Department
for Education

Guidance

Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Updated 21 October 2020

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Main changes to previous guidance

We have updated this guidance as follows:

- made format changes to make information easier to find
- added information on:
  - the use and disposal of face coverings (section 3)
  - supervised toothbrushing programmes (section 3)
  - local COVID alert levels and tiers of restriction (section 3)
  - music, dance and drama (section 3)
  - maximising use of sites and ventilation within settings (section 3)
  - reopening of buildings (section 3)
  - journeys, such as pick-ups and drop offs (section 3)
  - attending more than one setting (section 3)
  - a child with symptoms attending a setting (section 3)
  - pregnant women (section 3)
  - visitors to settings, including new admissions and settling in (section 3)
  - use of outdoor private and public spaces (section 5)
  - informal childcare (section 5)
  - supporting children's and staff wellbeing (section 6)
  - new SEND legislation (section 6)
  - EYFS disapplications ending on 25 September 2020 (section 7)
  - emergency first aid (section 7)
  - the Job Retention Bonus scheme (section 10)
- amended wording on:
  - employer health and safety and equalities duties (section 3)
  - staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable (section 3)
  - children who are shielding or self-isolating (section 4)
  - safeguarding (section 6)
- added an additional paragraph on managing coronavirus (COVID-19) cases (section 8)
- updated information on funding (section 10)

Since 1 June, early years settings, including childminders, have been able to welcome back children of all ages. We are continuing to work with the early years sector to understand how they can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

We will keep this guidance under review as we continue to monitor the situation.

This guidance should be read alongside the following guidance.

Guidance on infection prevention and control:

- safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

Guidance on funding:

- financial support for education, early years and children's social care
- check if you can claim for your employees' wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- use of free early education entitlements funding during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Other relevant guidance:

- supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus outbreak
- temporary early years foundation stage (EYFS) coronavirus (COVID-19) disapplications
- Ofsted's response to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- EYFS reforms: government consultation response

1. Who this guidance is for

This guidance is for local authorities and all early years providers in England. This includes early years provision in:

- maintained schools
- non-maintained schools
- independent schools
- all providers on the early years register
- all providers registered with an early years childminder agency

For reception, schools should, in the most part, refer to the guidance for schools: coronavirus (COVID-19), although some of the information in this guidance is relevant to Reception.

This guidance does not apply to:

- nannies or au pairs, as they work in the child's or children's family home
- community groups operated by non-registered providers
- providers caring for children over the age of 5 and registered with Ofsted on either the compulsory or voluntary childcare register - providers caring for children over the age of 5 should refer to the guidance on protective measures for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

2. Responsibilities of local authorities and early years providers

2.1 Early years providers' responsibilities

Since 1 June, early years settings have been able to welcome back children of all ages.

We understand that it may not be possible for all settings to open more widely or reopen at this time. Early years settings should work together with local authorities to agree the provision needed locally to support the needs identified. Settings are expected to be flexible and work together where required.

We understand that in some areas, shared provision through early years hubs and clusters is in place and separate guidance is available for early years settings on cluster and hub provision.

Settings are responsible for:

- safeguarding - local agencies, services and settings should work together to actively look for signs of harm given the greater risk of harm that some children may have been exposed to through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- supporting the learning and development of, and caring for, the children who attend, as set out in the early years foundation stage (EYFS)
- in the case of vulnerable children, particularly those with social workers, early years providers should continue to encourage these children to attend regularly and notify their social worker if they stop attending
- planning and implementing the system of controls, building on the hierarchy of protective measures that have been in use throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic - section 3 of this guidance sets out the public health advice which early years settings must follow

Since 20 July, early years settings have no longer been required to keep children in small, consistent groups within settings but can return to normal group sizes. Settings should still consider how they can minimise mixing within settings, for example where they use different rooms for different age groups, keeping those groups apart as much as possible.

This change does not extend to cover provision for children over the age of 5. Where early years settings are also caring for children over the age of 5, they should ensure they are also following guidance on protective measures for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak which includes guidance on group sizes.

Providers that care for children both under the age of 5 and over the age of 5 separately, where it is possible to do so, may choose to apply the measures outlined in this guidance to those children under the age of 5, and the measures outlined in the protective measures for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak to those over the age of 5.

Providers that have mixed age groups together will need to, as far as possible, keep all children irrespective of age in small consistent groups of no more than 15. Each group must be with at least one staff member, or with more staff members to meet relevant ratio requirements.

In light of the removal of 'bubbles' from 20 July, early years settings and local authorities should continue to keep risk assessments for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) up to date and should look to bring back more children with SEND in accordance with the SEND risk assessment guidance. Their return should be informed by their risk assessment, to help settings and local authorities ensure that the right support is in place for them to come back.

All other systems of control measures must remain in place.

We are continuing to make progress in understanding the disease and transmission characteristics of coronavirus (COVID-19). In addition, early years settings are on average much smaller than schools. This allows a less restrictive approach to mixing, and operating within strict space and ratio requirements, within settings than schools.

2.2 Welcoming back all children to early years settings

We have asked settings to welcome back more children to early years provision. We understand however that some settings may be unable to open, especially if they are experiencing staff shortages due to self-isolation and sickness, or particularly low levels of demand. Local authorities will work with local settings to determine the best way to ensure sufficient childcare.

2.3 Local authorities responsibilities

Local authorities are responsible for:

- monitoring demand and capacity for childcare and should work with early years settings to ensure there are sufficient places to cater for those in priority groups as well as meeting local need - this may involve providing places in alternative settings if necessary or working with neighbouring local authorities to co-ordinate provision while keeping in mind the impact on children and families
- continuing to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area, working with partner organisations and agencies, throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) period (as set out in working together to safeguard children)
- supporting early years settings to assess the risks for children whose education, health and care (EHC) plans they maintain, and ensuring those children are safely cared for whether in a setting or at home
- local agencies and services should work together to actively look for signs of harm given the greater risk of harm some children may have been exposed to through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

2.4 Actions for local authorities to monitor and manage their local early years markets

Local authorities should:

- continue to work with early years providers to monitor and manage their local childcare market
- develop an understanding of any gaps in childcare supply, as well as the barriers individual providers are experiencing and where they might temporarily be unable to open more widely or reopen (if they have been closed)
- where needed, manage the wider market flexibly to ensure that there is sufficient childcare provision, continuing to prioritise places for vulnerable children and children of critical workers, followed by 3- and 4- year olds, and then younger age groups - this may include:
  - moving children between providers where one provider has closed, and another has empty dedicated schools grant (DSG) funded places
  - operating through clusters and hubs to maintain educational provision, or, if necessary
  - using early years DSG block contingency budgets, where local authorities have them, or uncommitted central spend in the early years budget

Further information about funding for providers from the 2020 autumn term can be found in the guidance on the use of free early education entitlements funding during coronavirus.

3. Infection prevention and system of controls

Keeping children and staff safe is our utmost priority. This section of the guidance sets out the public health advice that early years settings must follow to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. It also includes the process that settings should follow if anyone develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while attending. This guidance has been developed with advice from Public Health England (PHE).

The public health advice in this guidance makes up a PHE-endorsed system of controls, building on the hierarchy of protective measures that have been in use throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. When implemented in line with a revised risk assessment, these measures create an inherently safer environment for children and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced for children and staff.

The system of controls provides a set of principles that when followed will effectively minimise risks. All elements of the system of controls are essential. All settings must cover them all, but the way different settings implement some of the requirements will differ based on their individual circumstances. Where something is essential for public health reasons, as advised by PHE, we have said 'must'. Where there is a legal requirement, we have made that clear. This guidance does not create any new legal obligations.

There cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach where the system of controls describes every scenario. Setting leaders will be best placed to understand the needs of their settings and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering high quality care and education with the measures needed to manage risk. The system of controls provides a set of principles to help them do this and, when followed, they will effectively minimise risks.

3.1 Risk assessment

Settings must comply with health and safety law, which requires them to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures.

Settings should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessment and draw up plans as part of their wider opening. Settings should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are effective, working as planned, and updated appropriately, for example when any issues are identified, or when there are changes in public health advice.

For more information on what is required of employers in relation to health and safety risk assessments, please see annex A of the guidance for full opening: schools.

