

## Parent & Toddler Covid Protocols - updated Sept 2021

The virus has changed since it first appeared. The form of the virus now dominant in Ireland is called the Delta variant and is more infectious than earlier forms of the virus.

Update - From the 20<sup>th</sup> of September organised indoor group activities (sports, arts, culture, dance classes) can take place with capacity limits of 100 people (with appropriate protective measures) where all patrons are immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months) or accompanied minors (under 18). Appropriate protective measures must be in place- social distance, face covering, hand hygiene, ventilation etc

Where patrons have mixed immunity status, pods of up to 6 participants will be permitted. Multiple pods will be permissible subject to protective measures. Number of pods will have regard to the size of venue and 2 meters social distance between individual pods.

Capacity limits indoor group activities refer to participants only.

Those attending the group - parents, guardians, grandparents, minders - should be aware that they must not attend the Parent Toddler Group if they have symptoms or signs that may suggest COVID-19 until they have taken appropriate medical advice and testing if appropriate. This continues to apply after vaccination is completed. They should be aware that if they are not fully vaccinated they should not attend the group if they have been told they are close contacts of a person with COVID-19. People who are contacts and are fully vaccinated may be advised to restrict their movements and stay off work by Public Health in some circumstances. These messages should be reinforced regularly. Contact tracing guidelines differ for those who have vaccine protection.

### **What to do before you re-open - A**

Contact parents in advance, explain all the COVID-19 infection controls in place & ask parents to sign a parental declaration form to include the following:

- They or their child/children will not attend the group if unwell, awaiting the result of a test, have any symptoms of COVID -19, are close contacts of a confirmed or suspected case
- They agree to follow all PH advice, including self isolation, restricted movement and travel advice
- They agree to the plan if a child or an adult becomes unwell while at the group
- They agree to follow the group's COVID-19 infection control measures to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus e.g. arrival and departure/ collection and drop off, social distancing, play pods, mask wearing, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, activities, toys & equipment, cleaning
- Set out your infection control procedures in writing for sharing with parent

### **What to do before you re-open - B**

- Deep clean environment indoors and outdoors
- Clean all toys, equipment, furniture
- Organise toys into different containers for the different play pods
- Consider how you will use your space to support social distancing, play pods, the safe arrival and departure of children and adults/ drop off and collection of children attending childminders
- Consider how you might organise the children & adults into play pods so as to reduce the number of close contacts
- Purchase liquid soap, hand sanitizer, cleaning products, tissues, face masks, child friendly posters, social distancing markings, pedal operated bins and liner bags, disposable gloves
- Identify isolation area - to be used if a parent or a child becomes unwell

### **Overview of how to reduce the risk of transmission**

- The public health measures that are taken in parent & toddler group are about reducing the risk of the transmission of the virus.
- The risk cannot be eliminated but it can be reduced by public health infection control measures

The key areas to focus on are:

- Trying to ensure that everyone that comes into the service is well

- That all activities and materials in the group are risk assessed for the likelihood of transmission and impact of the transmission of the virus

#### **Infection Control Measures in the Centre**

- Parents and children to stay at home if unwell with any of the symptoms of COVID 19 & contact GP for advice
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand gel for 20 seconds if running water not available, and if your hands are not visibly dirty
- Practice good respiratory hygiene when coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth or nose with flexed elbow or a tissue, discard tissue in designated bin, wash your hands or use hand gel
- Avoid touching eyes mouth nose

#### **Infection Control Measures general**

- If an adult or a child feels unwell, has any of the symptoms of Covid-19, stay at home, self isolate, contact their GP, seek medical advice COVID-19 telephone consultation with GP and COVID -19 test is provided free of charge
- If a child (3 months – 13 years) has a runny nose or sneezing, is otherwise healthy, has no new cough, no temperature, good appetite, not requiring paracetamol or ibuprofen, is not a close contact of confirmed or suspected case, no history of travel, they can attend the service but parents need to monitor
- If a child (3 months – 13 years) has a runny nose or other minor symptoms and 'off form', no fever equal to or greater than 38.00C, no cough, no shortness of breath, and NO ill contacts or history of travel. Keep at home for a period of 48 hours to observe their emerging condition

#### **Self isolation & restricted movement - when & for how long**

- If an adult or child is referred for a COVID 19 test, should self isolate until they get test results & members of their household & close contacts should restrict movements until test results known
- If an adult or a child tests positive for COVID-19 self-isolate at home for 10 days from the onset of symptoms (10 days from the date of a test if asymptomatic), the last 5 days should be without fever - & members of their household & close contacts should restrict movements for 14 day
- If an adult or a child is a close contact with someone with COVID-19 or suspected case, need to restrict their movements for 14 days
- As a close contact, the adult or child may feel well and have no symptoms, but because it can 2 -14 days to show symptoms there is a need to restrict movements for 14 days

Isolation quick guide - [age 3 months and up to 13th birthday](#) and [age 13+ and Adults](#)

- As a close contact, the adult or child may feel well and have no symptoms, but because it can 2 -14 days to show symptoms there is a need to restrict movements for 14 days

