Guidance

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

Updated 27 November 2020 | See all updates

Main changes since this guidance was last updated

Main changes since this guidance was last updated on 27 November:

- Who this guidance is for: clarification that this guidance applies to childminders
- Who this guidance is for: clarification that this guidance applies to out-of-school settings
- Section 2: updated to reflect the new tiered approach to COVID-19 restrictions
- Section 3: updated to reflect the new tiered approach to COVID-19 restrictions
- Section 4: updated to reflect the new tiered approach to COVID-19 restrictions
- Section

'System of controls': prevention

1) Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or who test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) but have no symptoms, and those in their household who does, do not attend settings

When someone in their household has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or has a positive test

Discuss children, staff and other adults do not come into settings if:

- they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or
- have tested positive for COVID-19

Anyone displaying these symptoms during the day is to be sent home. These should be reported to the NHS and Test and Trace. Any further direction or guidance will be provided by Public Health England and Test and Trace following the process set out in their standard operating procedures.

If anyone in the setting becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of sense of smell or taste, they should be sent home as soon (sessions)

- they must be sent home and advised to follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, which sets out the self-isolation period for the whole household
- they should arrange to book a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19). These arrangements for testing include education and childcare workers, children and their household members (including those who are asymptomatic) aged five years and over. Further information is available at: www.gov.uk/coronavirus-test-and-trace
- if a child is awaiting collection, they should be kept in an area where they can be easily observed and monitored
- ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation
- if possible, they should be supervised from a safe distance and in an area where they can easily be isolated
- if they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should be escorted to the nearest bathroom and the bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly before being used by anyone else
- we will follow our normal procedure for the child while they await collection if unknown or if parents are not contactable (for example, if it is the last person to leave, the child is with other people/children). More information on PPE can be found in the guidance document: Coronavirus (COVID-19): operating a childcare or education setting
- in a usual practice, in an emergency situation call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or in danger. In the context of coronavirus (COVID-19), follow the guidance above and seek medical assistance if needed in a manner as helpful

Further action to take when someone tests positive can be found in Ensure with the NHS Test and Trace process and Charge and report for Ofsted and Education and childcare providers: coronavirus (COVID-19) and children's social care (updated).

The above information is available in a printable format. What to do if a child is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

When individuals have had close contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

Any members of staff who have provided close contact care to someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or who test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) should not come into work. Close contact means providing care or being in the same household as someone who is going to be tested or has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

- the symptomatic person will be tested to see if they have coronavirus
- they develop symptoms themselves
- they are required by Test and Trace or Public Health England to do so

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser gel as soon as they arrive at the setting and at regular intervals. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned after they have left using a household cleaner. Further information can be found in the guidance document: Cleaning in non-healthcare settings.

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

2. Where recommended, the use of face coverings

The government is not recommending universal use of face coverings in early years settings, schools and colleges. Face coverings are not a substitute for other measures. Everyone should use other ways to minimise the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) such as keeping their distance from others and washing their hands. Face coverings should not be used for children under 11. Those who cannot tolerate a face covering for medical or other reasons should not be expected to enforce a coronavirus (COVID-19) secure environment.

When social distancing is difficult to maintain in communal areas

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of this guidance.

It is not mandatory for staff members to wear face coverings in early years and childcare settings. In situations where social distancing between adults is difficult to maintain, such as in small rooms or when passing in communal areas, staff may choose to wear a face covering. Staff may also choose to use face coverings for adults on site, for both staff and visitors.

There are some people who are exempt from wearing one or is required by law to wear a face covering. For example, on public transport. Further information can be found at Wearing a face covering while in early years and childcare settings.

Exemptions

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

- cannot put, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental impairment or disability (see below)
- speak to, or provide assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

Children under 11 are exempt from wearing face coverings and we should expect leaders and staff to be sensitive to these needs.

Access to face coverings

Leaders and teachers and staff will not have access to face coverings due to their increased use, and PPE. Please refer to the guidance document: Face coverings for make a difference for coronavirus.

Where anybody is struggling to access a face covering, or where they are unable to use their face covering due to having forgotten it, or having damaged it, we will make a face covering available. We will do this in line with contingency supply models in place for hand sanitiser.

Safe wearing, removal and disposal of face coverings

Settings should ensure clear procedures for the wearing of face coverings when staff or visitors who use face coverings arrive at the setting, and when they consider to be safe to remove their face covering, and dispose of it safely. This process should include procedures for safe disposal.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove it and put them on – and the safe storage of them in individual, separate plastic bags between use. Where a face covering becomes damp or dirty, it should be replaced. The face covering should be washed and cleaned.

3. Clean hands thoroughly and more often than usual

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is spread through droplets and contact on the skin. This can be spread to others by touching the face.

To clean hands, wash thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly. Lower risk activities include touching things that all parts of the hands are covered.

Settings 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
- after using the toilet

Regular and thorough hand cleaning is needed for the foreseable future.

Points to consider and implement:

- ensure the setting has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser stations available so that children can easily access them in their regular routines
- supervise use of hand sanitiser, given risks around ingestion. Young children and those with special educational needs may need more supervision with hand sanitiser. Store hand sanitiser out of reach of children when not in use
- build these routines into setting routines, and ensure younger children and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them as far as possible

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

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach promotes hygiene practices that are important in the context of coronavirus (COVID-19). It is important that staff support children and staff in following these practices. Tissues should be disposed rubbish bins and immediately clean hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser. Ensure there are enough bins available in classrooms and other areas and that pupils and staff are aware of the procedure and that it is now part of how the setting operates.

Some children and young people will struggle to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers. For example, those who get incontinent of saliva/drool, those who have a tracheostomy, those who require airway assessments or those who have difficulty with coughing and covering their mouth. It is not a reason to deny these children a place at the setting.

5. Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces and sharing standard products, such as detergents

In line with the risk assessment, enhance cleaning of the day, and in advance and maintain a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes:

- more frequent cleaning of rooms that are used by different groups
- more frequent cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and toilets
- clear procedures for cleaning and disinfecting any potentially contaminated areas, doing areas and table covering
- ensure that children and young people bring their own lockers, but lockers will need to be cleaned regularly and children and young people will need to wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet

All settings should follow the PHE guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings.

6. Minimise contact between groups of children where possible

Early years settings are no longer required to organise children and staff in stable, consistent groups and to minimise mixing between groups. Returning to normal group sizes is based on the fact that children and young people are at very low risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19). Typically under 18s have been shielding to a lesser extent than other groups, and children and young people are not the group most affected by the virus. Risk assessments for different age groups, keeping those groups apart as much as possible, and ensuring good hygiene practices remain important. Children and young people will need to be encouraged to maintain as much distance from their peers as is now part of how the setting operates.

Settings should continue to ensure that children and young people are given regular reminders of the importance of hygiene, and encourage good children and young people who are vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) and those who are clinically vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) are fully supported in attending school.

Settings are no longer required to carry out a risk assessment for children and young people who are vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) and those who are clinically vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19). Risk assessments should be completed for children and young people who are vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) and those who are clinically vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) where appropriate (see the PHE). The section of the guidance contains more information about the "vulnerable" and "clinically vulnerable" groups.

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

The majority of staff in early years settings do not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases, such as:

- when an individual child/student is with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and is awaiting a test, or is being tested, and is being cared for in a 'quarantined' area
- when a child already has routine intimate care needs that involves the use of PPE, in line with their existing risk assessment and care plan

Guidance on infection control in schools and other educational settings provides more information about preventing and controlling infection, how PPE should be used, and how it should be disposed of safely.

8. Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated

When the setting is in operation, it is important to ensure that it is well ventilated, using a combination of mechanical and natural ventilation.

This can be achieved by a variety of measures including:

- mechanical ventilation systems. These should be adjusted to increase the amount of fresh air circulating throughout the setting. Most modern ventilation systems can control the proportion of fresh air circulating. Ensure that the ventilation system is operating properly and is regularly serviced in line with the manufacturer's instructions. Consider whether the ventilation system can be adjusted so that it is not recirculating air from other areas of the setting, for example, in a dance studio or a music room
- natural ventilation, opening windows and doors to create a cross flow to ensure fresh air is circulated throughout the setting. Ventilation should be kept at a level that does not cause discomfort to those in the setting. In the winter, this may be as low as a few millimetres
- ventilation should be maintained when the setting is not in use

Further advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on ventilation during and after the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and in the Coronavirus (COVID-19): ventilation.

To balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, the following measures could be used in combination with other measures:

- opening high level windows in preference to low level to reduce draughts
- increasing the ventilation rate when the number of people is low
- re-arranging furniture where possible to avoid direct draughts

Settings should be used as necessary to ensure comfort levels are maintained particularly in occupied spaces.

'System of controls': response to any infection

9. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

Settings must ensure that they understand the NHS Test and Trace process. Settings must ensure that staff members and parents understand what they will need to do if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

Test and Trace will work with education providers, The main symptoms are a high temperature, a new continuous cough and a loss of sense of smell or taste or a change of smell or taste.

- Test and Trace will contact and liaise with the setting if they have symptoms, and test and trace will work with the setting to identify close contacts in the setting. All children can be tested if they have symptoms, including children under 5 years of age. Children under 5 years of age are not required to wear a mask or a face covering.
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were in the setting during the period 2 days before their test and up to 10 days after.
- close contacts will be identified and will be asked to isolate if they are close contacts (coronavirus (COVID-19) signs).

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) should not attend school. Tests can be booked online through the NHS website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 if they do not have access to the internet.

Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to tests.

The government will ensure that it is as easy as possible to get a test through a workplace, school or college, or through a local site, but all convenient. We will release more details on new testing avenues as and when they are ready to ensure everyone who needs a test can easily access one, as they understand the wider benefits of testing.

Settings should ask parents, carers and staff to inform them immediately of the results of any test taken for coronavirus.

If someone with symptoms tests negative, they should follow guidance for households with possible coronavirus (COVID-19) infection to continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and until they are well enough to return to school. Their household should continue to self-isolate for the full 14 days from the onset of their symptoms and should not go out in the community, for example, to shop or exercise. However, if they still have a cough or temperature 10 days after the start of their symptoms, they should continue to self-isolate until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should self-isolate for the full 14 days.

Read further guidance on testing and tracing for coronavirus (COVID-19).

NHS COVID-19 App

The NHS COVID-19 app is a result of the country's ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) response, aiming to identify local outbreaks and stop the spread of NHS Test and Trace. The app is available to download for free and is available to people aged 16 and over in England and Wales.

10. Manage and report to Ofsted and the PHE advice line confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting community

Actions to take when someone has tested positive

You must liaise with public health England and test and trace when has attended your setting has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

You should notify Ofsted of any confirmed cases the setting (either pupils or staff) attended in the 2 days before they became unwell. This is only when either the pupil or member of staff has been in close contact with incidents. Because all the information required is included.

You can contact the education and childcare infectious PHE and advised by the NHS Business Services Authority. This can be needed to provide a letter to confirm the absence of a member of staff or pupil to advice on the action to take in the case of a suspected or confirmed case. We will be through to a team of advisers who will inform you what action is required and provide ongoing support as the case.

Ofsted and PHE will work with settings to ensure they are aware of any risk assessment to contact who has been in close contact with the coronavirus (COVID-19) case, and what action they need to take, including whether they should be asked to self-isolate. Public Health England will be in touch with the person who tested positive and will ask them for details of their close contacts. It is important that we can work with Ofsted and PHE to ensure we can quickly and effectively take action when they were infectious.

Action card

The information above is available in a printable format: early years action card.

Close contact

Close contact includes:

- direct close contact face to face for a total of 15 minutes or more within any length of time, within metres, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or touching (including being cared for, trained, lived or worked, contacted a close contact for a total of 15 minutes or more within any length of time, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or touching (including being cared for, trained, lived or worked, contacted a close contact, or lived in the same household.

Recent tracing and letter templates

Ofsted and PHE will work with the education team (headteacher) will provide definitive advice on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we recommend setting have ready:

- children and staff in specific groups / rooms (where applicable)
- a letter template to send to parents and carers and staff members of pupil / staff members.

This should be a comprehensive recording process. Settings do not need to ask staff to keep records on pupils' movement and interaction.

PHE reporting to the setting

The NHS Test and Trace process will also contact settings directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended the setting, and they think it is likely.

When someone is sent home to self-isolate

Household members of those who are asked to stay at home and self-isolate in line with the NHS Test and Trace process do not need to self-isolate if they develop symptoms. If someone in a group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves then the whole household should self-isolate for the full period in households with possible or confirmed infection.

When someone self-isolating develops symptoms

Household members of those who are asked to self-isolate in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) and:

- starts to feel unwell and plan a test for coronavirus (Remember, and the test is negative, they should continue to self-isolate for the rest of the period. If they develop symptoms themselves, they should self-isolate for the full period in coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days
- if they are in a group that has been asked to self-isolate, setting immediately, and the test is negative, the whole household should self-isolate for the full period. If they meet the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period, the household should self-isolate for the full period. If the test is positive, the symptomatic person should follow the guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection.

Admitting children back to the setting

Children who have been asked to self-isolate or quarantine test results or other medical evidence confirming children in coronavirus (COVID-19) or other medical reasons.

To ensure the safety of cases, settings and parents and carers will be in contact with the local health protection team (HPT) to discuss the given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent or carer raises a child's medical condition as a reason for their child not returning to school, the local health protection team is responsible for advice to protect their children and staff from possible infection with coronavirus (COVID-19). Any such decision would be made on a case-by-case basis in the light of the circumstances and current public health advice.

11. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

If settings have 2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an unusual rise in absence, they should contact their local health protection team. Cases in the setting need to be considered, in liaison with the local health protection team, as to whether enough children and staff will be able to attend if additional action is required.

In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other children and staff isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps for a period of 14 days. This will be based on the specifics of the case, and will be a precautionary measure to minimise the risk of further transmission in the setting. It is not usual for whole bubbles or cohorts to be sent home. Local health protection teams will work closely with the setting and will be in contact with the setting if any such action is required.

3.4 Travel and transport

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Childminders and other settings should consider how they can work with parents and carers to ensure that children can travel to school in the safest way possible, using as little traffic as it allows, to reduce the need for a private car to travel with groups of children.

Settings may also include measures to reduce or subsist environments, for example, to a part or for a reduced stay only.

Walking, cycling, and scooters are good ways to travel. Further guidance on cycling, scooters, and other active travel options and how and when to re-purpose spaces can be found.

Mode of transport

If it is necessary for a childminder to pick up or drop off a child at school, or to transport children to other settings, they should do so in a way that minimises risk to people either by single household or in a private vehicle. Use of public transport should be minimised.

Information on using private school transport can be found in the safe travel guidance for passengers.