If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease. Advice on this can be found in the guidance on legionella risks during the coronavirus outbreak.

Additional advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers guidance on emerging from lockdown.

Once the setting is in operation, it is important to ensure good ventilation and maximising this wherever possible, for example, opening windows, where safe to do so (bearing in mind safeguarding in particular). Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak.

3.2 Supporting people who may be at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the review of disparities in risks and outcomes report. This looked at different factors including age and sex, where people live, deprivation, ethnicity, people's occupation and care home residence. The reasons are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future. If people with possible risk factors are concerned, we recommend settings discuss their concerns and explain the measures the setting is putting in place to reduce risks. Setting leaders should try as far as practically possible to accommodate additional measures and follow advice relevant to local COVID alert levels.

People who live with those who have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace.

Settings have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others, from harm and should continue to assess health and safety risks and consider how to meet equalities duties in the usual way. Following the steps in this guidance will help towards mitigating the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to children and staff and help settings to meet their legal duties to protect employees and others from harm.

All staff should follow the measures set out in the system of controls section of this guidance to minimise the risks of transmission. This includes continuing to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, and minimising contact where possible, including maintaining social distance between staff within settings.

Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

On 13 October 2020, new guidance on protecting the clinically extremely vulnerable was published. The guidance is less restrictive than previous shielding guidance, and includes advice at each local COVID alert level. The guidance also contains shielding advice that will now only apply in the worst affected areas and for a limited period of time.

If an area is at local COVID alert level medium, high or very high, and clinically extremely vulnerable staff are unable to work from home, they should still attend the setting as the workplace should be COVID secure, where the system of controls in this guidance is implemented in line with the setting's own workplace risk assessment.

Employers should be able to explain the measures they have put in place to keep employees safe at work.

The government may advise more restrictive formal shielding measures for the clinically extremely vulnerable, in the very highest alert levels, based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer. In this situation, clinically extremely vulnerable staff should not go into work if shielding advice is in place in their area or the area they work in.

Staff who are clinically vulnerable

Clinically vulnerable staff can return to settings. While in settings they should follow the sector-specific measures in this guidance to minimise the risks of transmission.

This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distance from other staff in settings. This provides that ideally, adults should maintain a 2 metre distance from others. Where this is not possible avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of others. While the risk of transmission between young children and adults is likely to be low, adults should continue to take care to socially distance from other adults including older children and adolescents . People who live with those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable can attend the workplace.

Staff who are pregnant

Pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category. They are generally advised to follow the above advice, which applies to all staff in early years settings. Employers should conduct a risk assessment for pregnant women in line with the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999.

3.3 System of controls: protective measures

Having assessed their risk, settings should work through the system of controls, adopting measures in a way that addresses the risk identified in their assessment, works for their setting, and in line with the learning and development needs of children in settings. This should include full educational and care support for those children who have SEND.

Settings should:

- ensure that all staff understand the system of controls and how they are applied in the setting - time should be taken for staff to review the actions in the system of controls and ask questions
- ensure that parents and carers are aware of the system of controls, how this impacts them and their responsibilities in supporting it

If settings follow the guidance on the system of controls, they will effectively reduce risks in their setting and create an inherently safer environment.

System of controls

This is the set of actions early years settings must take. They are grouped into 'prevention' and 'response to any infection'.

Prevention

1) Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend settings.

2) Where recommended, use of face coverings.

3) Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.

4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.

5) Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach.

6) Minimise contact between groups where possible.

7) Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Numbers 1 to 5 must be in place in all settings, all the time.

Number 6 must be properly considered, and settings must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 7 applies in all specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

8) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

9) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the setting community.

10) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

11) Notify Ofsted.

Numbers 8 to 11 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

System of controls: prevention

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend settings

Ensure children, staff and other adults do not come into settings if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or have tested positive in the last 10 days and anyone developing those symptoms during the day is sent home. These are essential actions to reduce the risk in settings and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). All settings must follow this process and ensure all staff are aware of it.

If anyone in the setting becomes unwell with a new, persistent cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia):

- they must be sent home and advised to follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 10 days
- they should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19)
- other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms
- if a child is awaiting collection:
  - they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door with appropriate adult supervision
  - ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation
  - if it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people
  - if they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should be taken to a separate bathroom if possible - the bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else
  - PPE must be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs) - more information on PPE use can be found in the guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings
- as is usual practice, in an emergency situation call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk - anyone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital
- any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any children who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate - however, they must self-isolate and arrange for a test if they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test), if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive or they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace
- everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell - the area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned with normal household disinfectant after they have left to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people, see the guidance on cleaning of non-healthcare settings outside the home

PHE is clear that routinely taking the temperature of children is not recommended as this is an unreliable method for identifying coronavirus (COVID-19).

2. Where recommended, use of face coverings

The government is not recommending universal use of face coverings in early years education and care settings because the system of controls, applicable to all education and childcare environments, provides additional mitigating measures. PHE advises that for health and safety reasons, face masks should not be used for children under three. In addition, misuse may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission and there may also be negative effects on communication and thus children's development.

When social distancing is difficult to maintain in communal areas

In situations where social distancing between adults in settings is not possible (e.g. when moving around in corridors and communal areas), settings have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings for adults on site, both staff and visitors.

When working with children

Based on current evidence and the measures that early years settings are already putting in place, face coverings are not necessary when adults are interacting with children, even where social distancing is not possible. Face coverings may have a negative impact on interactions between staff and children, and their use when interacting with children in this settings should be avoided.

Exemptions

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or

- Ventilation, air conditioning and other building services when co-ingesting - close spaces or force ventilation to maximum.

The same expectations will apply to early years settings, and we expect staff to be aware of and follow the guidance below.

Access to face coverings

It is reasonable to assume that staff will now have access to face coverings due to their increasing use in wider society, and PHE have made available resources for use in schools and other settings.

However, where staff require face coverings for their own safety or where they are unable to use them for reasons due to having forgotten it or having damaged it, we would expect early years settings to provide a face covering for staff to use.

Safe remove and disposal of face coverings

Settings should have a process for removing face coverings when staff or visitors who use face coverings arrive at the setting, and when face coverings need to be removed during the day, and for safely disposing of disposable face coverings and cleaning reusable face coverings.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires cleaning of hands before and after putting on, touching while wearing, and after taking off and disposing of in individual, sealable plastic bags between use. Where a face covering becomes damp or dirty, it should be changed for a new one and disposed of in the same way.

Further information can be found in face coverings: when to wear one and how to make one.

2 Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is new and there is much to be learnt on how this can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser.

Georgia must ensure that children clean their hands regularly, including:

- when they arrive at the setting
- when they return from break
- when they change rooms
- before they eat lunch

Hygiene and thorough hand cleaning is needed for the transmission future.

Practice to consider and implement:

- ensure the setting has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations' throughout the setting, ensuring that there is sufficient supply of soap, disposable towels, hand sanitiser, and other hygiene products. Young children and those with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly, and this will need to be done by an adult who is in attendance
- build these routines into planning and daily routines with young children and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them as far as possible.

3 Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach is known to be effective. All staff and children must ensure they have enough tissues and bins available in the setting to ensure they can dispose of used tissues in line with this approach. Young children and those with complex needs may need to be given this spirit, and all children understand that this is now part of how the setting operates.

Some children and staff may need to be reminded of the importance of respiratory hygiene as their peers. For example, those who self-consciously cough into their elbow may need to be reminded that this is not sufficient to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and that they should wash their hands. It is not a reason to deny these children a place at the setting.

Face coverings are recommended in secondary schools and colleges for children under the age of 15. Further information can be found in face coverings: when to wear one and how to make one.

5. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often and keeping toilets clean and hygienic

To facilitate cleaning, we recommend that children in early years environments where there is space (this from elsewhere. Public health advice is to maintain distance between people wherever possible, but this is not practical in early years settings. We know children in early years settings will be closer together, allows been large and up. Where bye-laws are stated, regularly disinfect them. Ensure that children are taught to wash their hands regularly and follow handling equipment.