[Isolation quick guide](#) - applying to those aged greater than 3 months and up to 13th birthday

#### **When should children wash their hands**

- Before they leave home, when they arrive at the group, before they go home
- Before eating and drinking
- After using the toilet
- After playing outside
- After sneezing or coughing into their hands
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty

#### **When should adults wash their hands**

- Before they leave home, when they arrive at the Centre, before they go home
- Before, between and after handling or preparing food
- Before and after eating
- Before and after giving or applying medication or ointment to a child
- After using the toilet or coughing /sneezing
- If they move from inside to outside areas

- If they have physical contact with a child from another pod other than their own pod
- After contact with bodily fluids (runny nose, spit, vomit, blood, faeces), cleaning tasks, removing gloves, handling rubbish/emptying bins
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty
- If in contact with someone who is displaying any COVID -19 symptoms
- Before and after being on public transport [if using it], being in a crowd, having a cigarette or vaping

#### **Arrival and Departure Procedures**

- The purpose is to support social distancing and minimize the number of close contacts that parents & children have with other parents & children, especially when they arrive and depart from the group
- Could organize staggered arrival and departure times
- Could use child friendly 2 meter markings on the ground to encourage social distancing
- Ask adults to wear face masks
- Ask adults and children to wash their hands before they leave home, on arrival at the group and before they go home – can use hand sanitizer station if running water not available
- Ask adults to only bring into the group items that they need in the group e.g. nappy changing, food, bottles. Leave all other unnecessary items at home

#### **Social distancing and masks**

- Adults to maintain social distancing of 2 meters or 6 feet with other adults
- Adults to wear a cloth face covering/mask when with other adults especially if they cannot socially distance, or if with a person/child with suspected or confirmed COVID-19
- Cloth face coverings to be worn by adults while with the children indoors where adults cannot adhere to 2 meters social distance and if they are not a barrier to care
- Face masks not advised for children under 13

#### **Play pods**

- Group children together in smaller groups with the same adults in 'play pods' and family units where appropriate
- A play pod limits the number of close contacts that the children and adults have – helpful for contact tracing if required
- There is no definite number of children in a play pod – just to have it as small as possible
- Children in play pods not expected to socially distance from each other
- There should be no physical contact between play pods
- Keep a record of children and adults attending each day and what play pod/group they are in & retain for at least 14 days

#### **Toys**

- Organize toys and play materials into a number of boxes for the different play pods – no sharing of toys across the play pods
- Ask parents not to bring toys from home
- Choose toys that can be cleaned and dried daily
- If using dressing up clothes – ask children to choose an outfit for that day – no sharing between the children – wash or rest for 72 hours
- Rest toys that can't be easily washed for 72 hours and then use again without washing provided that they are clean
- No sharing of food, playdough etc
- Parent and toddlers – where necessary comfort toys or soft toys to be kept by the parents and only used by their child in the group

#### **Cleaning**

- Evidence indicates that the virus causing COVID-19 can live on surfaces and objects from a few hours to a few days
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting schedules e.g. of toys, equipment, surfaces, rooms, outside equipment
- Wash frequently touched surfaces regularly e.g. door handles, light switches
- Wash furniture and equipment daily
- Wash toys after each session - no sharing of toys across play pods
- Wash toys that have been mouthed by children before use by another child
- Empty bins as needed and at least daily using gloves

#### **Environment**

- Good ventilation when indoors – suggestion not to spend more than an hour indoors without a break outdoors
- Spend more time outdoors with the children – covered outdoor area
- Have accessible hand washing facilities with liquid soap and/or hand sanitizing stations particularly at entrance and exit points, in the room/space where the children and adults are, in the outside area
- Ensure supervision of children using hand sanitizer
- Have tissues available
- Have pedal operated bins inside and outside

#### **What to do if a child or an adult becomes unwell while at a parent and toddler group**

If a child or an adult becomes unwell with any of the symptoms of COVID 19 e.g. with a fever of 38c or greater, cough, breathing problems, loss of taste or smell – This is the plan to manage the situation

- The child with their parent or adult should go home immediately, be advised not to use public transport to go home, call emergency services if necessary
- The parent or adult should be advised to contact their GP for advice on their symptoms and the GP will advise if a COVID-19 test is required
- If it is an adult that is unwell, they should wear a mask, keep their social distance of 2 meters from others
- The child, parent or adult should be advised not to touch surfaces, toys, equipment at the group
- Have a small supply of face masks available
- The environment should be cleaned and disinfected afterwards

#### **If a child or adult tests positive following attendance at the group**

- The parent or adult will be contacted by PH to inform them of positive test result
- PH will contact parent or adult to identify their close contacts
- PH will then contact the group organiser to identify close contacts, to advise on any actions or precautions that need to be taken, to advise on communications to other parents in attendance on the day
- Have attendance record to hand
- If you become aware of a confirmed case before HSE PH contact you, contact HSE PH as COVID-19 is a notifiable infectious disease for advice
- If you are unsure what to do contact your local HSE PH/ PHN/ GP