

Cwlwm Guidance

Temporary or Emergency Closure of a Childcare or Play setting



This guidance supports all childcare and play providers, including group settings or childminders to prepare for the temporary or emergency closure of their setting. Please note this guidance does not cover every eventuality and settings should comply with legal responsibilities and seek legal advice as needed as issues arise.

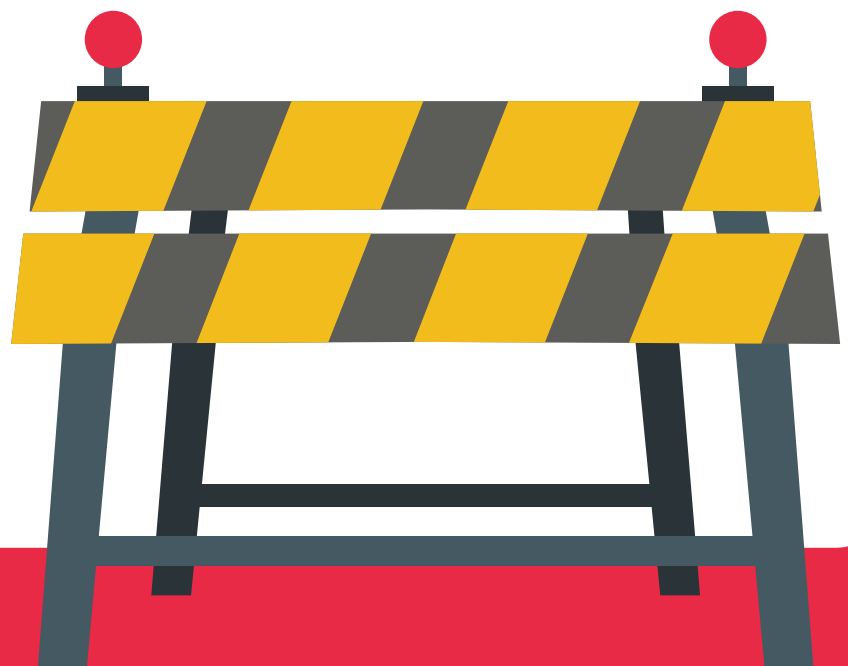
It is important for settings to be prepared for unforeseen circumstances and the possibility that they may need to close their setting on a temporary basis or evacuate due to an emergency that is beyond their control. Unforeseen circumstances may arise during or outside normal working hours, including weekends and holidays, at the setting or during trips away from the setting.

Developing a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) may help you think about, and plan for the actions required, during or immediately following an emergency or incident that threatens your normal business and bring all the information together in one place. If, for example, a flood, fire or other damage to your setting means that you can't operate as normal, there are things you would need to do. From calling all staff and parents/carers to let them know what's happened, to being able to make arrangements with insurers and regulators to get your business back up and running.

Having a BCP in place for both temporary and emergency closures ensures that everyone can work together efficiently. This helps to ensure the safety of children, their families, staff, volunteers and visitors, as well as support re-opening and the ongoing sustainability of the setting and well-being of all those involved. If your venue is shared, such as a childcare setting based at a school, joint planning will be needed to ensure plans align.

You may also need to consider a plan if the setting needs to move location to a more secure site e.g. moving from a cabin on school grounds to the main building in adverse weather conditions.

Minimising disruption of care for children and their families should be a priority.



Why may a setting need to close?

The reasons may include:



- Flooding or water damage



- Loss of water/ utilities



- Fire



- Extreme weather conditions e.g. heat, flooding



- Effects of a disaster in the area



- An outbreak of a notifiable infection, or a national/global pandemic



- Emergency lockdown or closure for example due to a significant risk*



- Serious injury to a child, visitor, member of staff



- Power cut or gas leak
- National major power outage



- Criminal activity (for example, bomb threat, anti-social or threatening attack, intruder, cyber security attack)



- Issues preventing access (for example building works, or host premises closure such as a school/ community centre)

This is not a complete list, please consider that there may be other unforeseen circumstances that cause settings to close.