Actions to consider and implement:

- Where staff are in one classroom and timetabling of the day, and if above a cleaning timetable that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes the regular cleaning of those more high touch areas.
- Frequently touched surfaces and objects should be cleaned more often.
- clear procedures for maintaining cleaning processes for food preparation areas, and for food and drink.
- Where staff are in one classroom and timetabling of the day, hot tubs will need to be cleaned regularly and children must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly and often.

PHE has published revised guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) which includes information on how to clean surfaces and objects.

6. Promote contact between individuals where possible

Where possible, settings should ensure that children and staff are in a small, consistent groups or can adhere to normal group sizes. Returning to normal group sizes is a key part of the wider school opening plan to ensure coronavirus (COVID-19) risks are as low as possible. Early years settings are typically smaller than schools. However, settings should still consider how they can adhere to the principle of keeping children in small groups as far as possible. Minimising contact between groups can reduce the number of children and staff potentially affected by a case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting.

Achieving this content of contact will not be in a robust way will also ensure there are proportionate measures in place if a case of coronavirus (COVID-19) is identified.

Children and carers should be encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend where, depending on their circumstances, they are using childcare consistently. This should be the case for staff.

There may be situations where it is not practical to maintain these ratios safely, for example, children attending a childminder before their nursery opens or a child who requires 1:1 support.

Settings, parents and carers should review their arrangements and consider how they can adhere to the principle of keeping children in small groups as far as possible. This should be done in a way that does not compromise the safety of children and staff.

7. Where necessary, seek support from local protective equipment (PPE)

The majority of staff in early years settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally use in their work. Settings should have a sufficient number of masks, visors.

- where an individual child/carer is with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at a setting, and is unable to be collected immediately
- where a child already has routine intimate care needs that involves the use of PPE, which is not the case for coronavirus.

Guidance on safe practice in education, childcare and children's social care settings during coronavirus (COVID-19) has been published. Staff should be aware and follow this guidance.

8. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

Settings must ensure they understand the NHS Test and Trace process. Settings should be ready to support the process when it is required. Settings will be required to:

- have a lead, if they are employing childcare providers. Staff and children must not be allowed to attend more than one setting, and should be encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend where, depending on their circumstances, they are using childcare consistently. This should be the case for staff.
- ensure that children are taught to wash their hands regularly and follow handling equipment.
- ensure that children are encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend where, depending on their circumstances, they are using childcare consistently. This should be the case for staff.

Actions to consider and implement:

- ensure the setting has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations' throughout the setting, ensuring that there is sufficient supply of soap, disposable towels, hand sanitiser, and other hygiene products. Young children and those with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly, and this will need to be done by an adult who is in attendance
- build these routines into planning and daily routines with young children and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them as far as possible.

9. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach is known to be effective. All staff and children must ensure they have enough tissues and bins available in the setting to ensure they can dispose of used tissues in line with this approach. Young children and those with complex needs may need to be given this spirit, and all children understand that this is now part of how the setting operates.

Some children and staff may need to be reminded of the importance of respiratory hygiene as their peers. For example, those who self-consciously cough into their elbow may need to be reminded that this is not sufficient to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and that they should wash their hands. It is not a reason to deny these children a place at the setting.

Face coverings are recommended in secondary schools and colleges for children under the age of 15. Further information can be found in face coverings: when to wear one and how to make one.

10. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often and keeping toilets clean and hygienic

To facilitate cleaning, we recommend that children in early years environments where there is space (this from elsewhere. Public health advice is to maintain distance between people wherever possible, but this is not practical in early years settings. We know children in early years settings will be closer together, allows been large and up. Where bye-laws are stated, regularly disinfect them. Ensure that children are taught to wash their hands regularly and follow handling equipment.

Actions to consider and implement:

- Where staff are in one classroom and timetabling of the day, and if above a cleaning timetable that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes the regular cleaning of those more high touch areas.
- Frequently touched surfaces and objects should be cleaned more often.
- clear procedures for maintaining cleaning processes for food preparation areas, and for food and drink.
- Where staff are in one classroom and timetabling of the day, hot tubs will need to be cleaned regularly and children must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly and often.

PHE has published revised guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) which includes information on how to clean surfaces and objects.

11. Promote contact between individuals where possible

Where possible, settings should ensure that children and staff are in a small, consistent groups or can adhere to normal group sizes. Returning to normal group sizes is a key part of the wider school opening plan to ensure coronavirus (COVID-19) risks are as low as possible. Early years settings are typically smaller than schools. However, settings should still consider how they can adhere to the principle of keeping children in small groups as far as possible. Minimising contact between groups can reduce the number of children and staff potentially affected by a case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting.

Achieving this content of contact will not be in a robust way will also ensure there are proportionate measures in place if a case of coronavirus (COVID-19) is identified.

Children and carers should be encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend where, depending on their circumstances, they are using childcare consistently. This should be the case for staff.

There may be situations where it is not practical to maintain these ratios safely, for example, children attending a childminder before their nursery opens or a child who requires 1:1 support.

Settings, parents and carers should review their arrangements and consider how they can adhere to the principle of keeping children in small groups as far as possible. This should be done in a way that does not compromise the safety of children and staff.

12. Where necessary, seek support from local protective equipment (PPE)

The majority of staff in early years settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally use in their work. Settings should have a sufficient number of masks, visors.

- where an individual child/carer is with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at a setting, and is unable to be collected immediately
- where a child already has routine intimate care needs that involves the use of PPE, which is not the case for coronavirus.

Guidance on safe practice in education, childcare and children's social care settings during coronavirus (COVID-19) has been published. Staff should be aware and follow this guidance.

13. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

Settings must ensure they understand the NHS Test and Trace process. Settings should be ready to support the process when it is required. Settings will be required to:

- have a lead, if they are employing childcare providers. Staff and children must not be allowed to attend more than one setting, and should be encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend where, depending on their circumstances, they are using childcare consistently. This should be the case for staff.
- ensure that children are taught to wash their hands regularly and follow handling equipment.
- ensure that children are encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend where, depending on their circumstances, they are using childcare consistently. This should be the case for staff.

Actions to consider and implement:

- ensure the setting has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations' throughout the setting, ensuring that there is sufficient supply of soap, disposable towels, hand sanitiser, and other hygiene products. Young children and those with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly, and this will need to be done by an adult who is in attendance
- build these routines into planning and daily routines with young children and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them as far as possible.

14 Pick-ups and drop-offs at school, childminders and other early years settings

Childminders and other early years providers should consider how they can work with parents and carers to agree how best to manage any necessary journeys. For example, they may be able to agree with parents and carers that they will drop children off and pick them up.

If it is necessary for a childminder to pick up or drop off a child at school, walking or cycling, this is a low risk activity and should be encouraged for non-household use is preferable. Use of public transport should be minimised.

Childminders and other early years providers should also consider how they can work with other parents and carers to share journeys.

15 Visits to the setting from parents and carers, additional staff, external professionals and non-staff members

Providers should consider visits to the setting from parents and carers. Settings are encouraged to avoid visitors entering their premises, wherever possible. If a visitor does need to attend, settings should follow the guidance on managing visitors to school, contractors and workers to support NHS Test and Trace.

Non-essential visitors

For new admissions, settings should consider providing virtual tours for prospective parents and carers.

Parents and carers can begin to visit the setting in the following ways:

- ensuring face coverings are worn if required in line with arrangements for staff and other visitors to the setting (see section 3 on face coverings)
- they should be encouraged to limit the number of visits they make
- avoid close contact with other people in the setting
- are aware of the content of contacts, how this impacts them, and their responsibilities in supporting the setting to manage risks (see section 4 on content of contacts)

Section 3 of this guidance includes details on the content of contacts. It is important that parents and carers, and visitors, adhere to it in order to prevent cross-contamination and spread.

Other visitors to parents and carers

Parents and carers should not be allowed into the setting unless there is a necessity.

Children should be dropped off and collected at the gate, if possible.

Stay and play sessions, such as where the purpose is for parent and carers to meet each other, should not take place at the setting.

Guidance on parents and carers coming into the setting for organised performances can be found in the music, dance and drama section of this guidance.

Contacts and personnels

In instances where settings need to use other essential professionals such as contractors, and contacts, they should follow the guidance on managing visitors to school, contractors and workers to support NHS Test and Trace.

Section 5 of this guidance includes details on the content of contacts. It is important that parents and carers, and visitors, adhere to it in order to prevent cross-contamination and spread.

