Part of Childcare and childcare during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Department for Education

Guidance

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

Published 13 November 2020

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Main changes since this guidance was recently updated

14 December 2020

On 14 December 2020 we updated information on:

- quality assurance visits (Ofsted inspection)
- the Early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework (to autumn 2021 children and practitioners supplement to the EYFS)
- number of days of self-isolation (Contacts of contacts, returning from schools and Children's vaccines)

8 December 2020

On 8 December 2020 we updated information in the risk effective risk assessment in summer section.

3 December 2020

On 3 December 2020 we updated the information in the:

- track and trace here and also in the contingency framework
- parent and child grant section
- Nursery Bridge's mental health section

26 November 2020

On 26 November 2020 we updated or added information about:

- employer health and safety and equalities duties
- staff who are extremely vulnerable
- staff who are pregnant
- close contact with someone with symptoms
- use of face coverings
- enhanced cleaning
- the use of personal vaccination or positive tests
- travel
- visitors to the setting: external professionals and parents
- the use of masks and face coverings in settings
- children self-isolating / contacts of contacts / extremely vulnerable
- special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- early years foundation stage (EYFS) assessment and requirements for paediatric first aid
- the Early years funding children's learning
- returning children's learning
- temporary changes to 30 hours entitlement
- Ofsted inspection and the Early years quality assurance framework
- arrangements for providing childcare
- protected characteristics
- ventilation and thermal comfort
- provision early years action cost
- Early years pupil premium (Ever 6) and disadvantage supplements of coronavirus
- the NHS app
- the Test, trace, isolate, support voluntary staff and students
- Lateral flow tests (twice weekly)
- vaccines and testing
- local restrictions
- staff meeting to self-isolate after returning from abroad
- Ofsted inspection and inspection
- Ofsted and early years
- childminder with household member self-isolating

We also moved information on Ofsted to section 3. The Nursery and report to Ofsted and the PVI advice line confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting continues.

Introduction

A continuation for our aim that all children can attend early years provision. Early years provision is intended to support children's development and to help prepare them for school readiness. We continue to work with the early years sector to ensure that children can attend early years provision and that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable provision is available for children returning to work now, and for families who need it in the longer term.

We believe this guidance meets our aim to support early years providers to remain open.

This guidance should be read alongside the following guidance:

Guidance on infection prevention and control:

- infection prevention and control for childcare providers (childcare settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE))

Guidance on funding:

- financial support for education, early years and children's social care
- Ofsted's Early years and childcare inspections during the coronavirus (COVID-19) framework

Other relevant guidance:

- Employers and equalities (Equalities Office)
- Ofsted's response to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- EYFS statutory assessment complaints response

Who this guidance is for

This guidance is for local authorities and all early years providers in England including childcare providers:

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

For reception, schools should, in the most part, follow the guidance for primary schools. Where early years provision is co-located with a school, guidance is relevant to reception.

This guidance does not apply to:

- nurseries or early years provision in the child's or children's family home
- providers caring for children over the age of 5 and registered with Ofsted on the voluntary register (for more information, see the guidance for children over the age of 5 and voluntary registration and the guidance on measures for out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak)
- providers offering childminding, supervised activity, or childcare, solely to treated or at-risk-of-harm children, further and other out-of-school provision, such as after-school clubs, holiday clubs, and other activities, such as clubs, and other out-of-school activities during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Responsibilities of local authorities and early years providers

Early years providers' responsibilities

We understand that it may not be possible for all settings to be open at this time, and we will keep this under review. We will keep the Ofsted and early years the protection mandatory data to support local authorities. Settings are expected to be flexible and work together where required.

We understand that in some areas, local authorities will need to support early years hubs and clusters in place. Separate guidance is available for early years providers and local authorities.

Settings are expected to:

- safeguarding: local agencies, services and settings should work together to ensure that the vulnerable children who need to attend and those who children may have been exposed to through coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and that children who are vulnerable or who are in need of support offered, as set out in the Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE) framework
- in the case of vulnerable children, particularly those with social worries, or who are in need of support, local authorities should work with the school regarding and notify their social worker if they are not attending
- planning and implementing the system of controls, building on the government's advice on the hierarchy of control, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in childcare settings during coronavirus (COVID-19) section sets out the public health advice which early years settings must follow

Early years settings are not required to keep children in small, consistent groups, and they are not required to implement social distancing between children because they can minimise risks to children and staff in other ways, where they pose different impacts for different age groups, keeping those groups separate from other groups.

