



# Emergency Closure Policy

**Arrangements for Review:**

**Pat Bacon** is responsible for the implementation of this policy and conducting regular reviews. This policy was adopted in July 2010 and will be reviewed in November 2011

**Policy Context:**

At Seashells and Sheerness Neighbourhood Nursery our priority at all times is to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, parents/carers, visitors, contractors and staff using the Centre.

Certain situations, such as the failure of essential services (e.g. heating or water systems), damage to the building, fire outbreak, severe weather conditions, or an illness epidemic may occasionally make it necessary for the centre to close to ensure the safety of all those using the centre.

Planning for these situations is a central part of the centre's policy on Health and Safety and Risk Management, and it is important that all staff, parents/carers and families are aware of the actions that will be taken should it become necessary to close the centre unexpectedly, either during session times or outside of normal hours.

This procedure outlines the steps to be taken in case of emergency to ensure good communication and orderly conduct, so that the welfare of children, staff and other individuals is maintained. In a real emergency, it may be necessary for the person in charge to respond as they see fit and we recognise that this will be the case when dealing with real life situations. However, this procedure gives a common approach which should make coping with an emergency easier.

This policy is associated with the following centre policies: Health and Safety, Risk Management, Late or Non-collection of Children, Fire, Sickness, and Complaints, and Kent Safeguarding Children Board 'Safeguarding Children Procedures'.

**Aims**

To ensure that children, parent/carers, families, contractors, visitors and staff members using Seashells and Sheerness Neighbourhood Nursery are kept safe at all times, and that the centre is prepared to respond to emergency situations in a planned and safe way.

**Procedure:****A) Preparation**

- All staff should have a copy of the emergency procedure, be familiar with its contents and keep a copy at home.
- No child should be left in the care of the Seashells or Sheerness Neighbourhood Nursery without the parent/carer providing the following information so that they can be contacted in the event of an emergency:
  - Place of work, address and telephone number (if applicable);
  - Mobile telephone number (if applicable);
  - Names, addresses and telephone numbers of adults who are authorised by the parents/carers to collect their child from the children's centre, for example a child minder or grandparent;
  - Information about any person who does not have legal access to the child;
  - Who has parental responsibility for the child.

- Anyone entering Seashells or Sheerness Neighbourhood Nursery must register in the visitor's book as being on site.
- All staff should sign in and out on a staff register held at reception. Staff should remember to sign out and back in again when leaving the centre for breaks.
- In an emergency, there may not be access to the centre, so key details (child name/contact numbers/sessions attended) should also be kept securely with the procedure, off-site, by the Children's Centre Manager, Nursery Manager or designated staff member. The Administrator/Receptionist is responsible for making sure that these details are kept up to date.
- Fire and emergency evacuation procedures should be familiar to all staff and commissioned providers / volunteers through regular drills and practices. All staff with specific roles (e.g. marshals) to carry out should practise these roles when drills are carried out.
- All appropriate staff should carry mobile phones to ensure that contact can be made with parents from outside of the building - or walkie-talkies for "isolated" locations / crèches where, for example, if only two staff members are looking after children, one cannot leave.
- Contact numbers for services such as Gas, Electric, Water are clearly displayed at reception so that they can be quickly contacted.

#### **B) Evacuating the Centre in an Emergency:**

- In the event of the fire alarm sounding (unless for a bell test), everyone should leave the building immediately, without stopping to collect personal belongings, and proceed via the nearest appropriate evacuation route to the assembly point. Everyone should assemble outside of the building at the **assembly point in Rose Street Primary School playground** where a register will be taken.
- Where necessary, the Children's Centre Manager or Administrator/Receptionist (or other designated / nominated person) will be responsible for calling the emergency services. All centre staff should also be familiar with the process for calling the emergency services themselves: for example, if a fire is discovered in the centre, they should initiate calling the emergency services as well as sounding the fire alarm and evacuating the children.
- The Administrator / Receptionist or other designated person is responsible for collecting the **emergency contact details** for all children, the **staff register** and **Visitors' Book** from reception.
- A '**grab bag**' could be stored at reception containing useful things you may need if you cannot go back into a building during an emergency situation. This is not a legal requirement, but it can be helpful to help manage an emergency incident. Suggested contents are given below:
  - *Charged mobile phone*
  - *Contact details for all staff and parents/carers of children left in nursery care (if applicable)*
  - *Check lists of things to do (e.g. security, shutting off water, electricity, gas etc)*
  - *Notes on location of stop cocks, gas valves, fuse boxes etc.*

- *Useful telephone numbers*
  - *Copies of the architects plans of the centre (if available)*
  - *Pens, Clipboard/ Notepad/ sellotape*
  - *First aid kit*
  - *Torch*
  - *Large scissors*
  - *Gloves disposable rubber*
  - *A few foil blankets*
  - *High visibility vests for leader and deputies*
  - *Spare set of master keys*
- Parents/carers who are in the building in a separate location from their children should leave the building immediately through the nearest available or designated exit and not return to collect their children. **Parents will be reunited with their children at the muster point and must not re-enter the building to go in search of their child(ren).** Whenever parents/carers and children are separated in the building in this way they should be made aware of this procedure.
  - Children involved in a crèche session are the responsibility of the appointed staff members, and should be led out of the building with those staff.
  - If you notice any children who seem unaware of which way to go, shepherd them out in the correct direction.
  - Nominated staff members will check each room and toilet area as they leave to ensure complete evacuation
  - Nominated staff members will take a register at the Assembly point to ensure complete evacuation. No one should re-enter the building to look for missing persons; any persons missing from the register should be reported to the Children's Centre Manager (or most senior staff member present), who can inform the emergency services.