3.5 Visitors to the setting

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

There will be occasions when visits to the setting are necessary, but settings are encouraged to avoid visitors entering their premises, wherever possible. Visits that allow a vulnerable child to meet a social worker, key worker or other necessary support should continue on site. Visits for SEND therapies should also continue on site.

A record should be kept of all visitors which follows the guidance on maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace.

New admissions

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

If parents and carers are keen to visit in person, settings should consider:

- 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)
- there is regular handwashing, especially before and after the visit
- holding visits after hours. If this is not possible, consider limiting visits to the outside play areas during regular hours, and ensure strict social distancing is observed

Prior to a visit, settings should ensure that parents and carers are aware:

- of the 'system of controls'
- how this impacts them and their responsibilities during their visit
- how to maintain social distancing from staff, other visitors, and children other than those in their care

Parents settling children

Parents and carers are able to enter a setting to help their children adapt to their new environment. Settings should ensure that parents and carers:

- wear face coverings, if required, in line with arrangements for staff and other visitors to the setting (see section 3 on face coverings)
- stay for a limited amount of time (ideally not more than an hour)
- avoid close contact with other children
- are aware of the 'system of controls', how this impacts them, and their responsibilities in supporting it when visiting a setting with their child

Section 3 of this guidance includes details on the 'system of controls'. It is important to explain these expectations, verbally or in writing, to parents and carers before or on arrival at a setting.

Other visits by parents and carers

Settings should restrict all visits to the setting to those that are necessary and make use of remote visits wherever possible.

In-person visits from parents can take place if they are necessary. Settings should work with parents to ensure parents still have visibility of the childcare environment during this time, including through use of remote visits, pictures and phone calls.

Guidance on parent and child groups can be found in section 5 of this guidance.

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

External professionals

In instances where settings need to use other essential professionals such as social workers, speech and language therapists or counsellors, or other professionals to support delivery of a child's EHC plan, settings should assess whether the professionals need to attend in person or can do so virtually. Visits that allow a vulnerable child to meet a social worker, key worker or other necessary support should continue on site. Visits for SEND therapies should also continue on site.

If they need to attend in person, they should:

- follow guidance relevant to the setting
- keep the number of attendances to a minimum
- wash hands frequently
- where possible to do so, maintain social distancing
- be informed about the 'system of controls' in settings

See further details on the 'system of controls' (section 3 of this guidance).

Recruitment

Recruitment should continue as usual. As this guidance advises limiting the number of visitors wherever possible, it may be appropriate for settings to consider a flexible approach to interviews, with alternative options to face-to-face interviews offered where possible, such as using video conferencing.

Where face-to-face meetings are arranged, settings should make clear to candidates that they must adhere to the 'system of controls' that is in place. Settings also have the discretion to require face coverings for candidates where social distancing cannot be safely managed.

When recruiting, settings must continue to adhere to the legal requirements regarding pre-appointment checks.

Supply staff and students

Settings can continue to engage agency staff and students. Supply staff and other temporary workers can move between settings but setting leaders will want to consider how to minimise the number of visitors to the setting where possible.

Where it is necessary to use supply staff and to welcome visitors to the school such as students, those individuals will be expected to comply with settings arrangements for managing and minimising risk, including taking particular care to maintain distance from other staff and children.

To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the setting and secure best value, settings may wish to use longer assignments with supply staff and agree a minimum number of hours across the year.

The presence of any additional members of staff should be agreed on a weekly rather than a daily basis, where possible, in order to limit contacts.

Other visitors

Settings should consider how to manage other visitors to the site, such as contractors, and ensure site guidance on social distancing and hygiene is explained to visitors on or before arrival. Where visits can happen outside of setting hours, a record should be kept of all visitors - where this is practical - which follows the guidance on maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors to support NHS Test and Trace.

Sessions in settings that use external providers, which are not directly required for children's health and wellbeing, should be suspended.

Guidance on visits from music, dance and drama peripatetic teachers can be found in section 3 of this guidance.

3.6 Supervised toothbrushing programmes

Supervised toothbrushing programmes may be re-established within settings using the dry brushing method.

The wet brushing model is not recommended because it is considered more likely to risk droplet and contact transmission and offers no additional benefit to oral health over dry toothbrushing.

For information on the cleaning and storage of toothbrushes and storage systems, see the guidance for supervised toothbrushing programmes in early years and school settings.

3.7 Malleable materials (messy play)

Settings should risk assess activities that involve malleable materials for messy play such as sand, mud and water, as part of their regular curriculum planning.

A risk assessment should consider whether:

- materials can be handled by a small, consistent group of children of no more than 15 at a time, and that no one else outside this group can come into contact with it
- the malleable material for messy play (for example sand/water/mud) can be used and cleaned - including being replaced - in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, where applicable. For example, see managing risk in play provision: implementation guide

Settings should follow the 'system of controls' and ensure that:

- children wash their hands thoroughly before and after messy play
- frequently touched surfaces, equipment, tools and resources for messy play are thoroughly cleaned and dried before they are used by a different group

Further general cleaning advice can be found in the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance.

3.8 Side effects of children taking a vaccination or teething

Vaccines and teething may cause a mild fever in children. This is a common and expected reaction, and isolation is not required unless coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected.

Parents and carers should monitor side effects from a vaccination or teething, and if they are concerned about their child's health, they should seek advice from their GP or NHS 111.

If coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, settings should follow the advice in the 'system of controls'.

3.9 Local restriction tiers

> The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.
>
> National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

In all local restriction tiers, the expectation is that education and childcare provision should continue as normal. The government has been very clear that limiting attendance at schools, and other education settings, should only be done as a last resort, even in areas where a local restriction tier is tier 2: high alert or tier 3: very high alert.

Decisions on any restrictions necessary in education or childcare settings are taken separately on a case-by-case basis, in the light of local circumstances, including information about the incidence and transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

At all local restriction tiers, there are exceptions from the legal gatherings limit for registered childcare, education or training. This means early years settings, including childminders, can continue to operate with normal group sizes.

3.10 Music, dance and drama

This guidance relates to organised group activity, not to spontaneous singing, dance and role-play that young children may naturally do, and should be encouraged to do, by early years practitioners.

Music, dance and drama build confidence, help children live happier, more enriched lives, and discover ways to express themselves. There may, however, be a cumulative risk of infection in environments where organised singing, chanting, playing wind instruments, dance and drama takes place.

Organised singing and wind instrument playing can be undertaken in line with this and other guidance, in particular guidance provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for professionals and non-professionals in the performing arts. Singers and players should be 2 metres apart to limit both droplet and aerosol risks. For aerosol risks, ventilation should also be encouraged. DCMS is continuing to develop a more detailed understanding of how to mitigate this potential aggregate risk, but in that context, organisations should follow this guidance.

Minimising mixing groups and volume control

Settings should take particular care in music, dance and drama lessons that children remain in their usual groups.

Additionally, settings should keep any background or accompanying music to levels which do not encourage participants to raise their voices unduly. If possible, use microphones to reduce the need for shouting or prolonged periods of loud speaking or singing. If possible, do not share microphones. If they are shared, follow the guidance on handling equipment.

Organised performances

Settings in local restriction tier 3: very high alert areas should not host performances with an audience. In these cases, settings should use alternative methods such as live streaming and recording, subject to the usual safeguarding considerations and parental permissions.

Settings in other local restriction tiers, planning an indoor or outdoor performance in front of an audience, should follow the latest advice in the DCMS performing arts guidance, implementing events in the lowest risk order as described. If planning an outdoor performance they should also give particular consideration to the guidance on delivering outdoor events.