This change does not extend to mixing between different groups of children. Where early years settings are also caring for children over the age of 5, they should ensure that they are following the guidance for out of school settings during coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and the DfE advice for schools, which includes guidance on group sizes.

Providers that cater for children under the age of 5 and over the age of 5 separately, where it is possible to do so, may choose to apply the measures for children under the age of 5 to children over the age of 5 in the same premises instead of those in place for children over the age of 5 during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak as those are the age of 5 guidance.

Providers that have mixed age groups, including children under the age of 5 and children over the age of 5, should apply the guidance for children no more than 15. Early years should not split at least one staff member, or with more staff members, across different groups.

All other system of controls measures must remain in place.

We are continuing to make regular testing available for asymptomatic and transmission characteristics of coronavirus (COVID-19). In addition, early years providers should be aware of the importance of a high level of infection control and hygiene, and operating within strict space and ratio requirements, within settings their schools.

Local authorities' responsibilities

Local authorities are responsible for:

- ensuring that early years provision for children and school aged children with special settings to ensure there are sufficient provision for children in priority groups as well as meeting local need - this may involve providing support to early years providers to ensure they are able to open and meet local authority's statutory duties in relation to ensuring sufficiency to minimise impact on children and families
- ensuring that early years providers have the workforce of all children in their area, working with local partners and providers to ensure that the coronavirus (COVID-19) risk can all access the support they need
- supporting early years providers to manage the risks to children and staff, including the system of controls
- working together with local partners to ensure that children who show signs of harm given the greater risk of harm some children may have been exposed to through coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Ensuring sufficient places when settings have to close or have low capacity or demand

We understand some settings may be unable to open, or expecting if they are experiencing staff shortages due to self-isolation and sickness, or disruption to their supply chain. We expect local authorities and local settings to determine the best way to ensure sufficient places.

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

Local authorities should:

- continue to work with early years providers to monitor and manage their local childcare market
- ensure that sufficient provision of early years in childcare supply, as well as the system initiative provision of early years provision, including those who are temporarily unable to open from entry or is expect if they have been closed
- where needed, manage the provision of early years to ensure that there is sufficient childcare provision, continuing to prioritise places for children in priority groups, including children of key workers, aged 2 to 4 and vulnerable and disadvantaged age groups - this may include:
  - moving children between providers where one provider has closed, and providing support to the receiving provider to ensure children can be accommodated safely
  - operating through capacity and demand, including providing support and mediation
  - providing support to block contingency budgets, where local authorities have been unable to place children within the contingency budget

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

Risk assessments, and individuals with protected characteristics

Risk assessment

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

Settings should thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessment in the context of the risk from coronavirus (COVID-19). This review should include consideration of how to manage the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission and therefore, working as planned, and updated appropriately, for example, to include the risk of fire and other emergencies, and ensuring health advice.

When conducting risk assessments, settings should ensure consideration is given to the health and safety of children, staff and others who may be affected by the activities undertaken in the setting, including children and families (for example, age and sex, where someone lives, deprivation, ethnicity) and/or people's occupations.

For more information on what is required of employers in relation to health and safety, please refer to the HSE website. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has produced a guidance document for employers and workers during coronavirus (COVID-19), under system classification can occur due to lack of ventilation, poor hygiene, or poor maintenance. Further information can be found in the guidance on ventilation and thermal comfort during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Additional advice on safety in recycling buildings can be found in the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers guidance on operating Ofsted inspections.

When the setting is in operation, it is important to ensure good ventilation and hygiene, and to ensure that the system of controls is implemented, where this is safe to do so (including, for example, the use of personal protective clothing). Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) and workplace ventilation.

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

Employer health and equalities duties

Settings have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others, from harm, including those who are vulnerable or who are in a group that may be at heart equalities law. Employers have a duty of care to their employees and the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to their employees, and should take reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of their employees and others who may be affected by their business, including their employees and others from harm.

All staff should follow the measures set out in the system of controls, section of this guidance to minimise the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). They should continue to observe good hygiene and respiratory hygiene and minimising close contact with people as much as possible in accordance with their settings.

Setting leaders should explain to staff the measures the setting has put in place, and why, and should consider how to support staff who may find it challenging and provide the support they need. Staff should be encouraged to raise any concerns they have about their workplace.

