

responding to an emergency

a Pre-school Learning Alliance **mini guide**



As required under the EYFS (3.55), providers must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of children, staff and others on the premises in the case of an emergency. This guide will help you consider how you can best ensure the safety of children, parents and staff in the event of a local threat or any other emergency situation which may result in your setting being placed into what is sometimes described as 'lockdown'.

Most of your existing procedures for handling an emergency situation will involve evacuation of the premises and will be focussed on an event that is happening within your building. However, in some situations, it is likely that you will be advised to stay put (lockdown) rather than evacuate the premises; In the event of an incident, 'lockdown' of a building or group of buildings is an emergency procedure intended to secure and protect occupants in close proximity to an immediate threat. By controlling movement in an area, emergency services are able to contain and handle the situation more effectively.

Be prepared

- Risk assess the likelihood of an incident happening in your area i.e. consider your location, are you near to a busy tourist attraction, power station, or city centre?
- Check your Police force website for advice and guidance about managing a range of issues or incidents that may be prevalent in your area. Make sure that you have local police contact numbers clearly displayed for staff to refer to.
- With regard to terrorism alert levels check the current status on the MI5 website www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels
- Follow any advice for managing emergency situations that is issued by your Local Authority.
- Review your existing emergency procedures and add to them if necessary. Give particular consideration to 'lockdown'.

- Share information with parents to advise them of the actions you will take in the event of a 'lockdown' and what they should do.
- Make sure that all staff are aware of their role during 'lockdown'.
- Consider the wording of a text or phone message that will be issued to all parents as soon as lockdown is announced and you are sure that the situation is not a false alarm.

Suggested wording for message to parents:

Due to an incident we have been advised by the emergency services to secure the premises and stay put until we are given the 'all clear'. Please do not attempt to collect your child until it is safe to do so. We will let you know as soon as we are able when that is likely to be.

In the meantime we need to keep our telephone lines clear and would appreciate your cooperation in not calling unless it is absolutely vital that you speak to us.

Lockdown procedures

If an attack happens the setting manager must act quickly to assess the likelihood of immediate danger. In most cases the assumption should be that it is safer to stay put and place the setting into 'lockdown' until the emergency services arrive.

As soon as the emergency services arrive at the scene it is essential that staff comply with their instructions at all times.

Upon alert to lockdown

- Stay calm.
- Ensure that staff and children stay in their designated areas. Stay in the room you are working in, secure all doors and windows and await further instructions.
- Close curtains and blinds where possible.
- Stay away from windows and doors.
- Stay low and keep calm, it might be an idea to rehearse this with children in an age appropriate way, in the same way that you would rehearse fire evacuation.
- Tune into a local TV or radio Station for more information
- Do NOT make non-essential calls on mobile phones or landlines.
- If the fire alarm is activated, remain where you are and await further instructions from emergency services unless the fire is in your area. In which case, move to the next room/area, following your usual fire procedures.

Be alert

- Do NOT open the door once it has been secured until you are officially advised 'all clear' or are certain it is emergency services at the door. This is another element of your 'lockdown' procedure that can be practiced in an age appropriate way with the children to avoid them becoming anxious when staff do not respond to the doorbell in the usual way.
- Do NOT travel down long corridors.
- Do NOT assemble in large open areas.
- Do NOT call 999 again unless you have immediate concern for your safety, the safety of others, or feel you have critical information.

Following the lockdown

- Cooperate with emergency services to assist in an orderly evacuation.

- Ensure that you have the Register and children's details with you.
- Any staff or children who have witnessed an attack or incident will need to tell the police what they saw.
- The police may require other individuals to remain available for questioning.

Managing parents

In the event of an incident it is inevitable that parents will want to come to the setting and collect their children immediately. They must be discouraged from doing so, until the emergency services give the all clear. Even then, depending on the severity and type of incident, children may need to be checked by medical teams or questioned by the police. It must be made absolutely clear to parents that you will be acting on the advice of the emergency services at all times.

With regard to getting information to parents during 'lockdown', you should use the existing systems that you have in place for sending group messages, such as social media, text, emails. Discourage parents from ringing you directly for further updates during 'lockdown'; it will be vital that your phone lines remain clear.

Threat levels

The current threat level for international terrorism is **SEVERE** (source: www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels). Threat levels are designed to give a broad indication of the likelihood of a terrorist attack.

- **LOW** means an attack is unlikely
- **MODERATE** means an attack is possible, but not likely
- **SUBSTANTIAL** means an attack is a strong possibility
- **SEVERE** means an attack is highly likely
- **CRITICAL** means an attack is expected imminently

Members of the public should always remain alert to the danger of terrorism and report any suspicious activity to the police on 999 or the anti-terrorist hotline: 0800 789 321. For non-emergency calls to the police, call 101.

Further information

Essential Policies & Procedures for the EYFS
(Pre-School Learning Alliance, 2016)

To order Alliance publications, visit www.pre-school.org.uk/shop or phone 0300 330 0996.

For further advice, please contact:

Information Services

T: 020 7697 2595

E. info@pre-school.org.uk

W. www.pre-school.org.uk/information-and-advice

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Disclaimer: *The information contained within this mini guide is not an exhaustive list of issues on the subject matter covered and is available as a source of guidance only. It does not, and is not intended to, cover every eventuality. Settings are responsible for all decisions they take and should seek expert guidance on matters of uncertainty. A free 24/7 legal advisory helpline and an information helpline are available for Alliance members.*