Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Updated 15 October 2020

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Main changes to previous guidance

The latest update to this guidance is as follows:

- added section with information about local COVID alert levels
- added content about local COVID alert levels to the live performances section

Introduction

This guidance is for parents and carers and covers changes to:

- after-school clubs
- holiday clubs
- tuition

Bubbles and group sizes in out-of-school clubs and activities

What to do if your child is displaying coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

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- community activities
- other out-of-school settings for children and young people aged 5 and over during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

These settings provide enriching activities that give children the opportunity to socialise with others outside their household and promote their wellbeing. We also recognise the importance of these settings in providing additional childcare options to parents and carers, particularly those with younger children.

Reopening of after-school clubs and out-of-school activities for children

Providers who run community activities, holiday clubs, breakfast and after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school provision for children can now operate with protective measures in place, see the protective measures guidance. Providing they are only operating in premises legally able to open, children are able to attend settings such as:

- tuition and learning centres
- extracurricular clubs (for example, dance classes, gymnastics training, football coaching)
- uniformed youth organisations (for example, Scouts, Guides and cadet forces)
- supplementary schools
- private language schools
- religious settings offering education (for example madrassahs, yeshivas, Sunday schools)

However, if you live in an area that is experiencing a local coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, different local restrictions may have been imposed. Please consult the local restrictions page to see if any such restrictions are in place in your area.

Local COVID alert levels

On 12 October the government introduced a system of local COVID alert levels. If you live, work or volunteer in an area that is part of 'local COVID alert level: high' or 'local COVID alert level: very high', there are additional restrictions which apply to you. Please visit the local COVID alert levels guidance to find out what level your area is in and the additional restrictions that apply.

Currently, supervised activities, training and education for children can continue to operate at all alert levels both inside and outdoors.

At ‘alert level: very high’, the government may seek to agree additional interventions in consultation with local authorities to drive down the transmission of the virus. These may include, for example, closing buildings such as libraries, community centres, leisure centres and gyms aside for specific, limited purposes such as youth activities, childcare and support groups.

Choosing after-school clubs and out-of-school activities for your child

As these settings reopen, it is crucial that we are minimising the risk of transmission of the virus due to increased mixing between different groups of children. For this reason, you should consider sending your child to the same settings consistently, and consider carefully the number of settings they attend overall.

You should also keep an accurate record of when and where your child attends out-of-school settings to help NHS Test and Trace identify people who may have been in contact with your child should they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

We have released protective measures guidance for providers to help them put in place protective measures to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. While some providers will be Ofsted registered, not all will be, and there is no single responsible body with complete oversight of these settings, or the quality and safety of their provision. With this in mind, you will want to check with the provider that they have put in place protective measures, such as those described in this guidance, to reduce the risk of infection before you send your child to a particular setting.

Who can attend after-school clubs and out-of-school activities

Out-of-school settings may open to all children and young people up to 18 years old.

Scientific advice suggests that there is a moderate to high degree of confidence that the susceptibility to clinical disease of younger children (typically until they become teenagers) is generally lower than for adults. However, it remains important that protective measures are put in place to help reduce the risk of transmission.

For older children, there is not enough evidence yet to determine whether susceptibility to disease is different to adults. If you decide that your older child will attend an out-of-school setting you should still consider how to minimise any risk of infection that they may face.

The risk can be minimised for children of all ages by:

- ensuring that you are sending them to a provider that has coronavirus (COVID-19) protective measures in place
- taking practical steps to reduce the risk of your child coming in close contact with someone who has the virus, such as encouraging your child to walk or cycle to the setting, getting dropped off by a member of your household in your private car rather than taking public transport. You should not car share with anyone outside your household (or bubble)
- discouraging your child from mixing with different peer groups outside of the specific activity or group setting

Children with health concerns

Very few children are now known to be clinically extremely vulnerable. Read the latest guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

These children are able to attend out-of-school settings, however if parents of children with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend they discuss their concerns with the provider, to receive reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk.

We are aware that some parents and carers may look to holiday clubs and out-of-school settings to offer respite childcare for children with special educational needs or with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). We have asked providers to ensure that making provision available and accessible to these children, as far as possible, remains a priority in these current circumstances.

Protective measures in after-school clubs and out-of-school activities

The government has released protective measures guidance to help providers of out-of-school settings put measures in place to reduce the risk of infection and transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The type of protective measures specific providers put in place will depend on their individual circumstances, such as the type of the activity they offer (for example whether children will be moving around rather than sitting at desks), the size and layout of their premises, and whether the activity is being held indoors or outdoors.

The key measures that every setting should have in place are:

- minimising contact with staff, children and young people, and other individuals who are unwell by ensuring those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms do not attend their setting. This also applies if a member of their family has symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, or if they have been advised individually by NHS Test and Trace to isolate at home because they are the contact of a case that does not live in the same house
- encouraging staff and children attending to clean their hands more often than usual, including before and after activities and before and after using toilet/washroom facilities
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces more often than usual using standard products, such as detergent or bleach
- increased frequency of cleaning of toilets and washrooms
- minimising contact and mixing between groups of children by altering the environment to allow for social distancing between children and keeping children in the same bubbles that they are in during the school day, or otherwise in small consistent groups

Before sending your child to a setting, you will want to ask providers what measures have been put in place to keep children, staff members and parents or carers safe, and any practicalities you need to be aware of such as collection and drop-off times and whether your child should bring their own water bottle or food to the setting.

Bubbles and group sizes in out-of-school clubs and activities

Where it is possible to do so, providers should try to work with you and the schools or early years settings which your child attends to ensure, as far as possible, your child can be kept in a group with other children from the same bubble they are in during the school day. This will minimise the amount of mixing between different groups of children outside of school, and therefore the risk of infection.

