

Safer Play Groups

Organising & Grouping Children Within Covid-19 Safety Guidelines

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Safer Play Groups (small groups)

What?

A way of grouping children at our nursery, keeping children and staff safe during the time of coronavirus by organising them into small groups and coordinating their routines, their movements, and their use of resources throughout the day. A safer play group will usually consist of children who would usually be in the same playroom/age group and are already known to each other.



Why?

- Reduce risk of transmission in children and adults
- Effectively manage instances of COVID-19 in the nursery. If a person tests positive for the virus, only the children and adults in the safer play group will be asked to self-isolate and seek tests where possible
- Reassure parents as to the control measures we are using within the setting
- Reassure staff that their health & wellbeing is being planned for daily
- Provides organisation and clear responsibility for staff in guiding and supporting children

A Safer Play Group MUST:

- Ensure the size of the groups for each age and stage is determined by the individual risk assessment but will contain no more than 16 children who will come into physical contact with each other throughout the week
- Contain the same children for a minimum of one week (Monday to Friday) unless in exceptional circumstance where a change to grouping is necessary for children's health and wellbeing
- Adhere to child to adult ratios as set out in government legislation

A Safer Play Group Should:

- Consider who will cover staff breaks to minimise the number of adults having direct contact with children. Any other members of staff that might need to enter play spaces, such as the manager, chef and cleaning staff must endeavour to maintain social distancing guidelines as much as is reasonably practicable

- Consider the following:
 - Additional requirements resulting from your own internal risk assessment
 - Attendance patterns
 - Room/environment size
 - Outdoor accessibility
 - How the group will safely access toilets and changing areas
 - Staff competency and/or qualifications
 - The child's existing learning and development requirements and their wellbeing
 - Mobility
 - SEND/ASN
 - EAL
 - Planned transitions – will this child return in the new room or the one they belonged to before lockdown? What makes better sense for the individual child
 - Family mix (siblings, relatives) – where this is being considered, due thought must be given to the impact on all children's safety and wellbeing
- Reviewed weekly for suitability of meeting children's needs and wellbeing

Changes should not be made more often than weekly, after a weekend, allowing for at least two days without contact between children or staff in a safer play group where symptoms could appear.

Considerations for Environment and Routine:

- Hygiene management of resources
- Splitting and rotating resources
- Malleable play resources versus risk of transmission
- Furniture arrangements, where necessary and practicable, to support your arrangements for safer play groups, whilst allowing for effective supervision, such as: -
 - Reducing pinch-points where groups could mix
 - Influencing the flow and/or focused activity stations for children
 - Deployment of staff to subtly direct 'traffic' where children from separate safer play groups may come into contact – i.e. toilets, going outdoors etc
- Utilise the outside space as much as possible, coordinating its use to avoid unexpected mixing of safer play groups. This includes staggered times for use and/or splitting of areas of the garden if possible
- Consider staggered mealtimes to allow for greater spacing between children eating
- Prepared activities available in a 'carousel' where effective setup and cleaning takes places in between play