Music, dance and drama peripatetic teachers

Settings can continue to engage peripatetic teachers (for example, non-staff who visit settings). This includes staff from Music Education Hubs, when they provide services for early years. A record should be kept of all visits.

Peripatetic teachers can move between early years settings, however, settings should consider how to minimise the number of visitors that attend where possible. Visitors will be expected to comply with arrangements for managing and minimising risk, including taking particular care to maintain distance from other staff and children. To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the premises, and secure best value, settings could consider using longer assignments with peripatetic teachers and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year.

If a teacher is operating on a peripatetic basis, and operating across multiple groups or individuals, it is important that they do not attend a lesson if they are unwell or are having any symptoms associated with coronavirus (COVID-19) such as a high temperature, a new, persistent cough, or a loss of, or change in, their sense of taste or smell (anosmia). In addition, they should:

- maintain distancing requirements with each group they teach, where appropriate. This means peripatetic teachers should not provide physical correction or demonstration with children
- make efforts to reduce the number of groups taught and locations worked in, to reduce the number of contacts made

Further information on the Music Education Hubs, including contact details for local hubs, can be found at the Arts Council England Music Education Hub.

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

When planning music provision, settings should consider additional specific safety measures. Although singing and playing wind instruments do not currently appear to present a significantly higher risk than routine speaking and breathing at the same volume, there is now some evidence that additional risk can build from aerosol transmission with volume and with the combined numbers of individuals within a confined space.

With appropriate safety mitigation, however, singing and wind playing can still take place.

Measures to take include:

- playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible
- if indoors, use a room with as much space as possible, for example, larger rooms - rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission
- if playing indoors, social distance each child 2 metres apart
- limit the numbers to account for ventilation of the space, it is important to ensure good ventilation - advice on this can be found in air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak
- singing and wind playing should not take place in larger groups such as choirs and ensembles unless significant space, natural airflow (at least 10l/s/person for all present, including audiences can be maintained
- position wind players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player
- use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly

By considering and adopting these cumulative risk mitigation measures, the overall risk will be reduced.

Handling equipment and instruments for organised sessions

Measures to take when handling equipment, including instruments, include:

- increased handwashing before and after handling equipment, especially if being used by more than one person
- avoiding sharing instruments and equipment wherever possible
- if instruments and equipment have to be shared, disinfect regularly (including any props, microphones and music stands) and always between users, following guidance on cleaning and handling equipment
- consider limiting the number of suppliers when hiring instruments and equipment. Settings should agree with suppliers whose responsibility it is to clean hired instruments. Clean hire equipment, tools or other equipment on arrival and before first use. Store equipment and instruments in a clean location if settings take delivery of them before they are needed. Clean them before first use and before returning the instrument
- create picking-up and dropping-off collection points where possible, rather than passing equipment such as props, and microphones hand-to-hand

Individual lessons

Where settings offer individual lessons in music, dance and drama, these lessons can resume. This may mean teachers interacting with children from multiple groups, so settings will need to take particular care, in line with the measures set out above on peripatetic teachers.

Specific safety measures for individual music lessons should include:

- extending social distancing between child and peripatetic teacher (current guidance is that if the activity is face-to-face and without mitigations, 2 metres is appropriate), where good ventilation is possible - child and teacher should be positioned side by side if possible
- avoid sharing instruments and equipment wherever possible and place name labels on equipment to help identify the designated user
- if instruments and equipment have to be shared, regularly disinfect them (including any props, microphones and music stands) and always between users, following guidance on cleaning and handling equipment

4. Children's attendance

4.1 Children self-isolating / clinically extremely vulnerable

> The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.
>
> National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

All children who normally access childcare are strongly encouraged to attend so that they can gain the learning and wellbeing benefits of early education.

A small number of children will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice to self-isolate because:

- they have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- they live with someone that has symptoms or has tested positive and are a household contact
- they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Far fewer children should remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group in the future following their routine discussions with their clinician.

The advice for children who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group is that they should return to settings from 2 December at all local restriction tiers unless they are one of the very small number of children under paediatric or NHS care (such as recent transplant or very immunosuppressed children) and have been advised specifically by their GP or clinician not to attend an education or childcare setting.

The government may reintroduce more restrictive formal measures for the clinically extremely vulnerable in the worst affected areas, based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer. This will only apply to some tier 3: very high alert local restriction areas, and the government will write to families separately to inform them if clinically extremely vulnerable children are advised to shield and not attend settings.

Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend the setting.

Parents or carers who are anxious about their child returning to the setting

Settings should be mindful that many parents and carers may be reluctant or concerned about sending their child back to the setting and settings should put the right support in place to address this.

This may include:

- children who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer formally advised
- those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable or are clinically extremely vulnerable
- those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity or diabetes

If parents or carers of children with possible risk factors are concerned, we recommend settings discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk.

Clear communications with parents and carers regarding the measures being taken to ensure the safety of their children will be necessary, including the role that they play, as parents and carers, in the safe operating procedures.

Settings should consider how to ensure communications are accessible to specific groups of parents and carers (such as those with English as an additional language) and parents and carers 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 alternative provision for children who need places. Parents and carers can also approach local authorities if their usual provider is not open. If a child moves settings, important information should be provided by the parent or carer to the new setting on day one, including emergency contact details, dietary requirements and medical needs to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child.

In the case of vulnerable children, the closed setting should notify the local authority (and social worker, where relevant) that there are vulnerable children who need alternative provision. The closed setting should work with the families of vulnerable children and local authorities (and social workers, where relevant) to support this.

Where a setting has closed, and a vulnerable child moves to a different early years setting:

- the closed provider should do whatever it reasonably can to provide the receiving setting with any relevant welfare and child protection information
- the receiving setting should be aware of the reason the child is vulnerable and any arrangements in place to support them. As a minimum, the receiving setting should, as appropriate, have access to a vulnerable child's EHC plan, child in need plan, child protection plan or, for looked-after children, their personal education plan, and know who the child's social worker is (and, for looked-after children, know who the responsible virtual school head is)
- the transfer of necessary information should ideally happen before a child arrives at the new setting and, where that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable. Any exchanges of information will ideally happen between the designated safeguarding leads (or deputies), and between special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) or named individual with oversight of special educational needs provision for children with EHC plans

While providers must continue to have appropriate regard to data protection and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), this does not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. For more information please read the advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.

4.3 Prioritising early years places

Since 20 July, normal group sizes have resumed so all children that are able can attend as normal. 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, or unable to operate at full capacity), settings should give priority to:

- vulnerable children and children of critical workers
- then 3- and 4-year-olds, in particular those who will be transitioning to reception
- 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 while keeping staffing arrangements as consistent as possible
- where necessary, pool staff with another setting, or take on qualified and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked staff from other educational settings (including local registered childminders) which have been closed, or invite local registered childminders to work with them at the setting. Registered childminders can already do this under the 50 / 50 registration flexibility they have
- wherever possible, ensure staffing arrangements are consistent on a weekly basis, rather than a daily basis, in order to limit contacts

5.2 Staff needing to self-isolate after returning from abroad

The government has set a requirement for people returning from some countries to self-isolate for 14 days on their return. Guidance is available on how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK and self-isolating after returning to the UK: your employment rights.

It is recommended that setting leaders discuss leave arrangements with staff to inform workforce planning.

There is a risk that where staff travel abroad, their return travel arrangements could be disrupted due to factors arising beyond their control in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19), such as the potential for restrictions on travel in the place they are visiting.