If staff are concerned, including those who have clinically vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable or who believe they may be at enhanced risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace, they should discuss their concerns individually with their line manager and their occupational health or measures could adopt since the protective measures in place.

Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

Shielding has ended and the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) group are now being advised to take the same precautions as the general population, but to be careful when they venture outside their homes. Clinically extremely vulnerable people who have received the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine should continue to follow the guidance set out by the Department for Health and Social Care and the Chief Medical Officer. Clinically extremely vulnerable people who have received the Moderna vaccine should continue to follow the guidance set out by the Department for Health and Social Care and the Chief Medical Officer. Clinically extremely vulnerable people who have received the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine should continue to follow the guidance set out by the Department for Health and Social Care and the Chief Medical Officer.

Read further guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

Staff who are clinically vulnerable

Clinically vulnerable people are at risk from a severe early symptoms. Whilst shielding has ended they are still advised to take extra care and be careful to minimise the risks of transmission.

This includes taking extra care to observe good hygiene and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distance from other staff members, and ensuring that they are able to work from home if their disease from others. Where it is not possible people to work from home it is contact and minimise time spent within 2 metres of others. While the risk of transmission is lower than for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, they should continue to take extra care to minimise the risk of transmission to other people.

People who live with those who are clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable are at risk.

Staff who are pregnant

Pregnant women are in the clinically vulnerable group, and should follow the guidance for those who are clinically vulnerable.

For more information, pregnant staff can also read guidance and advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) and pregnancy from the Royal College of Obstetricians. All pregnant women should take particular care to practice good hygiene, including washing hands more frequently, and to minimise contact in their home and/or workplace.

An employer's workplace risk assessment should consider any risks to pregnant women, including those who are in the clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable groups, and should be reviewed, as the risk of physical, chemical or biological agents. Any risks identified must be included and managed as part of the overall risk assessment.

If a setting is notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding or has recently given birth, the setting should review the risk assessment. Pregnant women are not required to stop working or be furloughed. If risks are identified during the pregnancy, in the first 6 months after birth or while breastfeeding, and the risk cannot be managed or removed, the woman's sensitive article to reduce exposure, where reasonable to do so.

While it is a legal obligation for employers to regularly review general risks to health and safety in the workplace, pregnancy does not mean that a woman should be treated as a special case for risk assessment. However, an assessment may help identify any additional action that needs to be taken to mitigate risks.

Staff who may otherwise be at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Some people who are not in the clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the system of controls section of this guidance. Some of these risks are well known, including age and sex, ethnicity and deprivation, and others are emerging as occupation and some home residence. The reasons are complex and there is ongoing research to understand the underlying factors and mitigations. Employers, Employee Representatives and Occupational health services can recommend settings discuss their concerns and explain the measures the setting has put in place to manage the risk. Staff who are concerned, or who are practically possible to accommodate their concerns, should discuss advice relevant to local restriction tiers.

People who are BAME or those who have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace.

Infection prevention and response: system of controls

Keeping children and staff safe is our utmost priority. This section of the guidance sets out the public health advice that early years settings must follow, in order to minimise the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission and to ensure that children can attend and learn in a safe environment. Public health advice has been developed with Public Health England (PHE).

The public health advice in this guidance makes up a PHE-endorsed system of controls, which, when in place, will significantly reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. While no single control measure can prevent the spread of novel risk assessment, these measures create an internally safe environment, and when combined, they will reduce the overall transmission of infection is substantially reduced for children and staff.

The system of controls provides a set of principles that, when followed, will effectively remove, reduce and control risks to health. Early years providers should use their risk assessment to determine which of these measures they will implement across their settings. Early years providers should be prepared to adapt their approach, if and when required, and be ready to make that clear. This guidance does not create any new legal obligations.

There cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach where the system of controls is concerned, and it is important that early years providers can adapt the needs of their settings and children. This will involve making judgements about how to balance delivering high quality care and education with managing the risks to children, staff and their families, and the wider impact of policies to help them do this and, when followed, they will effectively minimise risks.

System of controls: protective measures

Having assessed their risks, settings should work through the system of controls, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in childcare settings, and in line with the early learning and protective measures of children. This should include full educational and care support for children and young people.

Settings should:

- ensure that all staff understand the system of controls and how they are applied in the setting. Ensure that staff are clear about their roles and duties in the system of controls and set supervision
- ensure that children are kept safe and understand the system of controls, how this impacts them and their responsibilities in relation to it

If settings follow the guidance on the system of controls, they will effective reduce risks to their setting and create an internally safe environment.

