

# Closed *for* BUSINESS?



NDNA's **Purnima Tanuku** offers advice on coping with

emergency closures bad weather might force this winter...

## **Q** Following last year's snow I'm concerned about being prepared for this winter. What can I do?

**A** When bad weather occurs it's important to be prepared. You should have a clear plan in place to deal with snow and any other emergency closures. Key areas to look at in your planning include staffing, for example, how many staff live within walking distance and could safely make it to work, and are these staff able to provide cover should other staff members not be able to drive to work.

It should also look at how you will inform parents and keep them updated, and how you will assess if it is safe to open the nursery. For example, even if your nursery can open from a staffing perspective, you may be situated in an area where the roads are not gritted, making it unsafe for parents to reach you.

Having an action plan in place can be very helpful in preparing you – remember to think about what happened last winter, and include any steps you would undertake to tackle the challenge if it happens again. It can be helpful to take suggestions from staff to ensure you consider all possible eventualities.

## **Q** Should I charge parents when my nursery is closed due to unforeseen circumstances?

**A** This is a difficult one, and it's important that you both consider the best approach for your nursery and be clear with parents. Some nurseries do charge for closures. In such instances, it's critical that parents are fully aware of this, so make it a point of induction and ensure that it is included in the parent's contract.

Some nurseries take a different approach, not charging parents but ensuring this does not impact on the sustainability of the nursery by allowing staff to be paid but making the time up gradually. Others take an approach where parents are asked to cover half of the cost, for example. The key to a successful policy is making sure that parents understand what it says and means for them – avoiding any issues when you need to put the policy into practice.



### **findoutmore**

NDNA is the national charity and membership association for children's nurseries across the UK, supporting settings across all sectors to deliver the best possible care and early learning for children whilst ensuring they are sustainable businesses. If you have a question, or want to know how NDNA can support you, visit [ndna.org.uk](http://ndna.org.uk)

## **Q** I know I need to have a bad weather policy. What should it cover?

**A** Part of an effective approach to informing parents is making sure that they're not overwhelmed by information. You may consider including the bad weather element into an 'adverse weather' policy – which will also enable you to talk about situations such as heatwaves or floods.

In terms of bad weather, you should outline how children are kept safe and how you decide if you will remain open. You should also highlight how you will keep parents updated and how you will approach the taking care of children should there be staff shortages. You may also wish to reference the parent contract

regarding the approach to charging.

If staff shortages mean you're unable to maintain statutory ratio requirements, you should contact Ofsted – or the Care Inspectorate for Scotland and CSSIW for Wales – to inform them of the issue, and all details should be recorded in your incident file.

In the run up to the winter months you may wish to remind parents about its content, perhaps with a few bullet points in your newsletter or by speaking to them at parent's evening.

NDNA members can download a sample adverse weather policy as part of NDNA's free online guide to policies and procedures – visit [www.ndna.org.uk/policies](http://www.ndna.org.uk/policies) to log in and access these.