Where it is not possible to avoid a member of staff having to self-isolate when they are due to return from leave, settings should consider if it is possible to temporarily amend working arrangements to enable them to work from home.

5.3 When the premises from which a setting operates is closed, such as community centre, village or church hall

> The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.
>
> National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read how the national restrictions affect this section of the guidance.

Since 1 June, community centres, village halls and places of worship have been able to open for providers or the very parents/carers register which usually over three consecutive days.

Providers should ensure

- they are acting in line with the guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings
- they are managing risks to children and staff in the care of the premises.

5.4 Operating breakfast and after school clubs and other providers of wraparound childcare

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read from the national restrictions effect this section of the guidance.

All providers of wraparound childcare, and other out-of-school settings, are able to operate in line with current national restrictions, provided they have carried out risk assessments and have put in place mitigations.

Wraparound providers which are only registered with Ofsted on the early years register should:

- continue to follow this guidance
- implement the protective measures set out for early years settings.

Where wraparound providers are caring for children over the age of 5, they should ensure that they are implementing the protective measures outlined for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, including:

Providers caring for children from more than one bubble should, as far as possible, that they are keeping children over the age of 5 in small consistent groups, kept separate from others.

In cases where providers care for both children under the age of 5 and over the age of 5, they should ensure that children over the age of 5 are not cared for in those children under the age of 5 in the early years provision. Providers should take measures guidance for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak to minimise the risk of transmission.

Where providers have mixed age groups together they will need to, as far as possible, ensure that children over the age of 5 are not in contact with children aged more than 15 years old as part of contact within a year-group with regard to meet relevant rules requirements.

5.5 Use of private and public outdoor spaces

Settings should minimise use of public outdoor spaces.

Settings can take groups of children to outdoor public places and to walk beyond the local area, provided:

- it is for the purpose of education or childcare
- they remain within the EYFS framework
- they conduct a risk assessment in advance
- they do not mix with other groups (unless it is certain remain socially distant if it is outdoor, where possible, otherwise, where possible)
- good hygiene is maintained throughout
- thorough handwashing is carried out before and after the trip
- the trip is carried out in line with relevant local restrictions be updated and the relevant local restrictions in place at the destination.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has produced information on travel insurance based on government advice. Providers should check with their insurance provider before making any bookings. For more information and resources, they should contact their insurance provider.

5.6 Trips to indoor spaces (including soft play)

Settings may take children on trips to indoor spaces, for example, to a soft play centre when they are permitted to do so according to the local restrictions.

Settings must ensure these trips adhere to the rules and have completed a risk assessment prior to trip.

Settings, parents and users should work through the "Jackets of comfort" guidance before visiting a soft play centre, and should be satisfied that it is safe and that the centre has taken all relevant precautions.

Settings leaders should follow the guidelines relevant to the indoor centre (for example, a soft play centre).

Once inside:

- settings leaders should remain with the children in their group
- the group should socially distance from other individuals and groups
- the group should not share equipment with other groups and should clean equipment between groups
- adults (and children over 11) will be required to follow the face covering guidance while in the venue. Children in Year 7 and above are encouraged to wear face coverings in communal areas where they are likely to come into contact with people in a bubble, or when entering / exiting in the playtime

Further information on soft play centres can be found on the Association of British Insurers guidance for indoor play areas for children, operating guidance for indoor soft play centres and the Association for Uniformed Groups. Staff have contributed to the writing of this guidance.

Read further guidance from DCMS.

5.7 Parent and child groups

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read from the national restrictions effect this section of the guidance.

Parent and child groups should follow the guidance for additional relevant guidance for their local restrictions but and should only be held in venues and spaces that are open for business and are operating in accordance with COVID-Secure guidelines. Venues and spaces should be aware of the local restrictions in place and the rules that apply for the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in place.

Parent and child groups (other than those for children with special needs) can operate in all local tiered areas. Groups meeting in community spaces, such as a community hall, should follow the guidance for the use of premises. Groups should also follow the guidance for parent and child groups in spaces for the venue.

Groups must be organised by a business, a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic organisation, a public body, a community group or a group of participants excluding children under 5 years of age.

Informal groups, such as those organised by a parent, need to comply with the gathering and meeting rules in the Coronavirus (Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020.

Groups should follow the advice in this guidance to ensure that participants follow the "Jackets of comfort" guidance, and should take steps to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to children and adults in the setting.

It is important for parent and child groups to:

- social distancing between adults who do not live together and who are not in a bubble
- good hygiene practices, including washing hands and not sharing toys as they leave

Registered settings have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings for adults in Ofsted-registered sites, both staff and visitors (see section 3.4).

Group leaders should ensure:

- a risk assessment is completed prior to groups and activities taking place
- groups and activities have a maximum number of people and the use of time-limited hygiene measures allowing an Ofsted-registered setting
- the press pack and well-being pack for parents and children
- ship items used by these groups are cleaned after each use
- a record of attendance is kept.

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

Since 20 July, nominated groups have resumed so all children should be able to attend as normal, with the exception of those children who may still have to self-isolate.

We recognise that many children have enjoyed shared resources for children who are at home and are grateful for this.

Settings should continue to:

- to continue to support the learning of children who are self-isolating including have these children access to resources which their key person and peer groups through the early years setting
- to support children who are shielding provide a positive learning environment at home

Settings can also direct parents to:

- the Hungry Little Minds campaign. It features fun, and practical activities that parents can do at home with children to support their early learning, including ideas for how to make the most of everyday life and time spent at home. Hungry Little Minds has also created a collection of ideas and resources, bringing together all ideas e.g. the difference to children's lives.
- the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile Handbook and the Nursery Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile Handbook and
- Help children aged 2 to 4 to learn at home during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Settings should also offer to:

- vulnerable children who are not attending provision
- other children they might wish to keep in touch with, for safeguarding purposes

5.9 Monitoring of early years and childcare provision during coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Department for Education (DfE) launched a data collection process in April 2020 to monitor the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on early years and childcare provision during coronavirus (COVID-19). We have published guidance on the data collection process during coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

We will:

- continue to run the early years and childcare data collection until further notice to ensure that we have information on how many children are attending early years and childcare provision
- review the frequency and scope of the data collection

All local authorities have received information on how to access this data collection, the frequency and scope of the data collection and the DfE and the queries.

DfE have asked Ofsted to monitor which providers or the early years register are open or closed. The information Ofsted is seeking from registered early years providers is minimal and will not impact on their work. Ofsted will be asking providers if they are open or closed and if they are open, how many children they are caring for.

We understand that most local authorities are already collecting the data requested by DfE, so, to the majority of cases, providers will not be asking anything different or new. The Ofsted data collection does not duplicate the DfE data collection. Ofsted will use the information to inform their work and ensure ongoing monitoring between providers.

6. Safeguarding and welfare

Children may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to coronavirus (COVID-19), such as anxiety, stress or bereavement. This may particularly be the case for those who have been shielding or have family members who are shielding or have family members who are vulnerable to coronavirus (COVID-19) in this situation. Some may need support, a few may be showing signs of more severe mental health issues that require specialist intervention. Children may have been exposed to domestic violence or other forms of abuse and other issues which benefits wellbeing.

Settings must continue to take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well during the period and have regard to the statutory guidance on working together to safeguard children. Settings should follow the guidance on working together to safeguard children during the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the protection arrangements. Settings should work closely with local authorities.