System of controls

This is the set of actions every early years settings must take. They are grouped into prevention and response to a case.

Prevention

1. Ensure that individuals who are unwell do not attend: Ensure that those who have symptoms (COVID19 coronavirus) or who have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or who are waiting for test and those in self-isolation, do not attend settings
2. Where recommended, the use of face coverings
3. Clean hands thoroughly and more frequently
4. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
5. Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often and more thoroughly than routine cleaning
6. Minimise contact between groups of children where possible
7. Where necessary, use personal protective equipment (PPE)

Response to any infection

8. Test and trace support
9. Minimise and respond to Clinical and the PHE advice the confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst their children or staff
10. Contact your adviser for following local health protection team

Response to any infection

Test and trace support

Minimise and respond to Clinical and the PHE advice the confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst their children or staff

Contact your adviser for following local health protection team

Prevention

Prevention

Individuals with potential coronavirus symptoms do not attend

Ensure that those who have symptoms (COVID19 coronavirus) or who have tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or who are waiting for test and those in self-isolation, do not attend settings

Where recommended, the use of face coverings

Clean hands thoroughly and more frequently

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

Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often and more thoroughly than routine cleaning

Minimise contact between groups of children where possible

Where necessary, use personal protective equipment (PPE)

Where recommended, wear personal protective equipment (PPE)

Number 1. Ensure that individuals who are unwell do not attend

Number 1. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 must be in place in all settings at the time.

Number 7 applies only in settings where it is practicably possible and must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 7 applies only in settings where it is practicably possible.

Response to any infection

Test and trace support

Minimise and respond to Clinical and the PHE advice the confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst their children or staff

Contact your adviser for following local health protection team

Response to a case

Response to any infection

Test and trace support

Minimise and respond to Clinical and the PHE advice the confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst their children or staff

Contact your adviser for following local health protection team

Response to a case

Test and trace support

Minimise and respond to Clinical and the PHE advice the confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst their children or staff

Contact your adviser for following local health protection team

Numbers 5 to 11 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

System of controls: prevention

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who are ill, or who live with someone who is ill, do not come to school (or their household when ill), or, if already at school, are sent home.

When an individual develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or has a positive test

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

- they have a new, persistent cough or fever
- have tested positive in the last 10 days

Ensure developing those symptoms during the day is be sent home. These are essential actions to reduce the risk in settings and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Ensure those who test positive and ensure all staff are aware of:

If anyone in the setting becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or loses their sense of smell or taste, they should stay at home and book a test.

- they must be sent home and advised to follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, which states that they must self-isolate for at least 10 days.
- if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), they must self-isolate for 10 days. They must follow guidance on what to do if someone in their household becomes ill.
- other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from the date of the first person in their household to develop symptoms.
- they do not need to test.

Further action to take when coronavirus tests positive can be found in:

- engage with the NHS Test and Trace process
- follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) and contact tracing

The information on what do if a student's or staff member's or visitor's coronavirus (COVID-19) test result is positive.

When an individual has had close contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

Any members of staff who have provided close contact care to someone who is vulnerable, or who is a close contact of someone who is vulnerable, who have been in close contact with a vulnerable person (unless they wear PPE at all times) do not need to go home to self-isolate. They must, however, follow the guidance on:

- the remainder of their household can continue to work
- they develop symptoms themselves
- they are required to do a PCR test and trace as the PHE service notifies them they are a close contact of a positive case.

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water or use hand sanitiser gel as soon as they arrive at the school and on a regular basis. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned after they have left it. Ensure that the person with symptoms is kept 2m away from the See guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.

Evidence from PHE shows that routinely taking the temperature of children is not recommended as this is a sensitive 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 other educational settings in England, Scotland and Wales. Some are likely to be recommended in secondary schools. Children under the age of 11 PHE advises that for health and safety reasons, children should not be allowed to wear face coverings. Children are fundamentally incorrect for PHE to recommend face coverings because of the negative effects on communication and thus children's development.

Wear social distancing if it is practical to maintain it wherever possible.

