

Childcare Provider Case Study

An Emergency Situation

Submitted by Barking Preschool

Barking Preschool recently experienced an emergency, which would without doubt be an emergency, every childcare provider would dread. A child in our care collapsed, they stopped breathing and went into cardiac arrest. We put into place our full emergency first aid procedures and the outcome for this child is very positive. Reflecting back over what happened, we handled the situation extremely well and have subsequently been praised by the emergency services and consultants at the hospital.

Like all emergency situations there are often some “lessons to be learnt” and we at Barking Preschool would like to share these with you:

- Consider where you park your car – Is a gate blocked or could the cars obstruct access by the medical team. In a busy carpark the staff parked all together at one end of the car park which did block a double gate. The double gate led to a playing field which was used for the helicopter to land in. This meant the stretcher had to be lifted over a smaller gate rather than taken through the double gates.
- Make sure you ask parents where they work as well as phone numbers. The police could not reach the parent and asked for the work address, so they could send an officer to get the parents.
- Any change in a child’s medical condition might be significant. Keep reminding parents to keep you informed of any changes in their child’s health. If they are in a rush, write it in their child’s diary. What a parent considers to be minor just might be very significant and only really realised when asked by medical professionals later.
- If you only have 1 phone in your setting and if this phone has poor signal make sure you have access to other phones. If its staff personal mobiles make sure they are accessible and in reach but obviously considering safeguarding procedures. 1 phone will be needed to be on loud speaker to the emergency service and in ear shot of the person dealing with the emergency. Another phone will need to be used to call all the other parents to collect their children. If poor signal is an issue in your area give serious consideration to how you will manage this.
- In this incident the police took action regarding the area as a possible scene of crime. It was distressing for the staff but on reflection they now understand why this was the case. So in certain situations police may view an area as a possible scene of crime and this means that areas will be secured and maintained. Parents could not come into the building to collect their children but staff had to escort them out. High profile tape was used to secure and preserve the area – this caused some distress and also highlighted to the public very clearly there had been a significant issue.
- Once police arrived the staff were told they would have to remain at the setting until forensics officers said they could leave. This meant they were unable to collect their own children from school at 3ish in the afternoon. The incident started at 9.45am so practitioners will need to be prepared to be in for a long day.
- Work with the emergency services. They will keep you appropriately informed and if possible provide you with information.

- Parents and the public and then the press were very quickly asking and making some wrong assumptions to what had happened. This is very difficult as due to confidentiality the staff could not correct information or inform anyone. Ensure staff are aware that should an incident occur that confidentiality must be met at all times.
- Come to Suffolk County Council's Early Years and Childcare Service for support and advice. They can quickly support and offer guidance with dealing with the press, listen to what you have experienced and give some emotional support. In this case they provided support from their Education Psychologist Team too.
- This provider held an open meeting. Parents were invited to come along without their children to ask questions. What parents really wanted to do was give the staff a hug and show their compassion for what they had been through
- If possible, make time for all the staff to come together and reflect on the event. We talked and talked and talked through the event. It has helped us to come to terms with what they dealt with.
- Be prepared to remain with the child at all times until the parents arrive. The medical staff will take over the care of the child, but it is likely they will want and expect you to remain with the child as if you are the parent. You are the only significant person to the child until the parents arrive.
- If there is a defibrillator in your community it has a code, which the person on the emergency service number will pass to you. This particular defibrillator did not have child pads so we were told not to use it. Check where your nearest defibrillator is and ask if it includes child pads so you know what is available in the event of an incident.
- Have an area in your emergency plan which makes provision for any children not affected by the incident to be removed to another area. Children witnessing this soon become very distressed. In this case the staff took the children to an area which was blocked off by a large curtain.

Thanks for taking the time to read this case study, if you would like to discuss any of the points please call us:

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