The presence of any additional members of staff should be agreed on a weekly basis, rather than a daily basis, to minimise contacts.

16 Supervised toothbrushing programmes

PHE have confirmed that supervised toothbrushing programmes may be in operation within settings, but this is a local decision.

The wait brushing models is not recommended because it is considered more likely to be through aerosol transmission than other models and is not deemed to be small health over this toothbrushing.

For information on the clinical coverage of toothbrushes and storage systems, see the guidance for supervised toothbrushing programmes in early years and nurseries.

17 Local COVID alert levels and tiers of restriction

The tiers of restriction for education and childcare, summarised in Annex 2 of the guidance Supporting schools and colleges in tier 2 areas to prepare.

At all local COVID alert levels, the expectations is that education and childcare settings should remain open. Tier 2 and tier 3 restrictions do not impact on attending education and childcare, other educational provision, including day care or a short recent, mean in areas where a local alert level is high or very high.

Decisions on any more local restrictions on attendance at education settings will be taken separately on a case-by-case basis. In the light of local circumstances, the Public Health Officer advises the Incidence and transmission of coronavirus (COVID).

18 Music, dance and drama

This guidance is based on general principles of activity, not to specimen singing, playing musical instruments, dance, drama and other performances and is encouraged to do by early years practitioners.

Music, dance and drama lessons and other activities may children live together, more enriched lives, and discover ways to express themselves. There may, however, be some concerns about the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) when children are performing, singing and dancing together, dance and drama.

Organised singing and and instrument playing can be undertaken in line with this and other guidance, further guidance is available in the document Music Education Hub, dance and drama (COVID) the settings people and non-professionals in the arts, and the guidance for the performing arts industry. Staff should be encouraged, (COVID) continuity to develop a more detailed understanding of the risks and how to manage them. Staff should be encouraged to develop and should follow the guidance.

Minimising mixing groups and volume control

Settings should organise and run music, dance and drama lessons that children remain in their usual groups.

Additionally, settings should consider having background or accompanying music to bands which do not encourage participants to raise their voices singing or playing instruments. Music, dance and drama lessons should be conducted in classrooms or other spaces with ventilation.

Organised performances

If planning an indoor or outdoor face to face performance in front of a live audience, settings should follow the guidance for the performing arts industry. Further information is available in the document, Music education hub, dance and drama (COVID) the settings people and non-professionals in the arts, and the guidance for the performing arts industry.

Music, dance and drama lessons and other activities

Settings can continue to engage specialist teachers (for example, non-staff members) to deliver music, dance and drama lessons, and other activities, as part of normal provision. Settings should follow the guidance for the performing arts industry.

Participants teachers can move between early years settings, however, settings should consider how to minimise the number of people they visit and where possible. Visitors will be expected to comply with arrangements for managing visitors to school, contractors and workers to support NHS Test and Trace. Settings should also consider how to minimise the number of people who come into the premises, and secure bad areas. settings should consider using longer sessions with fewer visits, and should also consider how to minimise the number of people who come into the premises.

If a teacher is operating as a participants teacher, and operating across multiple settings, they should follow the guidance for the performing arts industry. Settings should also consider how to minimise the number of people who come into the premises, such as a high temperature, a new, persistent cough, or a loss of or change in their sense of taste or smell, or coronavirus (COVID-19).

- maintain distancing requirements with such group lines, where possible
- ensure that the number of people who come into the premises is minimised
- coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or coronavirus
- make efforts to reduce the number of groups taught and activities worked to, to reduce the number of contacts.

Further information on the Music Education Hub, including contact details for your local Music Education Hub, is available on the Music Education Hub.

Organised music sessions in the early years, including singing, and playing musical instruments

When planning music sessions, settings should consider how they can operate the safety measures. Although singing and playing and instruments do not necessarily pose a risk of transmission, there is a risk of transmission in the setting of the coronavirus (COVID-19) virus from one person to another if it is required to ensure good ventilation, advice on this can be found in air conditioning and ventilation in schools and colleges.

- singing and and playing should not take place in large groups such as assemblies
- practitioners and people who are in the room should not face the same way as another player
- not microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly

By considering and adapting these consultative risk mitigation measures, the settings can safely do this.

Handling equipment and instruments for organised sessions

Measures to take when handling equipment, instruments, include:

- increased handwashing before and after handling equipment, especially if sharing equipment or instruments
- ensuring that equipment is cleaned after each use
- if instruments and equipment have to be shared, disinfect regularly
- ensure that people who are using the equipment or instruments are washing their hands, following good hygiene practices
- consider limiting the number of supplies when bring instruments and equipment into the setting, and ensure that instruments and equipment are kept to a minimum. Consider how to manage instruments, such as other equipment or and and fabrics that. Gear equipment and instruments is a clear consideration, and settings should follow the guidance for the performing arts industry. Settings should also consider:
- create and bring up and dropping off collection points where possible, within the setting, to minimise the number of people who come into the premises

Individual lessons

Music lessons, for individual lessons in music, dance and drama, these guidance is that the setting is to be treated as a family group, and should follow multiple groups, so settings will need to take particular care in the setting that the guidance is that the setting is to be treated as a family.

Specific safety measures for individuals music lessons should include:

- increased handwashing before and after handling equipment, especially if sharing equipment or instruments
- ensuring that equipment is cleaned after each use
- if instruments and equipment have to be shared, disinfect regularly
- ensure that people who are using the equipment or instruments are washing their hands, following good hygiene practices
- consider limiting the number of supplies when bring instruments and equipment into the setting, and ensure that instruments and equipment are kept to a minimum. Consider how to manage instruments, such as other equipment or and and fabrics that. Gear equipment and instruments is a clear consideration, and settings should follow the guidance for the performing arts industry. Settings should also consider:
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Specific safety measures for individuals music lessons should include:

3.9 Further guidance

Read the guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care for more information and guidance on managing children and young people, how SEND should be used, what type of PPE to use, and how to access it.

4. Children's attendance

4.1 Children self-isolating or shielding

All children who normally access childcare are clinically encouraged to attend so that they can gain the educational and developmental benefits of childcare.

We are continuing to make progress in understanding the disease and transmission characteristics of coronavirus (COVID-19). We have already follow advice relevant to the last COVID alert level. Note that a small number of children who are shielding will be able to attend childcare, if it is safe for them to do so, but will not normally. Children who are shielded will be kept at home until further notice, and will be kept under review. Children who are clinically extremely vulnerable will be advised to shield.

Ministers advice for all adults who are clinically extremely vulnerable in August 2020: The Chief Medical Officers issued a supplement on shielding and childcare guidance on 23 July 2020. This guidance is for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and their families.

On 10 October 2020, new guidance on protecting the clinically extremely vulnerable was published. This guidance includes advice on extensive shielding patience and includes advice at each local COVID alert level. It includes advice on how to support children who are shielding, and how to support children who are clinically extremely vulnerable, or at risk of COVID alert levels unless they are one of the very small number under paediatric care (such as those with a life-limiting condition or those undergoing cancer treatment) advised by the CV and shielding teams to shield.

In the future, the government will only reintroduce formal shielding advice in exceptional circumstances, and will do so nationally. It will do so only if it is ready to come, but it will do so only if it is necessary, and in line with the advice on advice from the Chief Medical Officer. The government will write to families to inform them if it does need to reintroduce formal shielding advice for education settings.

Settings should be mindful that many parents and carers may be reluctant or concerned about their children's return to childcare, and settings should take the right support in place to address this.

The key include:

- children who have themselves been shielding previously but have been shielded from the wider impact of COVID
- those living in households who have been shielding previously
- those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus to children from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and other backgrounds or those living in areas with higher levels of COVID activity.

If parents or carers of children with significant risk factors are concerned, we understand and support their concerns and should be confident that the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk.

Clear communication with parents and carers regarding the measures being taken to ensure the safety of their children will be necessary, including the risk factors that their child may be exposed to in childcare environments.

Settings should develop risk assessments and risk mitigations as appropriate for specific groups of parents and carers (such as those with English as an additional language, those with a number of vulnerable children, to encourage attendance of these groups).