* (for example an act of terrorism or other safeguarding risk to children, staff and others in the setting)

Where to start

The National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare for children up to 12 years of age include the requirement for settings to have a procedure to be followed in the event of fire or accident. In addition, settings in non-domestic premises need to have regard to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.



Cwlwm partner organisations may be able to further support you with developing your risk assessments, policies and procedures for both temporary and emergency closures.

Risk Assessment

Thorough risk assessments need to be undertaken in order to minimise the risk of unforeseen events such as those outlined above. For example, it is important to find out if you are in an area that is at risk of flooding. You can then produce a specific flood response plan so that staff and families are prepared should flooding occur. You should review any risk assessments regularly and at least annually to check that they are still an accurate reflection of the risk in question.





Planning

Following your risk assessment, it is important to plan ahead and make preparations now in readiness for any emergency situation. Engage staff and management committees to gain involvement and support.

To help your planning, you may find it helpful to develop a **Setting Closure Pack** that you, or your staff as appropriate, can go to for information to guide the setting through a temporary or emergency closure. This could include policies and procedures; response plans and checklists; template risk assessments; communications and contact details for those you need to notify. It is important to clarify roles and responsibilities and when and how to seek advice if needed and how to respond if advice is not accepted.



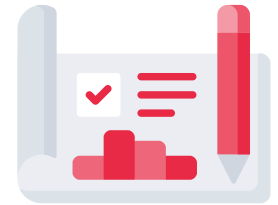
Consider how your planning could include:

- Preparation (including financial planning)
- Notifications to families, staff, CIW (through [CIW Online](#)) and other authorities
- Details on the types of steps that might be taken in the event of an emergency and what actions should be taken to enact them quickly
- Emergency evacuation plan and procedure
- Keeping in touch with families, staff and other authorities during closure short and long term and support for the wellbeing of children and staff
- Record keeping
- Re-opening
- Review of procedures following closure

We will now look at each of these points in more detail.

Preparation

This could include:



- **Policies and procedures** reviewed and new policies developed as needed, including:
 - Review of the current procedure in the event of a fire or accident
 - Emergency closure policy and procedure, to include plans for specific situations such as flooding, adverse weather conditions, the threat of or act of terrorism, other emergency lockdown situations, an outbreak of an infectious illness, power cuts, gas leaks or an external need for the premises to close.
 - Payment/ fees policy during closure
 - Security of children and staff fully considered within risk assessments and fed into various policies and procedures such as health and safety, evacuation/emergencies, arrival and collection of children, data protection and complements your safeguarding policy
 - Cyber policy to address cyber security incidents
 - Consider how you might need to adapt an admissions policy to temporarily prioritise places for vulnerable children and children of critical workers due to high levels of workforce absence for example. Remaining spaces can be filled by children outside of these priority groups
- **Emergency evacuations** should be practised on a regular basis. You may want to consider having an emergency evacuation bag with essentials in case you have to move quickly, this could include a mobile phone, contact details, first aid kit, waterproofs/ blankets, baby care items, drinks and snacks for example. For further information on what to do if a flood is imminent please see [Flood Warnings and Help](#) and [Natural Resources Wales](#). Learn from the practice and adapt procedures as necessary.
- **Contingency plans** need to be in place in the event of a more widespread power issue that may impact parents or carers' ability to contact the setting and potentially to collect their children promptly.



When considering a plan related to an unexpected loss of power/ utilities, settings will need clear policies and procedures for the collection of children. Settings will need to take into account potential impacts of a power loss, for example loss of mobile networks. A more widespread power issue could impact parents or carers' ability to contact the setting and potentially to collect their children promptly. Settings will need to have a process in place outlining how children will be cared for and kept safe if their parents/carers are delayed in collecting them from the setting.