Where it is not possible or it is impractical for providers to group children in the same bubbles as they are in during the school day (for example, if there are only one or two children attending the provision from the same school or school day bubble), providers may need to group children with other children from outside their school day bubble, or from a different school.

If providers need to do this we are recommending that they, as far as possible, keep children in small groups of no more than 15 children with the same children each time wherever possible (that is, do not mix groups unless absolutely necessary) and at least one staff member, depending on the type of provision or size of the group. Group sizes may need to be smaller than 15 children depending on factors such as age of the children in attendance, size of the premises or the type of activity.

This means that when your child attends the first session they should be placed in a particular group or class of children and they should remain in that group for future sessions as far as possible. Providers will need to review these groups to minimise the amount of 'mixing' (that is, the number of different people each child comes into contact with). For example, when new children register for the club or activity, the provider may wish to first determine whether they attend the same school or early years setting as other children in the setting and group them together if appropriate.

Multiple groups of 15 plus staff can use the same shared space, if that is necessary, with distancing between the groups.

What to do if your child is displaying coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

Anyone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, such as a raised temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss of or change to their sense of smell or taste, should stay at home. They should not attend an out-of-school setting and should follow the guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and get a test.

If your child becomes unwell while at a setting, the provider should call you immediately to come and collect them. While your child is awaiting collection they will be kept separately from others by a distance of at least 2 metres, ideally in a well-ventilated room with appropriate adult supervision. When you collect your child you should take them straight home; do not use public transport; do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital unless the child is seriously unwell. In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk.

Follow the NHS guidance on when to self-isolate and what to do or contact NHS 119 via telephone if you do not have internet access.

If your child tests negative, they can usually return to the setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation subject to confirmation from local health protection professionals.

If your child tests negative but is unwell, they should not return to the setting until they are recovered.

If your child tests positive, NHS Test and Trace will speak directly to those that have been in contact with your child to offer advice.

Parent attendance at extra-curricular clubs, tuition and other out-of-school activities

Parents and carers should not be allowed into the setting unless this is essential (for example, where children may have special care needs), and children should be dropped off and collected at the door if possible.

It is good practice for providers to give parents and carers a parental consent form to complete when enrolling children in a setting so they have at least one emergency contact number for each child and are aware of any medical conditions or allergies. However, it is particularly important during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak that you ensure the provider has your most up-to-date contact details in case of an emergency, such as your child falling ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while attending the setting.

If you are unable to supervise your child during a session, you will want to satisfy yourself that a provider has put protective measures in place to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus, as well as having adequate health and safety and child protection procedures. At Annex A we have included checklists to support you when choosing a setting for your child.

Live performances of children's dance, music and drama

Live performances are currently permitted but only where strict coronavirus (COVID-19) security measures are able to be implemented safely. This includes for the performers, the audience and anyone supporting the performance.

However, if you live, work or volunteer in an area that is part of 'local COVID alert level: high' or 'local COVID alert level: very high', there are additional restrictions which apply to you. Please visit the local COVID alert levels guidance to find out what level your area is in and the additional restrictions that apply. For example, at the 'alert level: very high', the government may agree with the local authority to close performing arts venues for the purposes of performing to audiences.

Ahead of attending, you should check with the provider organising the live performance what steps have been taken to mitigate the risk of transmission. The protective measures providers put in place should be in line with those outlined in the performing arts guidance, for example limiting the size of the audience to allow social distancing to be maintained and only operating in a venue with adequate ventilation.

In England, you must wear a face covering in entertainment venues, including theatres and concert halls. You must also wear a face covering by law in some other public places unless you have a reasonable excuse for not wearing one or you are not able to wear one, for example, because of your age or a health condition. You should follow the relevant government guidance on face coverings when attending an out-of-school setting to watch your child in a live performance.

Annex A: choosing a suitable provider

This information provides some examples of positive signs to look out for to help you make good choices when choosing an out-of-school setting for your child, but this is not an exhaustive list.

All providers

Things to look for:

- health and safety has been considered, specifically coronavirus (COVID-19) protective measures. Providers with more than 5 staff members should have a written policy. Small and self-employed providers do not need to have a written policy but should be aware of the risks and how to reduce them
- the environment appears safe (it is a well-maintained, clean building with a clear exit route in case of emergencies and a first aid kit available). The provider knows what to do in the event of a fire or emergency
- rooms are well-ventilated, either by a ventilation unit or naturally (for example, open windows)
- soap or hand sanitiser is readily available for staff, children and parents or carers to clean their hands. The setting may also have posters promoting frequent handwashing or the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- the setting is cleaned frequently (for example, cleaning checklists in toilets are visible and completed regularly)
- use of toilets and changing rooms is managed to prevent overcrowding
- children attending the setting are in school bubbles or small, consistent groups of no more than 15 children and one or two staff members
- social distancing is promoted, through physical markers for instance
- an appointed person is responsible for first aid
- the provider has relevant training to deal with child protection and safeguarding issues (for example abuse and neglect)
- a child protection policy can be given to parents on request. This should say how children can report concerns and how the provider will make parents aware of them
- there is an appointed safeguarding lead
- a parental consent form, which asks for medical information and emergency contact details, is needed before the child attends for the first time
- a complaints process is in place

Providers with staff members

Things to look for:

- staff members and volunteers are aware of the new safety measures the setting has introduced during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- staff members and volunteers have relevant training to deal with child protection issues such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- staff and volunteers have completed relevant qualifications and checks (for example pre-employment references, DBS checks and so on)

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