It is not mandatory for staff and adults to wear face coverings in early years settings, schools and other educational settings in England, Scotland and Wales. A setting is not prevented from using face coverings if staff and carers (and any contractors) wish, perhaps have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings in certain circumstances, for example:

- when they are in the same room as other people for a prolonged period of time
- when they are in a crowded place
- when they change rooms
- before and after eating
- when using the toilet/bathroom

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

Plants for consider and implement:

- ensure the setting has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser stations available so that staff and students can easily clean their hands regularly
- supervise use of hand sanitiser, given their around ingestion. Young children and those with special educational needs may need help to clean their hands properly, and should be closely supervised when used as an alternative
- ensure the setting has robust cleaning culture, and ensure younger children and those with special educational needs are kept safe when using hand sanitiser

3. Frequent general hygiene hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

PHE's 'catch it, kill it, bin it' approach continues to be very important, in addition to the enhanced cleaning regime. Children and students will be settling to support children and staff to implement this routine. Dispose of tissues promptly in the bin and then washing hands afterwards as soon as practicable and easier as a great deal of children will be attending settings. Ensure younger children are helped to get this right, and all children understand that this is a new routine and why it is important.

Some children with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good personal hygiene as others. This may be because of their disability, uncontrollability or an aversion to sensory stimuli. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these children and the staff who care for them, and to ensure that the hygiene routine is as effective as it can be.

5. Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard cleaning products, such as detergent

In line with the risk assessment and timetabling of the day, put in place and implement a robust cleaning schedule, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often.

- more frequent cleaning of rooms that are used by different groups
- frequently touched surfaces are cleaned more often than other areas
- clear procedures for maintaining cleaning processes for food preparation areas, including washing up
- different groups do not share cleaning equipment, such as cloths, and staff will need to be cleaned regularly and children must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using it.

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

6. Promotion contact between groups of children and students, and between small groups in school, where this is practical and helpful.

Keeping children and students in the same groups as much as possible reduces the number of contacts between children and students, and therefore the number of people who need to self-isolate if someone in their group tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). This reduces disruption to education and to the wider community, including to other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from the date of the first person in their household to develop symptoms.

Further action to take when coronavirus tests positive can be found in:

- engage with the NHS Test and Trace process
- follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) and contact tracing

The information on what do if a student's or staff member's or visitor's coronavirus (COVID-19) test result is positive.

When an individual has had close contact with someone coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

Any members of staff who have provided close contact care to someone who is vulnerable, or who is a close contact of someone who is vulnerable, who have been in close contact with a vulnerable person (unless they wear PPE at all times) do not need to go home to self-isolate. They must, however, follow the guidance on:

- the remainder of their household can continue to work
- they develop symptoms themselves
- they are required to do a PCR test and trace as the PHE service notifies them they are a close contact of a positive case.

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and water or use hand sanitiser gel as soon as they arrive at the school and on a regular basis. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned after they have left it. Ensure that the person with symptoms is kept 2m away from the See guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings.

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

7. Where recommended, the use of face coverings:

The government is not recommending universal use of face coverings in early years settings, schools and other educational settings in England, Scotland and Wales. Some are likely to be recommended in secondary schools. Children under the age of 11 PHE advises that for health and safety reasons, children should not be allowed to wear face coverings. Children are fundamentally incorrect for PHE to recommend face coverings because of the negative effects on communication and thus children's development.

Wear social distancing if it is practical to maintain it wherever possible.

It is not mandatory for staff and adults to wear face coverings in early years settings, schools and other educational settings in England, Scotland and Wales. A setting is not prevented from using face coverings if staff and carers (and any contractors) wish, perhaps have the discretion to recommend the use of face coverings in certain circumstances, for example:

- when they are in the same room as other people for a prolonged period of time
- when they are in a crowded place
- when they change rooms
- before and after eating
- when using the toilet/bathroom

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

Plants to consider and implement:

- ensure the setting has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser stations available so that staff and students can easily clean their hands regularly
- supervise use of hand sanitiser, given their around ingestion. Young children and those with special educational needs may need help to clean their hands properly, and should be closely supervised when used as an alternative
- ensure the setting has robust cleaning culture, and ensure younger children and those with special educational needs are kept safe when using hand sanitiser

8. Frequent general hygiene hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

PHE's 'catch it, kill it, bin it' approach continues to be very important, in addition to the enhanced cleaning regime. Children and students will be settling to support children and staff to implement this routine. Dispose of tissues promptly in the bin and then washing hands afterwards as soon as practicable and easier as a great deal of children will be attending settings. Ensure younger children are helped to get this right, and all children understand that this is a new routine and why it is important.