4.2 Action to take when a child's usual provider is closed

Local authorities should work with settings which are closed to identify provision for children who are expected to attend, and to ensure that children are able to access childcare provision as close to their usual place as possible. In rural settings, important information should be provided to parents and carers, including information about how children will be supported, the requirements and medical needs of children who are expected to attend, staffing and the child.

In the case of vulnerable children, the closed setting should notify the local authority (and social worker, where relevant) that they are closed, and provide information about how children will be supported. Local authorities should work with providers to ensure that vulnerable children are able to access provision.

Settings should be mindful that many parents, and carers may be reluctant or concerned about their children's return to childcare, and settings should take the right support in place to address this.

The key include:

- children who have themselves been shielding previously but have been shielded from the wider impact of COVID
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Settings should develop risk assessments and risk mitigations as appropriate for specific groups of parents and carers (such as those with English as an additional language, those with a number of vulnerable children, to encourage attendance of these groups).

4.3 Prioritising places when demand for places is too high

Since 20 July, local authorities have been mandated to ensure that children can attend as normally. This means prioritisation of children should no longer be necessary.

If there is a need to prioritise places (for example, where a nursery is oversubscribed), the order in which children should be prioritised, should be as follows:

- vulnerable children and children of critical workers
- first and 2 year olds, including those who will be transitioning to reception in September 2020
- followed by younger age groups

5. Considerations for operating the setting

5.1 Settings experiencing staff shortages due to sickness or self-isolation

Childcare settings that are experiencing staff shortages should:

- work with their local authority to identify how appropriate provision can be put in place and keeping children safe (including in relation to safeguarding if where necessary, post-staff with another setting, or take on qualified and unqualified staff, or use staff who are not normally deployed to work with children (including local registered childminders, school teachers closed or home or overseas teachers to work with them at the setting - recommended DBS checks and risk assessed, and DBS barred list checks, including on group lists)
- wherever possible, ensure staffing arrangements are consistent on a weekly basis, rather than adopting a rolling staff rotation.

5.2 Advice for settings where the premises from which they usually operate is closed, such as community centres, village or church halls

Since 1 June, community centres, village halls and places of worship have been able to open for activities and services, including childcare, in line with the government's guidance.

Where premises have been used by groups together they will need to, as far as possible, keep the children in the same groups as they were in before, and keep more than 15 with at least one staff member or with more staff members to meet relevant ratio requirements.

5.4 Use of private and public outdoor spaces

Settings can take group of children to outdoor public places and to outdoor private spaces, including:

- to the far expanses of education or childcare
- they remain within the EYFS child ratios
- they conduct a risk assessment
- the risk assessment demonstrates that they can remain socially distant if they encounter other people in the public space
- such hygiene is maintained throughout
- Through handwashing hygiene before and after the trip

5.5 Informal childcare

Groups must consult the local COVID joint level guidance relevant to their area.

Groups that are back in registered settings should follow the guidance for early years settings and childcare.

Groups in the community, such as childminders, or groups in local, multi-community centre or school, must follow COVID secure guidance for the venue and local COVID joint level guidance.

Informally arranged groups not covered by an exemption must follow the local COVID joint level guidance for the venue they use.

5.6 Staying in touch with parents or carers whose child is at home

Since 20 July, nursery settings have resumed so all children should be able to attend as normal, with the exception of those children who may still have to shield.

We recognise that many settings have already shared resources for children who are at home, and have been in touch with their parents and carers.

It is primary is essential that children who are at home are not left out of anything, including how these children can maintain their social and emotional well-being, and how they can be kept safe.

- parents and carers can be reassured that they can provide a positive learning environment at home

Settings can also be reassured by:

- the Nurture Little Minds campaign, it features tips and practical activities that parents and carers can use to maintain their child's well-being. There are many simple ways to help children learn and it does not have to be time-consuming or expensive. Many of the activities can be carried out using everyday items and household resources
- settings can also direct parents to the BBC's Tiny Happy People and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework for inspiration
- Early Years and Ofsted's Ask the Early Years Inspector COVID-19 blog

Settings should work with local authorities to monitor the welfare of children who are not attending childcare and settings.

- other children they might wish to keep in touch with, for whatsoever purpose

5.7 Monitoring of early years and childcare provision during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted have agreed that from 1 June and April 2020 to ensure there is up-to-date information on early years and childcare provision, Ofsted will contact providers to ask for information. This will be a proportionate and supportive approach to collecting information during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We will:

- continue to ask the providers to complete a short coronavirus confidence survey to ensure that we have information on how many children are attending and how many staff are in the setting
- ask the frequency and what the main reasons for staff absence are

All local authorities have received information on how to access the data collection. The frequency of collection will be every Friday and April 2020 with any quarter.

DfE has asked Ofsted to monitor which providers are the early years registered providers and childcare providers (including those providing childcare for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as well as those providers who are not registered with Ofsted and are operating during the pandemic.

We understand that most local authorities are already collecting the data requested by DfE, so it is important that Ofsted requests a small sample of such providers. The data collection does not duplicate the requirements for local authorities to collect information on children who are ongoing reporting requirements.

In addition, any confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting should be reported to Ofsted, and if the setting is a childcare provider it is not to be asked to report, should be swiftly reported to Ofsted through the usual notification procedures.

6. Safeguarding and welfare

Children may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, such as anxiety, fear, and concern. We may particularly be the case for vulnerable children, including those with a parent who is a key worker, or who is shielding, or who is ill. We will need to be sensitive to these and other possible responses, such as changes in sleeping habits or more anxiety or depression. Children who had attended a school or a childcare provider before the lockdown may be reluctant with other children and staff, which is normal.

Settings must continue to take all necessary steps to keep children safe and promote their welfare. Settings should follow their child protection policy and the Safeguarding and Child Protection: Amendment to statutory guidance of the DfE (Safeguarding Framework) will apply, including requirements relating to child protection arrangements, the Prevent duty and the Channel programme.

Settings should also promote more focused support where issues are identified through the Early Help process, including the Early Help Assessment, the Early Help Intervention and plans, Children Social Care assessment and plans, and other support arrangements. Local authorities will be expected to provide support to children who are vulnerable and their families, and settings should support this, and keep up to date with the ongoing reporting requirements.

6.1 Reviewing and updating child protection policies

Settings should consider whether any review of their child protection arrangements is needed as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This could take the form of a coronavirus (COVID-19) addendum and could include:

- a risk assessment for the operation of the child protection policy
- updated or new child protection policy addendum
- designated safeguarding lead (and deputy) arrangements
- any updated advice received from the local safeguarding partners
- any updated advice received from local authorities, for example, EHC and children's social care, about how to support children in your setting
- ensuring arrangements are in place to monitor children who are expected to attend school/college
- ensuring arrangements are in place should a child have concerns about a staff member or volunteer who is working with children
- how the updated policy links to the broader risk assessment to be conducted, discussed with staff, and communicated to parents

All staff and volunteers should be made aware of the new policy and be kept up to date as it is revised.

6.2 Changes to the role of the safeguarding lead

Settings must continue to have a practitioner designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding. It is possible for the safeguarding lead role to be shared between more than one practitioner, if necessary. The lead should be familiar with the local arrangements, as long as they are still available to provide support and advice on how to deal with safeguarding issues. The lead should be available to provide advice and support to other staff, on an appropriate basis, in the practitioner and know on any given day who that person is and how to speak to them.

6.3 Keeping children safe online

Settings should continue to consider what strategies they are using to keep children safe online during their time in setting.

- checking apps, websites and search results before using them with children
- supervising children during online activities

Further details can be found in safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations for practitioners

This advice is also relevant for parents and carers.

6.4 Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing

Staying at home for a prolonged period and the change of routine may have caused difficulties for some children, such as changes in behaviour or mood.

As more children return to settings, settings should:

- consider the mental health, pastoral or wider wellbeing support children may need as they return to school
- be aware of the mental health implications of the COVID-19 outbreak may have on children

Settings may want to refer to guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Settings may also appropriately consider and focus on identifying and supporting vulnerable children and parents and carers that return to the setting, including those who have experienced bereavement, those with poor mental health, domestic abuse or substance misuse issues. Providers should contact their local authority to understand what support is available and how they can access it for children and families, and refer to it where it is appropriate.

It will be necessary to consider how vulnerable children, who are currently attending the setting, continue to have their needs met and to be supported as the setting takes on more children.

