

Caring for children with Type 1 diabetes in nurseries

Position Statement (Updated: August 2018)

Why have we produced this position statement

Type 1 diabetes is a complex condition and caring for children with Type 1 diabetes in nurseries requires careful management by people with the right level of understanding and skills. Nurseries should be expected to make all the reasonable care arrangements to care for children with Type 1 diabetes appropriately using existing staff and budgets. However, we are aware that some nurseries need to improve their practice as we have been informed by a number of parents who have raised concerns about nurseries not making the necessary arrangements of care for their child with Type 1 diabetes.^{1,2}

How did we develop this position?

Diabetes UK have reviewed legislation that early years providers such as nurseries must meet in looking after children with medical conditions. We have also carried out a literature review of available evidence from international studies³ and brought this together with findings from our engagement work with parents with children with Type 1 diabetes and healthcare professionals in the UK. This includes views from parents who participated in a Diabetes UK Nurseries survey and social media discussions on their experiences of nursery care^{4,5} and views from healthcare professionals in a recent collaborative guidance⁶.

What we say about this issue

We believe that the current legislation and statutory guidance for nurseries do not provide an adequate framework of guidance to meet the needs of all children with Type 1 diabetes. This is because children experience diabetes differently and the level of support required depends on the individual child and so nurseries should ensure that they make all the reasonable care arrangements.

For this reason, we have set out a number of recommendations for nurseries, parents and local authorities.

Recommendations for nurseries:

- Nurseries should have a medical conditions policy in place, which recognises that every child with a medical condition is different and must be treated as an individual. The policy should also acknowledge that medical conditions can be life-threatening and impact upon a child's development.
- The medical conditions policy should clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in supporting the child with diabetes whilst they are at nursery, and should be regularly reviewed.
- Nurseries should ensure that their medical conditions policy covers the role of individual healthcare plans and who is responsible for their development, in supporting every child with Type 1 diabetes. This can be facilitated by the nursery coordinating a meeting between the child's parents and the paediatric diabetes specialist nurse (PDSN). They should then draw up an individual healthcare plan together, which includes the child's full care needs and how they will be met in each case.
- Nurseries should ensure that all staff are aware of a child's Type 1 diabetes and the procedures to follow in the event of an emergency situation.
- Nurseries should ensure that staff receive adequate training from a PDSN. An adequate number of trained staff should be available at all times, including when there are staff absences and during times of staff turnover.
- For children who require constant supervision, nurseries should ensure that sufficient staff are available to provide 1:1 support.

Recommendation for parents:

- Parents should not be required to go into nursery to provide for their child's diabetes care, such as administer insulin.
- Where parents feel that the arrangements made or proposed by a nursery are insufficient, they may apply jointly with the nursery for an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Parents can also separately request for an EHC needs assessment if they think that their child has educational needs as a result of their Type 1 diabetes.⁷

This is done by contacting the local authority where the nursery is based. Parents who do this themselves should let the nursery know.

Recommendations for local authorities:

- Local authorities when making decisions on whether to issue an EHC plan for a child should work closely with the local paediatric diabetes team and the child's family. This will ensure that the individual needs of children are taken into account.

Evidence and analysis - the reasons why we are saying what we do

There are approximately 1,700 children under the age of five living with Type 1 diabetes in England and Wales⁸, and 110 in Scotland⁹. Indeed, the steepest rise in diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes is in this age group, so the number of children with diabetes in nurseries is likely to increase.¹⁰

In England, it is mandatory for nurseries to meet the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to the age of five as outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.¹¹ Under this framework, nurseries must meet certain health care requirements, including having a policy and procedures for administering medicines and providing staff training on administration of medicine.

Evidence from a recent Diabetes UK survey showed that while nurseries are often able to make the necessary arrangements for care using existing staff and budgets, some need to improve their practice. Some of the concerns raised include:

- Lack of nursery staff understanding about diabetes and its complications hence making nurseries reluctant to make reasonable adjustments.
- Staff reluctance for training when staff who are trained in looking after children with Type 1 diabetes end their employment.
- Lack of confidence and inadequate skills in providing support to children with Type 1 diabetes.

Further information

- For more information on the Diabetes UK Advocacy Service, please go to www.diabetes.org.uk/How_we_help/Advocacy/

- Additionally, information on Diabetes UK's Care in School Helpline can be found at www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Schools/Care-in-School-Helpline/
- Please see IPSEA's website, which offers free information, advice and support to help get the right education for children and young people with all kinds of SEN and disabilities at www.ipsea.org.uk/
- Please see also the website of ACE Education, which provides independent advice for parents and carers on state education in England, at www.ace-ed.org.uk/

References

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4. Diabetes UK, Nurseries Survey, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TYMQYPX>
5. Diabetes UK, How do nurseries manage the needs of children with Type 1 diabetes?, (24 April 2015), <https://www.facebook.com/diabetesuk/photos/a.10150174129820167.410496.20583485166/10155400790495167/?type=1&theater>
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7. Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/special-educational-needs-support>
8. National Paediatric Diabetes Audit 2013-14 Report 1: Care Processes and Outcomes, <http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/system/files/protected/page/Revised%20Sept%202014%20NPD%20Report%201%20FINAL.pdf>
9. NHS Scotland, Scottish Diabetes Survey 2014, <http://www.diabetesinscotland.org.uk/Publications/SDS2014.pdf>

10. Bristol University, Dramatic increase of Type 1 diabetes in under-fives, <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2007/5349.html>, presented at the Diabetes UK Professional Conference 2007

11. Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (EYFS), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework-2>