In the event of a national loss of power/communications, preparations need to be in place in the setting. Settings should consider printing paper copies of registers, emergency contact details and the latest guidance and consider a suitable place for the storage of hard copy documentation. This could also include ensuring access in the setting to emergency supplies for example a first aid kit, waterproofs/ blanket, baby care items, food and drink (including bottled water in case water supplies are contaminated), torches, batteries and a battery operated FM radio. In the event of significant power outages, public announcements will be made on the radio.



- **Parent/carers agreements/contracts** – in addition to contracts with parent/carers and settings policies and procedures a parent/carers agreement may be additionally be of use. For example in the case of the pandemic it could be useful to outline everyone’s responsibility to inform and share essential information regarding the infection to minimise the risk of further infection. Cwlwm partner organisations can provide guidance in relation to parent/carers agreements and contracts.
- **Checklists** developed to be carried out in the event of a closure, including:
 - in the event of a temporary closure
 - in the event of an emergency evacuation
 - for re-opening following closure

Paper copies of plans and contact information for staff and children should be available if it is not possible to access digital information.

- **Insurance** cover and requirements checked, including whether or not you are in a [flood risk area](#). If so, seek further advice and guidance regarding insurance requirements, the further reading links at the end of this guidance. Contact your insurance provider for further guidance or information. See the Seeking support section at the end of this guidance for further information.
- **Financial arrangements** - develop plans to include how you will:
 - cover any staff wages
 - cover overheads such as rent, utilities and loans
 - negotiate a break from paying rent with your landlord during closure
 - consider if you need insurance to cover loss of earnings/income
 - use savings or a contingency fund for unforeseen closures and emergencies
 - collect fees, if applicable. You may need to review your contracts with parents/carers to ensure temporary closure is included. If retainers are to be paid these must be fair and reasonable, meeting the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). Following the pandemic, the CMA issued an [open letter to the sector](#) as well as guidance specifically on [Covid-19 restrictions and consumer law advice for nurseries and early years settings](#).
 - keep up to date with possible grants or funding opportunities

Notifications

Follow your policies and procedures and use checklists to ensure all parties are notified of a temporary or emergency closure, and as much notice is given as possible.

Ensure it is clear who is going to contact who, and that they are able to record when this has been done.

Use different methods to communicate to meet everyone's needs and to ensure all are notified promptly with clear information to reduce confusion and concern.

Ensure all personal data (for example children's details and parent/carer contact details) is kept safely and securely.

You will also need to notify all relevant parties of re-opening dates (see section below on re-opening).

Families – ensure key staff are able to contact all families through their preferred means of communication, and that this is followed up in writing, as well as general updates on social media where applicable. Include information about fee paying requirements.

Staff – include information regarding working arrangements (if applicable) and pay during the closure. Consideration may need to be given to whether staff will be subject to a temporary change in employment status. Refer to individual staff member's written employment conditions. Keep in regular contact with staff and consider their general well-being during this time.

Others – for registered settings this would include CIW (through [CIW Online](#)) given the requirement to notify them of any closure and potential changes to your Statement of Purpose. This may also include DEWIS Cymru, the Local Authority Childcare Team (particularly those funded to deliver education provision, Childcare or Flying Start), Family Information Service, Education Department and Flying Start. These notifications would be especially important where you receive funding for childcare or education places from a third party. Also consider there may be a need to notify Environmental Health and Public Health Wales. Your insurer and landlord may also need to be notified depending on the reason for the closure.



Keeping in touch

Think about how you may need a variety of forms of communication during a closure, and permissions from families and staff to contact them using methods such as group video calling, messenger apps and others.



Families – Inform parents/carers of the method to be used to keep them up-to-date about how long the closure will last and plans for re-opening. Consider use of social media and virtual platforms to share information and general updates along with ideas of activities for families and children to support their well-being. Be sure not to share any confidential or sensitive information through social media. You could also consider providing potential support (for example, provision of play and activity ideas) for children during periods of closure.