**NO ONE SHOULD RE-ENTER THE BUILDING UNLESS AND UNTIL PERMISSION IS GIVEN BY THE MOST SENIOR PERSONS PRESENT.**

### **C) Lock-Down Procedure**

There may be occasions when it is safer for everyone to remain inside the building due to a threat outside, for example if there is a violent or armed person outside the centre, a dangerous animal, or if there are dangerous fumes outside etc. In line with schools, Children's Centres should follow a 'lock down' procedure where the centre is sealed off and people are not allowed to enter (and are discouraged from leaving) until the situation is resolved.

***Please note, centre staff have no legal authority to prevent people who wish to from leaving the building; they can only make people aware of the dangers and encourage them to stay inside and wait for the danger to pass.***

In the event of a significant danger being present outside, the following procedure should be followed:

- Where possible, have a dedicated alarm to alert all staff; in other cases, a message to be passed around staff as quickly as possible without causing panic to parents/carers and children.
- Appointed keyholders immediately lock external doors.
- If the danger relates to a violent / armed / threatening stranger outside, call Police immediately. Staff inside rooms should lower blinds / draw curtains.
- Do NOT leave the building to challenge the person.
- Give the Police as much information as you can about the person.
  - Description
  - Name if known
  - Behaviour
  - Whether armed
- If the danger relates to a situation that is being managed by emergency services outside, (e.g. gas leak, fire) centre staff should tune in to local radio and await an all-clear from emergency services before unlocking doors.

**D) Closing the Centre out-of-hours (e.g. due to bad weather)**

- If the Centre needs to be closed in the morning, a decision will be reached as early as possible in the morning by the Centre Manager (or designated person).
- The closure of the centre will be announced on local radio (e.g. Heart FM) and where possible, on the centre's website. A pre-recorded message will be left on the answerphone where possible to advise anyone ringing the centre that it will remain closed.
- The 'telephone tree' (see Severe Weather Procedure at Appendix 1) will be used to contact all centre staff to advise them of the closure. The Centre Manager or Nursery Manager will initiate this process. Staff are responsible for ensuring that the centre has their up-to-date contact details. This document will be reviewed and updated once a month. Our partner teams, Family Action, Young Persons Project and Health Visiting are responsible for collecting up to date contact details for their own staff.

**E) Closing the Centre during a session (e.g. bad weather)**

- The Centre Manager, or in their absence the Duty Manager, will decide if the centre needs to be closed unexpectedly (for example, due to deteriorating weather conditions).
- If the centre needs to be evacuated in an emergency, please use the procedures in B above.
- Centre staff will make every effort to contact parents/carers (or authorised person nominated by the parent/carer) of the children that are in our care.
- If parents/carers have to be called to collect their children, children will be looked after safely by staff until they can be contacted. Depending on the emergency, this may be in the centre, in another place of safety, or it may be outside. If parents/carers cannot be contacted, the Late / Non-collection of Children policy will be followed.
- Telephoning parents to ask them to collect their children will be the joint responsibility of the Nursery Manager, Centre Manager and appropriate staff members as designated.

- All appropriate centre staff should carry mobiles to enable parents/carers to be contacted should it be unsafe to remain in the building.
- A telephone message, outlining the procedures that are being taken, should be left on the Centre's answerphone where possible to advise anyone trying to contact the centre of what has happened.

#### **F) Closing the Centre due to Sickness**

- Parents/carers should inform the centre if their child has been diagnosed with any infectious illness so that we can inform parents, staff and visitors that we have had a case in the centre. This allows other parents to be on the lookout for the symptoms in their child.
- Special notices and updates should be displayed in a visible place inside the centre
- Children and adults who are unwell with an infectious disease should NOT attend any activity and they should NOT return until the risk of passing on the infection has passed. For more information on exclusion periods, please see our *Health, Illness and Emergency Contact Policy*.
- If a child at the centre displays the symptoms of an infectious disease, the parents/carers should be contacted to take the child home and to seek medical advice. They should not return to the setting until they are symptom-free for 48 hours. This also applies to parents.
- Healthy children, with no symptoms, even if they have travelled to a region where there is an outbreak of a disease, should not be kept away from the centre.
- Where there is a risk of an epidemic or pandemic in the community, we will at all times follow the official government health guidelines, including closing the centre if necessary to prevent the spread of infection. If the decision is taken to close the centre, it will be taken by the Centre Manager in conjunction with the appropriate health authorities. It will take effect from the end of the current working day and there is no need to send children home early unless they are displaying symptoms.
- When we are informed that a disease is notifiable, we will advise the necessary authorities including OfSTED.

#### **G) Re-opening the Centre after Emergency Closure**

- The reasons for closing the centre will be recorded in the *Incident Book* / other formal records kept by the centre and OfSTED and any other relevant authorities will be informed.
- The decision to re-open the centre will be taken by the Children's Centre Manager in conjunction with the emergency services if necessary. Staff will be contacted via the 'telephone' tree to advise them that the Centre has re-opened. The Centre Manager / designated person will initiate this process.
- Where possible, the centre's website will be updated to advise parents/carers that the centre has re-opened.

#### **Policy Implementation**

- All parents and carers should be made aware of the centre's policy for emergency closure, and should have opportunity to inform this policy.
- Regular drills and practice evacuations should be carried out with staff to enable regular reviewing of this policy and ensure its effectiveness.

- All staff are made aware of this policy as part of their induction, reviews, and training.

**Arrangements for complaint**

These are defined in the Complaints Policy.