

Innsworth Preschool Public Health Emergency Policy

Last Updated: 1st January 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Overview: This policy sets out Innsworth Preschool's framework for preparing for, responding to, and recovering from public health emergencies.

1.2 Objective: The objective is to protect children, staff, and families while maintaining lawful and safe operational continuity. This policy operates alongside and overrides (where stated) the **Illness and Infection Control Policy** during a triggered public health emergency.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

2.1 Compliance: This policy complies with our duties under the following key legislation and guidance:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984.
- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- The Children Act 1989.
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR).
- Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR) regarding special category data.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Official guidance from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Department for Education (DfE).

3. Scope and Definitions

3.1 Definition of "Public Health Emergency": For the purposes of this policy, a "Public Health Emergency" is triggered by one or more of the following:

- **National/Local Mandate:** National or local public health instructions or formal government regulations/guidance applicable to childcare settings (including HPT advice, DfE operational guidance, or legal restrictions).
- **Specific Outbreak:** An outbreak or incident meeting UKHSA/HPT thresholds for childcare settings (which vary by disease), or where the HPT advises enhanced measures. (Note: While "two or more linked cases" is a common indicator, specific thresholds are determined by current health protection guidance).

3.2 Authority to Act: Measures implemented under this policy fall into two categories:

- **Mandated Closure:** Legal instruction or HPT direction to close.
- **Safety Closure/Partial Closure:** Operational decision by the Manager (based on risk assessment) to close the setting, a room, or a "bubble" due to staffing levels or infection risk.

4. Our Principles

4.1 Core Values:

- **Safety First:** The health, safety, and welfare of our children and staff will always be our primary consideration. EYFS ratios and safeguarding rules remain mandatory at all times. We will restrict attendance or close where ratios cannot be maintained.
- **Official Guidance:** All actions will be based on the latest authoritative advice from public health bodies and the DfE.
- **Communication:** We are committed to maintaining clear, regular, and transparent communication via a single point of contact (the Manager). Updates will be provided via email/Tapestry within 24 hours of a trigger and then daily/weekly as appropriate. No child-identifiable health info will be shared.

5. Preparedness Measures

5.1 Readiness: To ensure readiness, we will:

- **Appoint a Lead:** The Preschool Manager is the designated lead.
- **Conduct Risk Assessments:** We conduct regular public health risk assessments.
- **Staff Training:** Mandatory training on infection control and PPE.
- **Maintain Stocks:** Adequate stocks of essential medical, cleaning, and hygiene supplies.

6. Emergency Response Protocol

6.1 Enhanced Infection Control: In the event of a triggered emergency:

- **Hygiene:** Increased supervised handwashing, enhanced deep cleaning, and maximising ventilation.
- **Symptom Monitoring:** Staff and children will be monitored via visual symptom checks and parent declarations. We will only take temperatures or perform screening where advised by HPT/UKHSA or where a specific risk assessment supports it.
- **Visitor Controls:** Visitors/contractors must not bring food into child areas and must comply with allergen controls; where compliance is not practicable they are restricted to staff-only zones and supervised access routes.

6.2 Data Protection (Health Data): We process health information under an appropriate Article 6 basis (Legal Obligation/Public Task) and an Article 9 condition (Public Health and/or Safeguarding), limited to what is necessary.

- **Controls:** Access is restricted and retention is time-limited in line with our Privacy Notice and Retention Schedule. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will be completed where monitoring becomes systematic or intrusive.

6.3 Exclusion and Isolation:

- **Criteria:** Exclusion applies to anyone displaying symptoms meeting the current UKHSA/DfE exclusion criteria for childcare settings and/or HPT advice, and our Illness Policy. The Manager applies a documented risk-based decision for borderline cases.
- **Parent Reporting Duty:** Parents must inform us promptly of:

- (a) confirmed diagnoses listed in our current 'Reportable Illness' list (aligned to UKHSA/HPT);
- (b) positive test results where relevant guidance requires exclusion;
- (c) HPT-advised exposure scenarios.

- **Enforcement:** We will consider intent, risk, and pattern. Deliberate non-disclosure that exposes others to risk will be treated as a serious breach; one-off mistakes are managed proportionately.

6.4 Notifications:

- **RIDDOR:** We will make RIDDOR notifications only where the legal criteria for work-related exposure are met and the report is required by HSE guidance.
- **Ofsted/Agencies:** We will follow HPT advice on notifications and comply with EYFS notification duties for significant events affecting suitability/operation.

7. Operational Adjustments and Fees

7.1 Capacity and Priority Access:

- **Priority Allocation:** Priority allocation applies only where capacity restrictions are mandated or advised, and is applied using a documented, non-discriminatory decision record (e.g. Vulnerable Children, Critical Workers).
- **Evidence:** Evidence requests are minimal, time-limited, and stored securely.

7.2 Fees During Closure:

- **Policy Alignment:** If we close and cannot provide sessions, fees for undelivered sessions are credited/refunded in line with our **Fees, Funding, and Charges Policy**, subject to any lawful and fair force majeure clause.
- **No Double Recovery:** Where government support covers costs, we will not double recover from parents.

8. Equality and Reasonable Adjustments

8.1 Adjustments: In applying emergency measures, we will consider reasonable adjustments for children, parents, and staff (Equality Act 2010), including communication adjustments and sensory needs, provided safety is not compromised.

9. Monitoring and Review

9.1 Record Keeping: A **Decision Log** is maintained by the Manager recording the trigger, guidance source, risk assessment summary, measures taken, and review date. Records are retained in line with our Data Protection Policy.

9.2 Review: Emergency measures are reviewed regularly (e.g. weekly or upon new guidance) and stepped down as soon as safe to do so.