For children who require additional support (for example, children with ALN or disabilities), settings should continue to work with the local authority, as well as with parents and carers, to decide how best to continue supporting these children to stay healthy.

Also be alert to any safeguarding issues. Ensure everyone working in your setting is familiar with the local authority safeguarding contact and the details of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) within your setting to raise such a concern.

Staff – If the setting needs to temporarily close for a week or more, agree methods for keeping in touch on a regular basis and supervising staff to support any work being undertaken, inclusivity, mental health and well-being. Ensure staff have contact details of a manager that they can contact to discuss queries or concerns. Consider setting up a peer support system, such as a shared messaging group, to allow for communication between staff on a voluntary basis.

Others – For registered settings this may include CIW, DEWIS Cymru, the Local Authority Childcare Team, Family Information Service, Education Department and Flying Start, your insurer or landlord. Ensure these authorities have all your up to date contact details.





Record keeping

Include any ongoing concerns or difficulties, actions taken and dates completed.

Where applicable, try to photograph any damage and keep detailed lists of damaged items to assist your insurers in the handling of a claim.



Some examples of records you may need to keep include:

- Risk assessments – keep all revised versions
- Minutes of management committee meetings (if applicable)
- Completed checklists
- Notifications – record who has made them, when, method used, and keep copies of confirmation receipt or email
- Keeping in touch logs for families
- Keeping in touch logs for staff, as well as supervision paperwork, meeting notes and agreed actions. Copies to be shared with staff and kept on their files
- Support log – keep a log of who you have contacted to seek support, your queries raised and answers received

Records will also need to be kept of fire drills and emergency evacuation procedures that have been practiced, providing details of differing situations and any actions identified and completed.



Re-opening

If your property is too damaged to re-open, consider moving to a temporary premises if available. You will need to contact CIW (through [CIW Online](#)), your Local Authority, insurers, landlord and other relevant parties.

You may also find further support, information, guidance and helplines are available from Cwlwm partner organisations or your local authority childcare team. This could include any financial support or grants that you may be able to apply for to support sustainability.

Ensure your risk assessments and operational plan are up-to-date and identified actions completed. Consider if you have access to other staff who can cover if you have an employee who is unwell or in self-isolation.

Check what essential suppliers, partners and contractors you depend upon and how they may also be affected by an unforeseen event, for example by flooding or closure due to infection outbreak.

Legionnaires' disease – if your setting has been closed for more than a week and the hot and cold water systems have not been used, there could be risk of bacteria which causes Legionnaires' disease growing in the system. Please refer to [Legionnaires' disease: A Guide for Childcare Providers](#)

Ensure your contracts with parents/carers, staff contracts, policies and procedures and statement of purpose reflect any changes to your services.

Notifications – all relevant parties will need to be notified of your re-opening date. Staff and families may need to be informed of any changes to the setting and new daily operational procedures, including any health & safety requirements.

In the case of closure due to infectious illness, you may want to consider drawing up a parent/carer agreement to outline the roles and responsibilities of what your staff and parent/carers need to do to minimise risk of further infectious outbreaks. Ensure you are familiar with and keep up-to-date with all the latest Welsh Government and Public Health Wales guidance, and that this is shared with staff and parents/carers. Refer to section below on looking after your staff.





Flooding – if your setting has been flooded follow Public Health Wales guidance [Cleaning up Safely](#). These include useful information to support you re-opening your setting after flooding, including health and safety information on cleaning up after a flood, checks for electricity, gas supplies and who to contact. There are links in the seeking support section below to further resources relating to flooding available.

Review of procedures following closure

Following any incident in the setting, it is important to take the time to reflect and review on what happened, the actions taken and if any lessons could be learnt for the future.

Consider how you can involve all parties in gathering feedback, including children, their families, staff, any other users or commissioners of your service such as Flying Start, and your landlord as appropriate.