Settings should ensure that they have sufficient staff and volunteers to be able to meet their statutory safeguarding responsibilities and to carry out other necessary and associate. Settings should also consider support needs of children who are being cared for at home and children who are being cared for in other provision in deciding what staff are required to be on site. To support this, settings may wish to access the free resource Thrive Approach which provides practical guidance on how to support children's emotional, social, fear and trauma, attachment.

Ofsted have also developed a coronavirus (COVID-19) staff survey to run with parents and tips for families.

Where there is a concern that a child is in need or suffering or likely to suffer from harm, the early years practitioner should follow the usual procedures, including referral to children's social care and the police if appropriate, as part of the statutory safeguarding guidance keeping children safe in education and consider any referrals to statutory services (and the guidance is appropriate).

6.1 Reviewing and updating child protection policies

Settings should consider whether their child protection and safeguarding arrangements is needed as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). This could take the form of a coronavirus (COVID-19) addendum to their policies.

- how to identify and act on new safeguarding concerns about individual children in the setting
- how to manage safeguarding allegations
- any updated advice received from the local safeguarding partners
- any updated advice received from the local authority that affects their risk assessment, delivery of education and care and staffing
- working arrangements with children's social workers and the local authority virtual school head (VSH)
- other staff and volunteers in the setting who need to be made aware of these changes and be provided with a safeguarding briefing
- how the updated policies will be communicated to staff, parents and volunteers, consulted, described in advance of the beginning for schools

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

Ofsted has confirmed that the Coronavirus Act 2020 does not lead responsibility for safeguarding. It is acceptable for the safeguarding lead not to be in the setting, if this is in line with the DfE's guidance. Ofsted expects settings to be in touch with their safeguarding lead, and for the safeguarding lead to provide support, advice and guidance to staff. It is important that all children have access to a trusted adult. Ofsted expects that in most cases, this practitioner will know or be able to quickly identify what parent is and how to quickly contact them.

6.3 Keeping children safe online

Settings should continue to consider what challenges they are only to keep children safe online during the period. Settings should:

- checking apps, websites and search results before using them with children during lessons and when setting homework
- Online details can be found on: safeguarding children online monitoring, online safety resources in early years settings, online safety guidance 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 impact disruption for some children, and their families and carers.

As more children return to settings, settings should:

- consider the mental health and emotional wellbeing support children may need, including with bereavement
- ensure that staff are trained to deliver this setting after a long period of absence

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

Staff may require appropriate instruction and training on identifying and supporting mental health difficulties and parents and carers may need support the setting. For example, by signposting them to appropriate local services such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and local authority children's services (LACS) and ensure that staff are aware of these services and agencies and providers should search together to actively look for signs of harms and abuse.

Providers should also consider how to support vulnerable children, who are currently attending provision, continue to develop their resilience which will be supported by the setting plans or early intervention.

6.5 Supporting children with SEND and changes to SEND legislation

Settings should continue to support children with SEND to attend their setting. Risk assessments should be carried out in a setting to minimise any challenges for children with SEND. Settings should also consider how they can continue to support children with SEND who are not able to attend because of their setting.

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

- with additional or enhanced social, emotional and mental health needs as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- who have fallen further behind their peers as a result of time out of childcare settings, or interrupted learning, or lack of access to resources

Settings will need to ensure they have the staffing needed to support children with SEND. Settings should also consider how they can support children who are shielding or who are self-isolating, including those who are waiting for test results or who are in quarantine.

From 5 May to 31 July 2020, Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 was modified to provide that, in England, the requirement for local authorities and health commissioners were required to use their reasonable endeavours to secure or arrange the provision set out in Education, health and care plans (EHCP) was temporarily modified to a duty to secure.

Following the expiry of the modification notice on 31 July 2020, we do not intend to issue further notices to reintroduce the duties in their previous changes. The focus is now on supporting local authorities, health commissioners, providers and children with SEND and their families and children who are in education, health and care plans (EHCP) and their families who are expected to access provision that they are back in their settings.

7 Early years foundation stage and reforms

7.1 Application and disapplication of the early years foundation stage framework

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read from the national restrictions effect this section of the guidance.

The EYFS statutory framework sets the standards that schools and childcare settings must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old.

Nursery schools are exempt from the EYFS requirements until the end of September 2020. This means the EYFS learning and development and assessment requirements do not apply to nursery schools. Nursery schools continue to be exempt. The requirements for early years foundation stage profiles to staff qualifications and Paediatric First Aid changes ended on 20 November 2020.

Further government relaxed restrictions, or requirements, relating to qualifications, training, ratios and staff deployment in the EYFS framework. Therefore, new requirements, which came into force on 20 November 2020, allow the temporary changes to be suspended in coronavirus (COVID-19) related circumstances. Providers will be required to notify parents and Ofsted if they are using the temporary flexibilities and have decided to disapply the EYFS in any of the ways set out below.

Details of the temporary changes, which cover learning and development, assessment and disapplying the Paediatric First Aid requirement, can be found in the guidance on the EYFS coronavirus (temporary) disapplication guidance. Settings are required to notify parents and Ofsted if they are using the temporary flexibilities to ensure they understand the flexibilities available to them.

7.2 Planning for and supporting children's learning

Where children are not able to be settling, or returning after the new year, they should be given to helping them adapt to their new routines and stresses, especially where the transition is to a new setting or school.

Settings may want to:

- consider how children's ongoing and gaines can be used to help children settle back into routine
- plan how children can learn in age-appropriate ways about how they can keep themselves safe, including how to manage their own feelings and crisis
- consider how to encourage children to learn and practise these health and safety routines in their setting

Settings can refer to the following guidance:

- Professional association for children and early years (PACEY) supporting children in pandemic
- DfE free resource catalogue
- Early years alliance
- 10 ways to parent learning
- Settings for Children about EYFS Development Matters

As set out in paragraph 3.3 of the EYFS statutory framework, providers may take regulations to disapply elements of the EYFS due to further local or national restrictions relating to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, or in circumstances where staff are unavailable due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Where settings are impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19) related restrictions and are using the new regulations, they should notify parents, Ofsted, they may wish to focus on supporting communication and language area of learning and development.

7.3 EYFS reforms

We have published the government response to the consultation on EYFS reforms. This response outlines our policy position for the EYFS in 2021.

An early adoption year is underway with primary schools that volunteered to make the changes in 2020. We will pilot a number of statutory schools to start early settings in the EYFS 2021 in September 2021.

7.4 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 (RBA) has been postponed until the 2021 to 2022 academic year. However, schools have been invited to take part in an early adopter year, which will take place in the second half of the autumn term 2020. Schools that are not participating in the early adopter year will implement a Reception Baseline Assessment between statutory.

7.5 Requirements for Paediatric First Aiders (PFA) being on site

As set out in paragraph 3.7 of the EYFS statutory, where a setting is using the new regulations to disapply elements of the EYFS due to further local or national restrictions relating to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, or in circumstances where staff are unavailable due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related circumstances, providers with a full PFA certificate can or site at all times when children are present, or sit at least one PFA qualified paediatric 12 hour full-time attendance at EYFS provision.

7.6 Renewing paediatric first aid (PFA) certificates

The guidance in this section applies from 2 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read from the national restrictions effect this section of the guidance.

EYFS certificates for qualification training is prevented for reasons unrelated directly with coronavirus (COVID-19), or in circumstances where an emergency advice, the validity of current certificates were able to be extended to 31 December 2020. Providers will be able to renew certificates that expired on or after 16 March 2020 and provide a temporary extension of the certificate on the General Childcare Register and early years provision.