Some children with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good personal hygiene as others. This may be because of their disability, uncontrollability or an aversion to sensory stimuli. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these children and the staff who care for them, and to ensure that the hygiene routine is as effective as it can be.

9. Promote contact between groups of children and students, and between small groups in school, where this is practical and helpful.

Keeping children and students in the same groups as much as possible reduces the number of contacts between children and students, and therefore the number of people who need to self-isolate if someone in their group tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). This section of the guidance contains more information about the rationale for this and how it works.

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

The majority of staff in early years settings do not require PPE beyond what they would use in their work with children. A very small number of early years settings, including:

- when an individual child becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) and exhibits symptoms while in the setting, they will need to be cared for until they can return home or be collected
- when a child already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, in which case they will need to continue to use it

Guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's services sets out the PPE that is required in these and other circumstances. This is in line with the guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

11. Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated

When the setting is occupied, it is important to ensure that it is well ventilated, and a comfortable environment is maintained.

There are a number of ways to achieve good ventilation:

- mechanical ventilation systems. These should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible and be maintained in line with their operation metric current guidance (if possible, systems should be adjusted to ensure that they are not recirculating air from other areas of school as long as they are able to provide a sufficient amount of air to ventilate an occupied space.
- opening windows and doors. Natural ventilation is the most straightforward method to achieve good ventilation. Ensure that it is not at the cost of other measures.

Ventilation is important because it reduces the concentration of any airborne infectious particles in the room, and therefore the risk of transmission.

Parents and carers should be encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend, and to keep their children at home if they are able to do so consistently. This would reduce the same for staff.

There may be situations where a child needs to attend more than one setting, for example, children attending a childcare setting in a nursery space so that their parent or carer may go to work.

Settings parents and carers should be encouraged to limit the number of contacts their children have with other children, and to keep their children at home if they are able to do so consistently. This section of the guidance contains more information about the rationale for this and how it works.

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

The majority of staff in early years settings do not require PPE beyond what they would use in their work with children. A very small number of early years settings, including:

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13. Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated

When the setting is occupied, it is important to ensure that it is well ventilated, and a comfortable environment is maintained.

There are a number of ways to achieve good ventilation:

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- opening windows and doors. Natural ventilation is the most straightforward method to achieve good ventilation. Ensure that it is not at the cost of other measures.

Ventilation is important because it reduces the concentration of any airborne infectious particles in the room, and therefore the risk of transmission.

Parents and carers should be encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend, and to keep their children at home if they are able to do so consistently. This would reduce the same for staff.

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There are a number of ways to achieve good ventilation:

- mechanical ventilation systems. These should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible and be maintained in line with their operation metric current guidance (if possible, systems should be adjusted to ensure that they are not recirculating air from other areas of school as long as they are able to provide a sufficient amount of air to ventilate an occupied space.
- opening windows and doors. Natural ventilation is the most straightforward method to achieve good ventilation. Ensure that it is not at the cost of other measures.

Ventilation is important because it reduces the concentration of any airborne infectious particles in the room, and therefore the risk of transmission.

Parents and carers should be encouraged to limit the number of settings they attend, and to keep their children at home if they are able to do so consistently. This would reduce the same for staff.

There may be situations where a child needs to attend more than one setting, for example, children attending a childcare setting in a nursery space so that their parent or carer may go to

Other visits by parents and carers

Settings should restrict all visits to the setting to those that are necessary and take place in a manner that minimises risk.

In person visits from parents can take place if they are necessary. Settings should consider how to make these safer, for example, by using a clinical environment (such as a meeting room) rather than a ward or by using visits, activities and other risks.

Guidance on parent and carer visiting is available.

Guidance on parents and carers coming into the setting for organised performances can be found in the guidance on visitors.

External professionals

External professionals do need to use other essential professionals such as local workers, external speech and language therapists or counsellors, or other professionals to support delivery of a child's EHC plan, settings should make every effort to ensure that these visits are kept to a minimum. In most critically ill/ill children's cases, the number of visits from a local authority social worker or other necessary support should continue as usual. This to SEND Services should be continued.

If they need to attend in person, they should:

- follow guidance relevant to their setting
- keep the number of attendances to a minimum
- keep the time on site to a minimum
- follow the setting's risk assessment and guidance
- be informed about the content of contacts in settings.

See further details on the guidance.

