my support, my life: Scottish Government, updated 2022  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-social-care-standards-support-life/>

Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors, September 2025  
<https://educationinspectorate.gov.scot/inspection-frameworks/quality-improvement-framework-for-the-early-learning-and-childcare-sectors/>

Space to Grow and Thrive: Scottish Government, June 2024  
<https://www.careinspectorate.scot/resources-data/publications-and-statistics/library/space-to-grow-and-thrive>

Health protection in children and young people settings, including education, March 2024  
<https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/health-protection-in-children-and-young-people-settings-including-education/health-protection-in-children-and-young-people-settings-including-education-version-1/overview/intended-audience/>

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  
[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

Public Health Scotland  
<https://publichealthscotland.scot/>

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