6.5 Supporting children with SEND and changes to SEND legislation

Particular care will be needed in supporting children with SEND to return to their settings. Recognising that children with SEND may have more challenging for some children with SEND than others, and consideration and support will need to be given to how children with SEND can transition into their setting.

Settings should be alert to the fact that these may be children:

- who attended or were expected to attend childcare provision as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- who have been shielding for many years as a result of time out of childcare settings, or transitioning from primary to secondary school

Settings will need to ensure they have the staffing needed to support children with SEND of all ages and to ensure that the provision set out in Education Health and Care (EHC) plans (EHCP) is carried out in accordance with current of special educational needs and disability (SEND) legislation.

From 1 May to 31 July, Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 was temporarily suspended as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020. This meant that local authorities were temporarily unable to secure the provision set out in EHC plans, and children and young people were not entitled to have their needs assessed for an EHC plans. To ensure that children and young people receive the support they need, local authorities, health bodies and providers had to make reasonable endeavours to secure provision as close to that set out in the EHC plans. This temporary changes to the law on the timescales for EHC needs assessments and for the production of EHC plans, and the duties in relation to the relevant provision in the Children and Families Act 2014 were discussed on them by Coronavirus (COVID-19) regulations and ceased to apply as planned on 25 September 2020.

We remain committed to listening to and working with local authorities, parent and carer representatives, and children and young people, as we lift the lifting of the temporary changes to SEND legislation in a way that supports the relevant children and young people with SEND.

7 Early years foundation stage and reforms

7.1 Application of the early years foundation stage framework

The EYFS statutory framework sets the standards that schools and childcare settings must meet for children's learning and development and for their welfare.

We have extended application to allow for the temporary disapplying and modifying of several elements of the EYFS framework, including flexibility required to changes in workforce availability and contextual challenges. We have also made changes to the EYFS profile, the EYFS Statutory Framework and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook. There is a 2 month transitional period for requirements relating to staff qualifications and Ofsted inspections.

New regulations that came into force on 28 September 2020 allow for temporary changes to the early years foundation stage framework to be disapplied or modified to ensure that the EYFS framework continues to be able to comply with the EYFS.

Ofsted's Early Years Inspection guide can be found in the EYFS: coronavirus (COVID-19) response, which sets out how the temporary arrangements will be brought to an end. Settings and local authorities should use the EYFS Statutory Framework and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile Handbook to inform their planning and assessment for children, especially in relation to pandemic first aid. During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, settings:

- Will continue to use the following helpful resources:
- Early years foundation stage framework and early years (PACEY), supporting children at your setting
- Dr Dina Lansbury coronavirus
- Tickets and activities
- Our back mentors work
- Early years and COVID-19 town conversion

7.3 Meeting the learning and development requirements in sections 1 and 2 of the EYFS

Following the coronavirus to the EYFS on 25 April, early years settings may need to use reasonable endeavours to deliver the learning and development requirements in sections 1 and 2 of the EYFS statutory framework, taking into consideration and the profile and the EYFS. Since keeping children safe and safe and safe. As far as possible, children should benefit from a broad range of learning and development.

For children in pre-reception, settings and practitioners may focus at this time on the prime areas of learning, including:

- communication and language
- personal, social and emotional development
- physical development

For children in reception:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world: address gaps in language, early reading and mathematics, particularly ensuring children are ready to learn phonics, including through home learning

7.4 Meeting the learning and development requirements in sections 3 and 4 of the EYFS

Following the coronavirus to the EYFS on 25 April, early years settings may need to use reasonable endeavours to deliver the learning and development requirements in sections 3 and 4 of the EYFS statutory framework, taking into consideration and the profile and the EYFS. Since keeping children safe and safe and safe. As far as possible, children should benefit from a broad range of learning and development.

For children in pre-reception, settings and practitioners may focus at this time on the prime areas of learning, including:

- communication and language
- personal, social and emotional development
- physical development

For children in reception:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world: address gaps in language, early reading and mathematics, particularly ensuring children are ready to learn phonics, including through home learning

with the relevant system of controls in place

7.4 Assessment of the EYFS profile for next academic year

This will go ahead in summer 2021.

7.5 Progress check for 2 year olds

Settings will not be required to undertake the progress check at age 2 during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

7.6 EYFS reforms

We have published the government response to the consultation on EYFS reforms.

This response confirms what changes will be made to the EYFS. Primary schools have been invited to carry out voluntary early adoption of the reforms in 2020 to 2021, ahead of statutory rollout to all early years settings in the 2021 to 2022 academic year. Please read the consultation response for more information.

7.7 Postponement of the statutory implementation of the Reception Baseline Assessment

In response to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on schools, the statutory implementation of the Reception Baseline Assessment has been postponed until the 2021 to 2022 academic year. Instead, schools are invited to take part in an early adopter year in the second half of the 2020 autumn term to familiarise themselves with the assessment and training materials before the Reception Baseline Assessment becomes statutory.

7.8 Does someone with a paediatric first aid (PFA) certificate still need to be on site?

The requirements in the EYFS on PFA certification have been modified and the EYFS: coronavirus disapplications guidance has been published setting out what this means:

- the existing requirement remains in place where children aged 0 to 24 months are on site - paragraph 3.25 and annex A of the statutory framework for the EYFS set out the requirements, including that 'at least one person who has a current PFA certificate must be on the premises and available at all times when children are present, and must accompany children on outings'
- the existing requirements also remain unchanged for childminders because they are already required to have full PFA certification
- the requirement is modified where children aged 2 to 5 are on site (with no children aged below 24 months) to a best endeavours duty to have someone with a full PFA certificate on site - if all steps set out in the guidance have been exhausted and settings cannot meet the PFA requirement, they must carry out a written risk assessment and ensure that someone with a current First Aid at Work or emergency PFA certificate is on site at all times
- new entrants (level 2 and 3) do not need to have completed a full PFA course within their first 3 months in order to be counted in staff to child ratios

7.9 Renewing paediatric first aid (PFA) certificates

If PFA certificate requalification training is prevented for reasons associated directly with coronavirus (COVID-19), or by complying with related government advice, the validity of current certificates can be extended to 25 November 2020 at the latest. This applies to certificates which expired on or after 16 March 2020. If asked to do so, providers should be able to explain why the first aider hasn't been able to requalify and demonstrate what steps have taken to access the training. Employers or certificate holders must do their best to arrange requalification training at the earliest opportunity. The EYFS: coronavirus disapplications guidance will be updated to reflect the recent extension of the validity of PFA certificates.

7.10 Emergency first aid

The Health and Safety Executive published guidance on first aid during coronavirus (COVID-19) which will support local risk assessments and provides guidance for first aiders.

It is clear that treating any casualty properly should be the first concern. Where it is necessary for first aid provision to be administered in close proximity, those administering it should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards, including washing hands.

7.11 Varying staff to child ratios and qualifications

Paragraph 3.30 of the EYFS states:

'Exceptionally, and where the quality of care and safety and security of children is maintained, changes to the ratios may be made.'

We consider the extent of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to be an exceptional temporary circumstance in which the staff to child ratios set out in the EYFS can be changed if necessary. Early years settings and schools, however, remain responsible for ensuring the safety and security of children in their care.

Amendments made to regulations from 24 April allow further exceptions to be made to the qualification level that staff hold in order to be counted in the ratio requirements.

Settings should use reasonable endeavours to ensure that at least half the staff (excluding the manager) hold at least a full and relevant level 2 qualification to meet staff to child ratio requirements, but this is not a legal requirement.

In nursery classes in maintained schools, caring for children aged 3 and over, reasonable endeavours should be used to ensure that at least one member of staff is a school teacher. Where this is not possible, there must be at least one member of staff for every 8 children, with at least one member of staff who holds at least a full and relevant level 3 qualification.

Providers should use reasonable endeavours to ensure that at least half of other staff hold at least a full and relevant level 2 qualification.

Further detail is set out in EYFS: coronavirus disapplications.

7.12 Advice on separate baby room requirements for children under the age of 2 years

The EYFS requirement to have a separate baby room is a safety issue for the protection of very young children particularly when they are asleep. Paragraph 3.59 of the statutory framework for the EYFS already allows for the mixing of children when this is appropriate. If the layout of the premises does not allow for a separate 'baby room' with its own door, a suitable area may be partitioned off to provide safety for younger children.

7.13 Taking on new staff (including volunteers) even if a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check has not been completed

The requirements set out at paragraph 3.11 of the EYFS remain in place.

Settings must obtain criminal records checks for new members of staff including volunteers. If an application has been made but the DBS disclosure has not arrived new staff and volunteers can still care for children provided they are supervised by someone who has a DBS check. Under no circumstances can an unchecked member of staff be left alone with children.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter the early years setting, they should continue to be provided with a safeguarding induction.

7.14 Enhanced DBS checks for staff moving temporarily to another early years setting

Where members of the early years and childcare workforce are already engaging in regulated activity and already have the appropriate DBS check:

- there is no expectation that a new DBS check should be obtained for them to temporarily move to another setting to support the care of children
- the onus remains on the receiving setting to satisfy themselves that someone in their setting has had the required checks - this requirement can be satisfied by seeking assurance from the current employer rather than requiring new checks

8. Ofsted

8.1 Notifications requirements for settings providing childcare

We have asked Ofsted to work with us and with local authorities to find out which early years providers, including childminders, are open or temporarily closed.

Ofsted still require further information about whether some providers are open or closed. Settings may have received or will receive an email in the coming weeks to ask you about your setting and plans for the future. Check that this email comes from an Ofsted.gov.uk address before responding as soon as you can.

In the meantime, if your operating circumstances do change (that is, you open or close):

- let Ofsted know by sending an email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk with 'change in operating hours' in the subject field
- in the body of the email, confirm the unique reference number for each setting and the details of the change - the URN can be found the setting's registration, inspection report(s), and Ofsted reports page

In addition, any confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting (either child or staff member), or if the setting has been advised to close as a result, should be swiftly reported to Ofsted through the usual notification channels.

8.2 Ofsted inspections during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The Secretary of State for Education announced the suspension of routine Ofsted inspections on 17 March 2020.

The safeguarding responsibilities of settings have not changed, and Ofsted's inspection and regulatory work triggered by safeguarding concerns will continue. On 6 July 2020, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector announced Ofsted's plans for the autumn term. During the autumn term, Ofsted will begin carrying out regulatory activity in providers that have been judged 'inadequate' or 'require improvement' and have associated actions to fulfil.

Please see Ofsted's collection of documents on the autumn plans for further information about early years and the other Ofsted remits.

8.3 Resuming routine Ofsted inspections

For Ofsted registered early years provision, it is intended that routine inspections will restart from January 2021. By this time the EYFS is expected to be reinstated fully - with the exact timing of routine inspections being kept under review.

Ofsted will continue to assess early years provision against the EYFS, which sets the standards that all early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. This will include:

- the steps providers have taken to ensure staff and children in their care are not exposed to risks
- the ability to demonstrate how risks are being managed

Ofsted will continue with its registration and regulatory work for early years and childcare providers. In the autumn term inspectors will commence some regulatory activity on providers who have been judged 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' and have associated actions to fulfil. These visits will not result in a judgement. However, Ofsted will publish a short summary to confirm what it found during the visit. See Ofsted's collection of documents on the autumn plans for further information.

8.4 Ofsted action on unregistered provision

The health, safety and wellbeing of children is our first consideration, and the government continues to expect childcare to take place only within registered settings.

See Ofsted's response to coronavirus (COVID-19) in Ofsted: coronavirus (COVID-19) rolling update for more information.

9. Childminders

Since 1 June, childminders have been able to look after children of all ages, in line with their current Ofsted registration, and within usual limits on the number of children they can care for.

9.1 Early years entitlement funding for childminders

On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed the government would continue to pay local authorities for free early years entitlement places for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds.

On 20 July, we announced that this would continue through the autumn. We will continue to fund childcare, at the level we would have done before coronavirus, until the end of the calendar year. This will give nurseries and childminders another term of secure income, regardless of whether fewer children are attending.

We have published guidance on the use of free early education entitlements funding during coronavirus. This sets out how local authorities should fund early years providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

9.2 Childminder eligibility for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Eligibility for the scheme is based on employment structures and not professions. You can apply if:

- you are self-employed, or a member of a partnership
- have lost profits due to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- meet further eligibility criteria

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will contact individuals who are eligible and invite them to apply online.

9.3 Childminders working with other childminders to look after more children together

Up to 3 registered childminders (or a mix of up to 3 registered childminders and assistants) can work together in the same domestic premises. However, if:

- more than 3 childminders work together they will need to apply to Ofsted to register childcare on domestic premises
- registered to deliver childcare on domestic premises, 4 or more childminders (or a mix of 4 or more childminders and assistants) can work together in the same domestic premises, which would enable them to care for larger groups of children and still meet ratio requirements

Further details of requirements for childminders and childcare on domestic premises is available.

9.4 Quality assurance visits

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Vicky Ford MP, wrote to Ofsted's Chief Inspector about supporting childminder agencies to retain their registration where the minimum number of quality assurance visits required has not been met as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This will ensure that childminder agencies (and their childminders) can continue to adhere to the government's guidance on protective measures and reduce external visitors.

The safeguarding responsibilities of childminder agencies and their childminders have not changed. Childminder agencies must continue to prioritise visits to any of their registered childminders if they have concerns about the quality of a provider or wish to check any registered non-domestic premises (as set out in section 3.4 of childminder agencies: a guide).

For more information about this change, visit the Foundation Years website.

10. Funding

10.1 Funding for free childcare places

On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed the government would continue to pay local authorities for free early years entitlement places for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds.

On 20 July, we announced that this would continue through the autumn. We will continue to fund childcare, at the level we would have done before coronavirus, until the end of the calendar year. This will give nurseries and childminders another term of secure income, regardless of whether fewer children are attending.

We have published guidance on the use of free early education entitlements funding, setting out how local authorities should fund childcare providers for the early years entitlements during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

From the 2020 autumn term, we expect the demand for childcare to increase, and it will become increasingly important for local authorities to ensure sufficiency of childcare and delivery of the early years entitlements for all children - not just vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Further information about funding for providers in the autumn term is included in the guidance on the use of free early education entitlements funding.

From the start of the autumn term 2020, local authorities should continue to fund providers which are open at broadly the levels they would have expected to see in the 2020 autumn term had there been no coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. They should also continue to fund providers which have been advised to close, or left with no option but to close, due to public health reasons. Local authorities should not fund providers which are closed, without public health reason, from the start of the autumn term.

10.2 Early years entitlement funding for local authorities during 2020 to 2021

On 20 July, we announced that we will continue to fund childcare, at the level we would have done before coronavirus, through the autumn until the end of the calendar year. This will give nurseries and childminders another term of secure income, regardless of whether fewer children are attending.

We have published guidance on the use of free early education entitlements funding which provides further details on how local authorities will be funded in 2020 to 2021.

10.3 Furloughing staff

See guidance on how the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) applies in the education and childcare sector in coronavirus: financial support for education, early years and children's social care. See section 10.8.

10.4 Temporary changes to parents and carers eligibility to the 30 hours free early education entitlement and Tax-Free Childcare

Temporary changes have been made to the 30 hours free entitlement and tax-free childcare offers so that all eligible parents and carers, including critical workers, are not disadvantaged during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Specifically, parents and carers who will temporarily not meet the minimum income threshold (16 hours per week at National Minimum/Living Wage) for Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free entitlement due to lower earnings as a direct result of coronavirus (COVID-19) will be treated as meeting the minimum income threshold until 31 October.

We have laid the Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 to ensure that critical workers who exceed the maximum income threshold (of £100,000) set out in the Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) Regulations 2016, due to increased income mainly attributable to earnings from work undertaken directly or indirectly as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, can continue to take up 30 hours free childcare. We have set a new upper threshold of £150,000. The change will only be effective for the tax year starting with 6 April 2020 and ending with 5 April 2021.

10.5 Applying for, or reconfirming, the 30 hours entitlement and/or Tax-Free Childcare when a child is not currently attending a setting

All eligible parents are encouraged to continue to apply for, and reconfirm, their 30 hours and Tax-Free Childcare entitlement. See the guidance to check if you can get Tax-Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare during coronavirus (COVID-19).