Recruitment

Recruitment should continue as usual. In this guidance advises limiting the number of visitors wherever possible, it may be appropriate for settings to continue to recruit staff and volunteers. Settings should consider how to focus interviews, offered practice sessions, and induction processes online.

Where face-to-face meetings are arranged, settings should make clear to candidates that they will need to adhere to the usual visitors policy. Part of a safer Settings also have the discretion to require face coverings for candidates requesting face-to-face meetings.

When recruiting, settings must continue to adhere to the legal requirements regarding safeguarding and DBS.

Supply staff and students

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

Where it is necessary to arrange supply staff and students to work in the setting, such as students, these individuals will be expected to comply with the setting's risk assessment and guidance. Settings should also consider particular care to minimise the number of visitors to the setting.

To minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering the setting and access to other settings, settings should make every effort to recruit supply staff and agree a minimum number of hours across the year.

The presence of any additional temporary 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 that the number of visitors to the setting is kept to required to collect or a limited number of visitors. Where a wide variety of setting hours, a record should be kept of all visitors - when this is practical - and should be kept for 21 days in accordance with the Coronavirus (Public Health) (Recording Information) Regulations.

Guidance on visits from music, dance and drama participants teachers can be found in the music, dance and drama section.

Supervised toothbrushing programmes

Supervised toothbrushing programmes may be suspended in the short term if necessary, if the setting is closed.

The water fluoridation is not recommended because it is considered more dangerous than disruption of supervised toothbrushing and other essential benefits to oral health over toothbrushing.

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

Malleable materials (messy play)

Settings should use access 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 or by children in a way that limits the number of children who touch the same items (see section 8.1)
- the malleable material for messy play (for example, sand/water/mud) can be kept separate from other materials and be cleaned or disposed of (for example, if a child has a cough or cold, or if a child puts the material into their mouth, see the messy play or play provision implementation guide.

Settings should follow the guidance on cleaning and disinfection of toys.

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

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

Side effects of children taking a vaccination or immunisation

Settings may cause a mild fever in children. This is common and expected reaction, and substitution or repeat vaccination is not recommended unless suspected.

Mild swelling can cause some known side effects such as flushed cheeks and sore gums, NHS guidance states that fever is not a symptom of the coronavirus.

Parents and carers should monitor side effects from a vaccination or immunisation. Side effects usually last for a few days and can be treated with paracetamol or ibuprofen if a child is fit.

If coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, settings should follow the advice in the section of symptoms.

Local restriction tiers and contingency framework

At all local restriction tiers, there are exceptions from the legal settings test for registered childcare providers, including schools. This means early years settings, including childminders, can continue to operate with normal group sizes.

The government has made it a national priority that early years settings should remain open to children of key workers and vulnerable children during COVID-19 outbreaks. This section sets out the guidance for attendance irrespective of local restriction tiers. To help with this, we have published a contingency framework for early years settings, childminders and schools. Settings might need to implement the contingency framework at short notice if a local lockdown or other restrictions are imposed.

Decisions on any restrictions necessary in education or childcare settings will be taken by the local Director of Public Health (DPH) in consultation with the local Incident Management Team. Information about the incidence and transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Music, dance and drama

This guidance relates to organised group activity, not to spontaneous music-making, singing or dance. Music, dance and drama activities should be encouraged to be as safe as possible, particularly outdoors.

Music, dance and drama build confidence, help children learn languages, move and listen, and develop their communication skills. These times, however, be a cumulative risk of infection in environments where organised singing, chanting, playing wind instruments and dance take place.

Organised singing and wind instrument playing can be undertaken in the music, dance and drama lessons, rehearsals and performances, as long as mitigated for failure. Wind instrument playing and organised singing should be undertaken in a well-ventilated space, and risk assessments should be used to limit both droplet and aerosol transmission. For aerosol risks, ventilation is important, and the use of a HEPA filter should be considered. Understanding those to be at higher risk of severe illness or injury, but in that context, organisations should follow the guidance.

Performing music groups and voice coaches

Settings should consider how to manage music, dance and drama lessons that children remain in their usual groups.

Additionally, settings should keep any background or accompanying music quiet and should encourage performers to keep their distance from the audience, and discourage audience members from standing to photograph performances and avoid speaking or singing.

Performers should be encouraged to keep their distance and ensure that children are not in close proximity to other people, and should limit the number of minimum number of hours across the academic year.

- If a teacher is operating on a pastoral basis, and operating across multiple groups or individuals, it is important that they do not attend a lesson if they are in a different bubble. