



Managing children's personal care and supporting self-care in Lambeth (EYFS) settings and schools

Background

This document has been written as guidance in best practice for school leaders, teachers, practitioners and support staff working in private, voluntary, independent and maintained early years and childcare settings (including children's centres, out of school provision and nursery or reception classes in schools.) The aim of the document is to ensure inclusive practice in developing and managing children's personal care, in regard to continence and ensuring the needs of all children in Lambeth are met appropriately and with sensitivity.

The vast majority of children will be toilet-trained before starting school or an early years setting. However, it is recognised that some children and young people are delayed in attaining this key personal and self-care skill. Others may never achieve continence due to a disability. Therefore it is very important that schools and settings have policies and practices in place to ensure that they can respond to a child's continence needs, should they arise and offer appropriate support and advice to parents and carers.

What the law says

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 required all education providers to re-examine all policies, consider their current practice, and revise their arrangements if necessary. In particular, changes will have been required where previous admissions policies included predetermined or inflexible rules about continence. Schools and other education settings also need to ensure that they provide an accessible toileting facility if this has not previously been available. The Department of Health issued clear guidance about the facilities that should be available in each school (Good Practice in Continence Services, 2000).

The DDA provides protection for anyone who has a physical, sensory or mental impairment that has an adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out

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normal day-to-day activities. Admission policies that set an absolute requirement of continence, or any other aspect of development, are discriminatory and therefore unlawful under the DDA.

Asking a child's parent(s) or carer to come and change their child is likely to be a direct contravention of the Disability Discrimination Act, and leaving a child in a soiled nappy for any length of time pending the return of the parent could be considered a form of abuse.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act is a legislative framework to protect the rights of individuals and improve equality of opportunity for all. It protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

A significant and growing minority of Lambeth children will make the transition into early education having had no previous assessment of their learning or developmental needs. The council recognises this continuing challenge and offers guidance and support to all early education settings in meeting the needs of Lambeth children by using early identification and individualised planning in addition to making the necessary reasonable adjustments. Many children will have their individual learning and development needs addressed. However, some may go on to have a learning difficulty or disability that makes it harder for them to learn or develop than most children of the same age.

The Children and Families Act 2014, places a statutory duty on education settings to support children with medical conditions, so that affected children can access and enjoy the same opportunities at school as any other child. Bladder and bowel difficulties are medical conditions and should therefore be covered by a school's medical policy. The Department for Education has provided guidance for schools: Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.

It is notable that:

- Schools do not have to wait for a formal diagnosis prior to providing support to pupils
- School's policy should consider having individual healthcare plans to support pupils with medical conditions and that these should be reviewed annually
- The guidance states that it is not generally acceptable to: prevent pupils from drinking, eating or taking toilet breaks whenever they need to in order to manage their medical condition effectively; or to require parents or otherwise make them feel obliged to attend school to...provide medical support to their child, including with toileting issues.

Part 3 of **The Children and Families Act 2014** relates to those children and young people with special educational needs. Department for Education and Department from Health joint guidance is available: Special educational needs and disability code of practice 0 to 25 years.

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This includes information about Education Health Care Plans (EHCP). For children with bladder or bowel issues, these should be included in the EHCP, where there is one.

Admissions

It is unacceptable to refuse admission to children who are delayed in achieving continence. Delayed continence can occur for a number of reasons and is a manageable condition. Children should not be excluded from school, nursery or any activities because they are not toilet trained. Issues should be dealt with on an individual basis, and settings are expected to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of each child.

Refusing to admit a child with learning difficulties and/or physical difficulties because of their incontinence or delayed personal development is likely to be viewed as discriminatory. The local authority will challenge admission being refused to children who are delayed in achieving continence.

What this means for you

Review your policies and practice

Policies and practice should indicate your commitment to working in partnership with parents and carers to support children in developing independent toileting, and must not exclude children using nappies or pads.

All schools and settings should have clear written guidelines for staff to follow when changing a child. This will support the induction and supervision of all staff, ensure consistency in following the correct procedures (you should already have infection control measures in place) and offer protection from false allegations of abuse. It will also clarify for parents the exact procedures the school or setting follows when supporting personal care.

You may wish to consider a core vision / mission statement that makes reference to inclusion and anti-bias or anti discriminatory practice.

There should be a clear process for the school or setting to use when a child is admitted or leaves, (e.g. transition meeting, personal care and/or management plans, monitoring and review arrangements, etc.)

Schools and settings should also consider in their written policies the possibility of special circumstances arising should a child with complex continence needs be admitted. In such circumstances the appropriate health care professional will need to be closely involved in forward planning.

Local authority officers can offer practical advice, guidance and support in how to make reasonable adjustments (this may include staff deployment, small private areas for changing or minor adjustments to routines.)

It is generally not acceptable practice to ask parents to come into school to change their child after they've wet or soiled themselves.

Child Protection

The normal process of changing a nappy or pad should not raise child protection concerns and there are no regulations that indicate a second member of staff must be available to supervise the nappy changing process to ensure abuse does not take place.