10.6 Flexibility for parents and carers who have missed the deadline for 30 hours codes

DfE had previously asked local authorities to use their discretion to relax the validity dates on 30 hours codes, where critical worker parents or parents of vulnerable children were ordinarily eligible and expecting to take up a 30 hours childcare place between 1 April 2020 and 31 August 2020, but had missed the reconfirmation or application deadline of 31 March 2020. This allowed children to take up their places in the summer term.

Now more people are returning to work, we expect that those who became eligible for 30 hours during the summer term should have applied by the 31 August deadline, in order to be able to access their entitlement from 1 September.

10.7 Business support for early years and childcare settings

The government announced a package of support for businesses during coronavirus which will benefit early years and childcare settings, including the CJRS and the Self-employment Income Support Scheme. We have provided further guidance on how the CJRS applies in the education and childcare sector in coronavirus: financial support for education, early years and children's social care.

In addition:

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that private early years and childcare settings will be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year - that means non-local authority providers of childcare (registered with Ofsted and providing EYFS) will not be charged business rates in 2020
- nurseries in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief will benefit from small business grant funding of £10,000 (note that nurseries which are eligible for charitable status relief are not eligible for small business grant funding)
- nurseries which are eligible for a charitable status relief will also not be charged business rates in 2020 to 2021
- some settings operate from shared spaces which may now benefit from a 100% rates relief. We strongly encourage those shared spaces to reflect any business rates saving in their rent charges
- the Self-employment Income Support Scheme for those who are self-employed or members of a partnership and have lost profits due to coronavirus (COVID-19) - the scheme allows individuals to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 per month for 3 months, HMRC will contact individuals who are eligible and invite them to apply online
- for the self-employed (including childminders), the minimum income floor will also be temporarily relaxed, meaning Universal Credit can be accessed at a rate to match statutory sick pay (SSP)
- the Business Interruption Loan Scheme will be interest-free for 12 months, an increase from 6 months
- VAT payments due with VAT returns between now and the end June 2020 were deferred - UK VAT registered businesses will not need make those payments until March 2021
- the Secretary of State for Business announced on 28 March 2020 that he would make changes to enable UK companies undergoing a rescue or restructure process to continue trading to help them avoid insolvency, this includes temporarily suspending wrongful trading provisions retrospectively from 1 March 2020 for 3 months for company directors so they can keep their business going without the threat of personal liability
- working tax credit has been increased by £1,000 a year
- the government also announced a £20 per week increase to the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element, and an increase in the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and Housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the cheapest third of local rents
- some early years settings may be eligible for the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund, details and eligibility criteria for this can be found in the guidance on applying for the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund

10.8 Accessing the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

Guidance on how to access the CJRS scheme can be found at claim for wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Early years providers remain eligible for the CJRS while continuing to receive early entitlement funding via local authorities.

The claim for wages through the CJRS guidance, first published by HMRC on 26 March, states that:

- where employers receive public funding for staff costs, and that funding is continuing, we expect employers to use that money to continue to pay staff in the usual fashion - and correspondingly not furlough them
- this also applies to non-public sector employers who receive public funding for staff costs
- employers should not be able to receive public funding for staff cost and furlough payments for the same staff

We have provided further information on how the CJRS applies in the education and childcare sector in financial support for education, early years and children's social care.

On 17 April, DfE published guidance on the financial support for education, early years and children's social care. It sets out:

- how the CJRS and early entitlement funding interacts
- that early years settings can access the CJRS to cover up to the proportion of its salary bill which otherwise would have been paid for from that provider's private income

On 29 May, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced changes to the CJRS. These included a new flexibility meaning that, from 1 July, employers can bring furloughed employees back to work for any amount of time and any shift pattern, while still being able to claim the CJRS grant for the hours not worked. This only applies where employers have previously submitted a claim for the employee in relation to a furlough period of at least three consecutive weeks taking place any time between 1 March 2020 and 30 June 2020. Please refer to claim for wages through the CJRS.

A private provider should only furlough employees, and therefore seek support through the CJRS, if they meet the conditions set out in the guidance check which employees you can put on furlough to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. The conditions include:

- the employee must work in an area of business where services are temporarily not required and where their salary is not covered by public funding
- the employee would otherwise be made redundant or laid off
- the employee is not involved in delivering provision that has already been funded (free entitlement funding)
- the employee is not required to deliver provision for a child
- the grant from the CJRS would not duplicate other public grants received, and would not lead to financial reserves being created

If it is difficult to distinguish whether staff are funded through free entitlement

If it is difficult to distinguish whether staff are funded through free entitlement or private income for the purposes of meeting the first 3 conditions as listed above, then an early years provider can access the CJRS to cover up to the proportion of its salary bill which could be considered to have been paid for from that provider's private income.

In July 2020, the Job Retention Bonus was introduced to provide additional support to employers who keep on their furloughed employees in meaningful employment, after the CJRS ends on 31 October 2020. The Job Retention Bonus is a one-off payment of £1,000 to employers for each employee who was ever furloughed, has been continuously employed until 31 January 2021 and is still employed by the same employer as of 31 January 2021.

Employees must have been continuously employed, earn an average of more than £520 per month in November, December and January and have been furloughed and successfully claimed for under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme at any point to be eligible.

Further details can be found in the guidance on the Job Retention Bonus.

10.9 Charging parents and carers if they are unable to take up their child's place

The government is working hard to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on all parts of our society, including individuals and businesses. Settings are expected to comply with the law and take a reasonable and proportionate approach to parents' and carers' fees, in light of these unprecedented circumstances, and to communicate any arrangements clearly with them.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) established a COVID-19 Taskforce to identify, monitor and respond to competition and consumer problems arising from coronavirus (COVID-19) and the measures taken to contain it.

The CMA guidance can be found in the CMA open letter to the early years sector.

People and businesses who have seen or experienced businesses behaving unfairly during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic can report it to the CMA by using their dedicated online form. Where there is evidence that businesses have breached competition or consumer protection law, the CMA will take enforcement action if warranted.

10.10 Charging for consumables

Settings may charge for consumables, such as nappies, in line with the early education and childcare statutory guidance for local authorities. As per this guidance, they should consider the impact of charges on disadvantaged families.

10.11 Arrangements for providing meals

In the event a maintained nursery school has to close temporarily, they should continue to provide free school meals to children who would normally receive them.

In all other settings, where free school meals do not apply, settings may charge for meals in line with national entitlements guidance. Settings should consider the impact of charges on disadvantaged families.

10.12 Insurance of early years providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Business interruption insurance

For childcare providers which have a policy that covers government-ordered closure and unspecified notifiable diseases, the government's social distancing measures may be sufficient to allow businesses to make a claim against their insurance, provided the other terms and conditions in their policy are met.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules require insurers to treat customers fairly, including:

- handling claims fairly and promptly
- providing reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim
- not rejecting a claim unreasonably
- settling claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed

The government is working closely with the FCA to ensure that the rules are being upheld during this crisis and fully supports the regulator in its role. The Association of British Insurers (ABI) and its members have agreed a set of principles for handling business interruption claims to support and provide clarity to customers.

Customers who feel they have not been treated fairly should:

- first make a formal complaint to their insurer
- refer the matter to the Financial Ombudsman Service if they do not feel that their complaint has been dealt with satisfactorily

Businesses that have not purchased the appropriate level of cover should seek assistance through the government's wider support package if they are in financial difficulty. This includes measures such as business rates holidays, small business grants, and the CJRS.

Public liability insurance

Providers must carry the appropriate insurance (for example, public liability insurance) to cover all premises from which they provide childcare, including childminding. Some existing public liability policies may have been written or adjusted during the term of the policy (where permitted) to exclude coronavirus (COVID-19) risks, and some insurers may choose to exclude coronavirus (COVID-19) when offering public liability policy renewals. Nurseries should check the terms and conditions of their public liability insurance policies and consult with their insurance providers and brokers to determine their coverage for coronavirus (COVID-19). It is worth noting that different insurers may take a different view, therefore nurseries are encouraged to shop around to seek the most suitable cover at the best price.

For general advice on insurance matters (but not on specific policies) including those related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the ABI can be contacted by phone on 0207 600 3333 or email at info@abi.org.uk.

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Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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