Providers will be able to renew certificates that expired on or after the date has not been able to qualify and demonstrate that and steps have been to access the training. Employers or certificate holders must do their best to arrange requalification training at the earliest opportunity.

7.7 Emergency first aid

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

In case that emergency cases usually properly should be the first concern. Where it is necessary for first aid provision to be administered in close proximity. Those who are administering emergency first aid should wash their hands immediately afterwards, including washing hands.

7.8 Varying staff to child ratios and qualifications

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read from the national restrictions effect this section of the guidance.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Read from the national restrictions effect this section of the guidance.

Paragraph 3.32 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 coronavirus (COVID-19) to be an exceptional circumstance in which providers may be able to vary staff ratios in the EYFS can be changed if necessary. Early years settings and schools, however, remain responsible for ensuring that children are kept safe and their needs are met. Providers should consider the impact on children and staff when deciding to make exceptions to the ratios to the qualifications that staff hold in order to be able to deploy staff effectively.

For more detail, see CPS's coronavirus disclaimers.

7.0 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. It is not a requirement for childcare. Paragraph 3.35 of the statutory framework for the EYFS already allows for the rooms of children under the age of 2 years to be used by children over the age of 2 years for a separate 'baby room' with a clear intention, on a suitable area may be partitioned off to provide safety for younger children.

7.10 Taking on new staff (including volunteers) even if DBS checks have not been completed or DBS checks have not been completed

The requirement to wait for an enhanced DBS check is not a requirement in place.

Settings must obtain criminal records disclosures for new members of staff in accordance with the statutory guidance in place at the time. If the DBS disclosure has not arrived new staff and volunteers can still care for children provided they are supervised by a member of staff who has a DBS disclosure and undertaken an unchecked member of staff to be with children.

Where new staff are recruited, or new volunteers enter the early years setting, they should be supervised by a person who has undertaken a DBS check.

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

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

- there is no requirement for a new DBS check to be undertaken for them to temporarily move to another setting to support the care of children
- there is no need for a new DBS check to be undertaken for those who are temporarily moving to another setting to support the care of children
- in the case of the early years workforce, 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 currently temporarily closed.

This means that Ofsted requires further information about whether some providers are open or closed.

If your operating circumstances change (that is, you open or close):

- let Ofsted know by sending an email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk with 'coronavirus' in the subject line of the email
- in the subject line of the email, include the provider's name, the reason for such setting and the details of the change - the URN can be found on the setting's registration - inspection report or certificate

In addition, any confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting should be reported to Ofsted. Ofsted will then share information as it is required, should it decide swiftly required to Ofsted through the usual notification procedures.

8.2 Ofsted inspections during coronavirus (COVID-19)

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

The safeguarding responsibilities of settings have not changed, and Ofsted's expectation is that they will continue to be fulfilled to the extent that is practicable. Unit 6 of the Ofsted inspection handbook for childcare providers lists the key actions here and the full operational note for interim visits has been published.

8.3 Resuming Ofsted inspections

For registered early years provision, Ofsted are carefully considering how to return to routine inspections. The timing and the form of any inspection will be under review.

Ofsted will continue with its registration and regulatory work for early years and childcare providers.

8.4 Ofsted action on unregistered provision

The health, safety and welfare of children is Ofsted's priority. Ofsted will continue to take action against unregistered provision where it is operating unregistered settings.

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

9. Childminders

9.1 Early years entitlement funding for childminders

On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed the government would continue to pay childcare providers for the 30 hours free childcare for 2- 4 year olds.

On 20 July, we announced that this would continue through the autumn. We recognise that childcare providers, including childminders, are small businesses, and the vital role they play in the early years education and childcare and childminders partner form 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 fund early years providers during coronavirus (COVID-19).

9.2 Childminder eligibility for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme

Eligibility for the scheme is based on employment structures and not activities that they do under.

- you are self-employed, or a member of a partnership
- you have taken a trading profit
- 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 can in any of up to 3 independent childminders' premises, provided they do not exceed the following limits:

Disposal 1

- more than 3 childminders work together they will need to apply to Ofsted to register childcare on non-domestic premises
- registered to deliver childcare on domestic premises, if, or more childminders, who are registered to deliver childcare on domestic premises and work together in the same domestic premises, they will need to apply for a 'for larger groups of children and old mixed ratio requirements.

See further details of requirements for childminders and childcare on domestic premises.

9.4 Quality assurance visits

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Vicky Ford, has written to childcare providers to inform them that local authority agencies to relate their quality assurance visits to a minimum number of quality assurance visits. We will ensure that local authorities are aware of coronavirus (COVID-19). This will ensure that local authorities are able to prioritise their resources and focus on the most critical aspects of their quality assurance visits.

The safeguarding responsibilities of childminder agencies and their childminders have not changed. Childminder agencies are expected to prioritise visits to any of their independent childminders if they have concerns about the welfare of children. Childminder agencies are expected to carry out their assessments as set out in Ofsted's 'Childminder agencies'.

For more information about this change, visit Foundation Years.

9.5 Childminder with household member self-isolating

Household member self-isolating due to contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19)

This advice applies when a childminder usually looks after children in their own home, and where a childminder's household member is self-isolating.

If this is:

- only as a result of coming into contact with a positive case
- because they have returned from a country or area
- the household member does not require care

The childminder can continue to provide childcare at their registered setting. The childminder should take extra precautions to minimise contact with parents and carers of children attending the setting about the self-isolation.

The household member who is self-isolating, can't have any contact with the childcare setting, including being in the same room as children, or should use a separate bathroom where possible. If the person self-isolating has to use a shared bathroom or other communal area, these must be thoroughly cleaned after use.

The childminder must:

- comply with health and safety law, which requires a risk assessment. The risk assessment should take into account the health and safety of children, staff and other people who may be affected by the childcare provision. Further guidance can be found in COVID-19: guidance in non-healthcare settings and for childcare providers
- put in place proportionate measures to control the risk identified in the assessment in respect of employees in relation to health and safety risk assessments. Further guidance can be found in COVID-19: guidance for employers.

The childminder should:

- thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessment
- have active arrangements in place to monitor the health and safety of those working in alignment, and updated appropriately (for example when any issues are identified, or when there are significant changes to the early years

Further guidance on risk assessments and keeping children and staff safe can be found in section 2 of this document.

Household member self-isolating due to testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

This advice applies where a childminder usually looks after children in their own home and a member of the childminder's household has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

The childminder should also take the precautions in section 2 of this document. Further guidance on risk assessments and keeping children and staff safe can be found in section 2 of this document.

A childminder cannot care for children in their home because all household members are affected.

The household must self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the household member first showed symptoms. The childminder can then return to the childcare setting, subject to the following:

- the household member who has been tested has recovered from coronavirus (COVID-19) and is no longer showing symptoms
- the household member who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) is not required to self-isolate, and is not showing symptoms

Further guidance on risk assessments and keeping children and staff safe can be found in section 2 of this document.

Household member self-isolating due to testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

This advice applies where a childminder usually looks after children in their home and a member of the childminder's household has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

The childminder should take the precautions in section 2 of this document. Further guidance on risk assessments and keeping children and staff safe can be found in section 2 of this document.

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- the household member who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) is not required to self-isolate, and is not showing symptoms

Further guidance on risk assessments and keeping children and staff safe can be found in section 2 of this document.

10. Funding and business support

10.1 Funding for free childcare places

On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed the government would continue to pay childcare providers for the 30 hours free childcare for 2- 4 year olds.

