Managing Illness and Allergies policy and procedures

In the UK, preschools and early years settings that are Ofsted-approved must have clear policies and procedures for managing illness and allergies. These policies ensure the safety and well-being of children and staff while adhering to legal and health requirements. Below is an outline of what such a policy and procedure typically includes:

**1. Purpose of the Policy**

* Ensure the safety and health of all children and staff.
* Comply with the legal requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Ofsted guidelines.
* Provide clear steps to manage illness and allergies, reducing the spread of infections and promoting a healthy environment.

**2. Key Areas Covered in the Policy**

* **General Illness Management:**
	+ A list of symptoms or conditions under which children should not attend preschool (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhea, infectious diseases).
	+ Clear guidance on when children can return to preschool after being ill.
	+ Procedure for notifying parents if a child is feeling unwell during the day.
	+ Process for isolating children who feel unwell until they can be collected.
	+ Guidelines for staff on when to report symptoms or absences due to illness.
* **Infectious Diseases:**
	+ Procedures for managing cases of contagious diseases (e.g., chickenpox, flu, norovirus) and informing other parents and staff.
	+ Follow-up actions, including disinfecting areas and items potentially contaminated.
* **Allergy Management:**
	+ Clear identification of any allergies a child may have, including food, environmental, or medication-related allergies.
	+ Procedures for parents to provide information about allergies when children first start attending or whenever an allergy is diagnosed.
	+ Specific actions to prevent allergic reactions (e.g., no nuts, clearly labelled foods, and segregating children with severe allergies).
	+ Information and training for staff on recognizing and responding to allergic reactions, including the use of EpiPens or antihistamines.
	+ Emergency contact procedures for parents in case of an allergic reaction.
	+ Safe food preparation practices (e.g., allergen-free zones, cleaning procedures, and label checking).

**3. Parental Involvement**

* **Communication with Parents:**
	+ Parents must inform the setting if their child has any medical conditions, allergies, or any changes to their health.
	+ A signed agreement or consent form from parents for administering medications (e.g., antihistamines, asthma inhalers).
	+ Regular updates to parents about the policies and any outbreaks of illness within the setting.

**4. Staff Training and Responsibilities**

* Staff should be trained in recognizing signs of illness and allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis.
* Training on the use of first-aid kits, including handling allergic reactions, CPR, and the use of an EpiPen.
* Staff should follow hygiene procedures like handwashing, cleaning surfaces, and disinfecting toys to reduce the spread of illness.

**5. Medication Procedures**

* A clear procedure for the safe storage, administration, and recording of medication given to children.
* Protocol for administering emergency medication for allergies (e.g., EpiPens) and informing parents if it was used.

**6. Health and Safety Measures**

* Routine cleaning and sanitizing of surfaces, toys, and equipment.
* Providing tissues, hand sanitizers, and encouraging good hygiene practices among children.
* Ensuring children wash their hands regularly, especially after using the toilet and before eating.
* Keeping children’s personal items (e.g., water bottles, towels) separated to avoid cross-contamination.

**7. Emergency Action Plan**

* Clear steps to take in case of a medical emergency due to illness or an allergic reaction.
* Contact information for local health services, emergency services, and parents should be easily accessible.
* Clear documentation and reporting protocols for all incidents involving illness or allergies.

**8. Documentation and Record Keeping**

* A record of children’s medical conditions, allergies, and any incidents involving illness or allergic reactions.
* Written consent forms from parents for the administration of medication and emergency treatment.
* Incident forms and logs for tracking illnesses and reactions.

**9. Policy Review**

* Regular review and updating of the illness and allergies policy to ensure it remains compliant with changing regulations and best practices.
* An annual review of the policy to ensure all staff are aware of procedures and that any new children’s needs are adequately catered for.

**Conclusion**

By having a comprehensive Illness and Allergies Policy, preschools can protect children, manage risks associated with illness and allergies, and create a safe, healthy environment. Regular training for staff, open communication with parents, and robust emergency procedures are essential to ensure this policy is effectively implemented and maintained. This policy must be reviewed regularly to stay aligned with Ofsted guidelines and any changes in public health recommendations.

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