It may be that improvements have been made to your service as a result of the closure, and these should be reflected in any revisions to your policies and procedures and can also be included in your annual Quality of Care review. Ensure that families, staff, any other users or commissioners of your service such as Flying Start, and your landlord as appropriate are made aware of any improvements that have been made.



Keep calm

You may be dealing with a lot of anxiety from children in your setting as well as parents/carers and, of course, any staff you may employ. Try to keep calm, remain level-headed and use whatever stress-relief tactics work best for you. Keeping an eye on the latest news updates is useful but use reliable sources such as from the Welsh Government, NHS, Public Health Wales, Cwlwm partner organisations and Local Authorities. Social media updates from unchecked sources can add to anxiety levels.



Look after your staff

If you employ staff, you should be able to explain to your workforce any steps to keep staff safe at work as part of emergency plans. You have a duty to take steps to ensure their health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable. You can do this through incorporating risks to staff in your





risk assessments. Remind your staff that they also have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of the children and other adults they work with.

An example of this is around managing your staff's fears around specific illnesses or worries about whether their job is secure. Check the government advice regularly and share this with your staff.

Ensure that staff are supported during any period of closure by keeping in touch with them and providing relevant updates. You can keep in touch by phone, email, social media and also through formal or informal one to one meetings or team meetings to keep morale high.

Seeking support

Contact details for Cwlwm partner organisations and their websites are given below. They can provide further information and support.

Local authority childcare teams may be able to signpost to local support services as well as advise of any grants to support your setting re-opening.

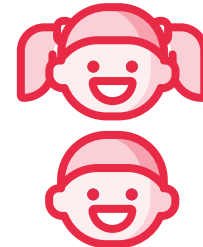
Helplines - Check to see if there are any helplines available, either locally or nationally, for example Citizens Advice Bureau, Public Health Wales or counselling services.





Childcare and Play organisations in Wales

A wide range of support and information for childcare and play settings is available through the Cwlwm partner organisations and Play Wales.



Please see their websites and social media platforms as well as contacting them directly with any queries or concerns you may have.

Please note some resources may be freely available, some may be accessed by members only and some may have a small charge for non-members



Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids Clubs

[Stepping Out Policies and Procedures Eng](#)

[Stepping Out Policies and Procedures Cym](#)



Early Years Wales

[Shop- resources](#)

[Member resources](#)



Mudiad Meithrin

[Temporary closure of the Cylch Meithrin policy](#)



National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA)

[Factsheet – Flooding Advice \(Wales\)](#)

[Coronavirus Knowledge Hub](#)



PACEY Cymru

[Protecting your business](#)

[Emergency evacuation](#)



Further Sources of information

There are a variety of organisations offering information and support, please see below some useful links.

- **Welsh Government guidance**
[Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings \[April 2023\]](#)

[Guidance for childcare and playwork: coronavirus \[April 2022\]](#)
- **Public Health Wales**
[Infection Prevention & Control: Guidance for Childcare and Educational Settings](#)
- **Business Wales**
[Covid-19 and other financial support and guidance](#)
- **ACAS**
[ACAS Corona virus guidance](#)
- **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance**
[Covid-19 restrictions and consumer law advice for nurseries and early years settings.](#)

Flooding/Extreme Weather

- **Welsh Government**
[Flood Warnings and Help](#) includes links and signposting to further information on what to do if a flood is imminent, before and after a flood, flood insurance and financial help.
- **Natural Resources Wales**
[What to do before, during and after a flood and what to do if a flood is imminent](#)
- **Public Health Wales**
[Public Health Wales](#) includes information and downloads for [General Advice](#) and [Cleaning up Safely](#).
- **Met Office weather warnings**
www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice and
- **Air Quality in Wales**
[Air Quality In Wales \(gov.wales\)](http://Air Quality In Wales (gov.wales))

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www.cwlwm.org.uk