On 20 July, we announced that this would continue through the autumn. We recognise that childcare providers, including childminders, are small businesses, and the vital role they play in the early years education and childcare and childminders partner form 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 fund early years providers during coronavirus (COVID-19).

It is important for local authorities to work with early years providers and deliver of the early years entitlements for all children - not just vulnerable children and children of key workers. Local authorities should continue to make payments to early years providers in line with their normal payment schedules. Local authorities should not force providers who are closed, without a 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 would continue to fund childcare, at the level we would have done before coronavirus, through the autumn until the end of December 2020. We have published guidance on the use of free early education entitlements funding which provides further details on how local authorities will fund early years providers during coronavirus (COVID-19).

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

10.3 Temporary changes to parents and carers eligibility to the 30 hours free childcare entitlement and Tax Free Childcare

Temporary changes have been made to the 30 hours free childcare entitlement and Tax Free Childcare offer, so that eligible parents and carers, including critical workers, can access childcare during coronavirus (COVID-19).

Parents who had all eligibility for 30 hours free childcare ended by 30 June 2020 will continue to receive the 30 hours free childcare offer, if they still meet the eligibility criteria. Parents who did not receive immediately the 30 hours provision and to give parents support with transitioning out of the scheme in a phased way, the 30 hours free childcare entitlement will continue for a grace period and then eligibility will be tested at the end of the period through the Childcare Service and the 30 hours free entitlement would continue without a break for a period.

Parents who were in the process of applying for the 30 hours free childcare offer based upon an individual's recommendation date. Parents falling out of eligibility for the 30 hours free childcare offer during the period 23 March 2020 may be entitled to a grace period. The grace period will be tested at the end of the period through the Childcare Service and the 30 hours free entitlement would continue without a break for a period.

Parents who were in the process of applying for the 30 hours free childcare offer based upon an individual's recommendation date. Parents falling out of eligibility for the 30 hours free childcare offer during the period 23 March 2020 may be entitled to a grace period. The grace period will be tested at the end of the period through the Childcare Service and the 30 hours free entitlement would continue without a break for a period.

Tax Free Childcare, which is a government scheme that provides up to £2,000 per child per year in childcare vouchers, Tax Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare entitlements for lower income families, the government will top up the Tax Free Childcare account by £2,000 per child per year. This is in addition to the 30 hours free childcare offer, which is worth up to £4,000 per child per year.

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

All eligible parents are encouraged to continue to apply for, and reconfirm, the 30 hours free childcare entitlement and Tax Free Childcare. Parents should if you do, use Tax Free Childcare and 30 hours free childcare during coronavirus (COVID-19).

10.5 Business support for early years and childcare settings

The guidance in this section applies from 3 December.

National restrictions are in place until 2 December. Please check the national restrictions after this section of the guidance.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) will be extended until the end of April 2021. This will be a flexible scheme, with furlough for a maximum of 22 days. Information about how employers can access support is available in Care for young people during the coronavirus job retention scheme.

Further guidance is available:

- furlough scheme extended and further economic support announced
- Care for young people during the coronavirus job retention scheme
- coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for employers and businesses

Information about the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme is available at: coronavirus (COVID-19): support for small businesses and Coronavirus (COVID-19): Bounce Back Loan Scheme.

The launch of the Job Support Scheme has been postponed because of national developments related to the coronavirus pandemic.

In addition:

- we are continuing to work with the sector to understand how the early years and childcare sector is being affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) and what more affordable childcare can be provided to parents and carers who need it most, and families who need it the longer term
- the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) was paid in February, as the CJRS has ended, and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) was paid in April
- early years and childcare settings are eligible for a business rates discount for the 2020 to 2021 financial year. Information about the Childcare Nationwide and Offered and the provision (CTS) and not be charged business rates for 2020 to 2021
- some settings qualify for small business rates which may be benefit from a 50% rates relief. We strongly encourage those eligible sectors to refer to the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme
- there is an extension of the Business Interruption Payment Scheme for those who are self-employed or members of a partnership and have lost income because of coronavirus (COVID-19). Eligible claims will be made a course grant and will be paid in two instalments. Further information and guidance will be provided in early and contact information are also eligible and claims may be made online
- the Business Interruption Payment Scheme is for those who have lost income and also be temporarily closure, requiring Universal Credit can be accessed through the Universal Credit Scheme
- the Business Interruption Payment Scheme is for those who have lost income, and increase from a month
- there will be a gap of 5 weeks between one and the next one 2020 and April 2021 UK GDP contracted by 2.1% compared to a month ago, the largest quarterly contraction since 1955
- the government will provide a 'Bounce Back Loan' scheme for the Coronavirus Credit standard allowance and Bounce Back Credit basic standard, and an extension of the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme for those who are ineligible for the Bounce Back Loan Scheme
- some early years settings may be eligible for the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund. Information about the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund

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

Settings are expected to comply with the law and take a reasonable and proportionate approach to charging parents and carers, fairly and transparently, unprecedented circumstances, and to communicate any arrangements clearly with parents.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) established a COVID-19 taskforce to ensure that consumers are treated fairly and that businesses and professions acting fairly and competitively. CMA's guidance is available here.

The CMA guidance can be found in the CMA's open letter to the early years sector. Please acknowledge the need for fairness and transparency between behaving unfairly during coronavirus (COVID-19) can result in it to CMA the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPUTR) and the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA). Consumer protection law, the CPUTR will take enforcement action if warranted.

10.7 Charging for consumables

Settings may charge for consumables, such as nappies, in line with the government's guidance. Settings should be sensitive to the need for this guidance. They should consider the impact of charges on disadvantaged families.

10.8 Arrangements for providing meals

Where children qualify for benefits-related free school meals, because they are eligible for free childcare, local authorities should continue to make sure that such during term-time, they should continue to be supplied as normal.

In any instance where an eligible child is not supplied with a school meal, local authorities should make sure that a suitable alternative is provided, or cancelled for example, in the case of a boarding school.

In all other settings, where free meals do not apply, settings may charge for meals in line with arrangements before coronavirus (COVID-19) and the impact of charges on disadvantaged families.

Kitchens must comply with the guidance for food businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19).

10.9 Insurance of early years providers during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Business interruption insurance

For childcare providers that have a policy that covers government-ordered closure and unspecified notifiable diseases, the government's social distancing measures, the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has issued a statement to insurance, provided that the wording of the policy seem permitted to include

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) also requires 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

Early years providers and childcare providers

The government is working closely with the FCA to ensure that the rules are clear and that customers can access the support they are entitled to. The Association of British Insurers has also set up a dedicated webpage with a list of principles for handling business interruption claims to support and provide clarity for customers.

Customers who think their insurer has not treated them 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

Insurers are also required to ensure that appropriate support is provided to vulnerable customers.

Public liability insurance

Public liability insurance covers the appropriate insurance (for example, public liability insurance) to cover all premises from which they provide childcare. Including premises that are temporarily closed, or premises from which childcare is adjusted during the term of the policy (where permitted) to include coronavirus (COVID-19), and, and some insurers may choose to exclude coronavirus (COVID-19) from their standard policy wording. Insurance brokers should check the terms and conditions of their public liability insurance policies and consult with their insurance providers and brokers to ensure that they are aware of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the impact of different insurers may take a different approach to coronavirus (COVID-19) and encourage to shop around to seek the most suitable cover at the best price.

For general advice on insurance matters (but not about specific policies) please contact the Ofsted helpline on 0300 123 1231, or info@ofsted.gov.uk.

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