If there is a known risk of false allegations by a child then a single practitioner should not undertake nappy changing. Staff in all settings and schools should be encouraged to remain highly vigilant for any signs or symptoms of abuse or improper practice, as they would for all activities carried out on site. There should already be procedures in place for staff members when they notice that a child is unduly distressed and/or has unexplained marks or injuries.

Resources

When several children wearing nappies enter the Foundation Stage provision of a school, the foundation stage teacher or co-ordinator, should discuss with the SENCO, the availability of additional resources from the school's delegated SEN budget to ensure that the children's individual needs are met. For example, the provision of changing areas and mats which are suitable for the size of nursery or reception age children, access to protective clothing such as gloves and aprons for staff and also access to cleaning materials. Downloadable resource links are provided at the end of this document.

Job Descriptions

Personal care is an integral part of teaching and learning within the early years. By definition it involves the early year's staff team supporting the development of an individual child's personal hygiene skills. All early years workers, should have nappy changing included in their job description.

Schools and settings should consider including personal care to promote independent toileting and other self-care skills as one of the tasks in any new posts. The need for any changing routines to be handled and organised sensitively, to promote children's emotional wellbeing, should also be specified.

Partnership Working

In some circumstances it may be appropriate to set up a home setting agreement that defines the responsibilities that each partner has and the expectations each has for the other. In particular, both parties should agree to

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share information about the implementation of a toilet training programme or toileting/changing plan for a child.

For example...

The parent/carer responsibilities could be:

- Agreeing to ensure that the child is changed at the latest possible time before being brought to the setting
- Providing the setting with spare nappies, pads and a change of clothing
- Understanding and agreeing the procedures that will be followed when their child is changed at the setting - including the use of any cleanser or the application of any cream
- Agreeing to inform the setting should the child have any marks and/or rash
- Agreeing to the implementation of individual toilet training programmes
- Agreeing to review arrangements should this be necessary

The setting's responsibilities could be:

- To work flexibly and be able to change the child when needed
- How often the child will be changed should the child be staying for the full day
- To minimise disruption to the child's participation in the daily routines and experiences
- To share information regularly with parents in order to plan for the child's individual personal care needs
- To report to the parents/carers and/or others should the child become distressed, or if marks or rashes are seen
- The implementation of individual toilet training programmes
- To review arrangements should this be necessary.

This kind of agreement should help to avoid misunderstandings that might otherwise arise, and help parents/carers feel confident that the setting is taking a holistic view of the child's needs.

Keys to Success

Remember that delayed continence may be linked with delays in other aspects of the child's development, and will benefit from a planned programme worked out in partnership with the child's parents.

There are other professionals who can help with advice and support. The family GP, School Nurse or Health Visitor have expertise in this area and can support parents to implement toilet training programmes in the home. Health care professionals can also carry out a full health assessment in order to rule out any medical cause of continence problems.

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Parents are more likely to be open and honest about their concerns if they understand that support strategies can be put into place.

Support

By working closely with parents and carers, all children can be included and enjoy full access to the experiences and opportunities on offer at the setting. In schools, the Educational Psychology Service is available to support you in addressing the needs of children, including the use of whole school approaches.

The following contacts can also provide support and advice:

Early Years and out of School Quality Improvement Lead

Kathryn Shaw

Kshaw2@lambeth.gov.uk

Tel: 07908119631

School Improvement Team

Monique Bertrand – maternity leave until October 2023

MBertrand@lambeth.gov.uk

Gerald Mehrtens – Interim lead until October 2023

Gmehrtens@lambeth.gov.uk

Early Years Special Educational Needs (EY SEN) Team

Catherine Pearson

cpearson@lambeth.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7926 9966 or 07710026923

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team

Karen Nugent

knugent@lambeth.gov.uk

0207 926 7754

Further Information and National Guidance

- **Enuresis Resource & Information Centre (ERIC)**, 34 Old School House, Britannia Road, Kingswood, Bristol, BS15 8BD. Telephone: 0117 960 3060
Website <http://www.eric.org.uk/>
- **Potty Training Package for Early Years Settings**
<https://eric.org.uk/potty-training-package-for-early-years-settings/>

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- **Managing Bladder and Bowel Issues in Nurseries, School and Colleges** – a document that has been put together for education settings.
<https://eric.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Managing-Bowel-and-Bladder-issues-in-nurseries-colleges-and-schools-2022.pdf>
- **Bladder and Bowel UK** - Information sheet on toilet training children with special needs.
<http://www.bladderandboweluk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Information-sheet-re-Toilet-training-children-with-additional-needs.pdf>
- **Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions**
Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools and proprietors of academies in England.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/306952/Statutory_guidance_on_supporting_pupils_at_school_with_medical_conditions.pdf
- **Victorian Continence Resource Centre**
This booklet and set of tip sheets is a must for parents of a child with special needs. The booklet describes a 5 step process that moves the child towards using the toilet independently.
<https://continencevictoria.org.au/one-step-at-a-time/>

Downloadable resources

Toilet time – www.sensetoys.com or www.eric.org.uk

A 10 page laminated wipe-clean flip book containing Velcro backed pictures of children toilet training. These provide a visual sequence for the stages of toileting. They also sell the symbols individually.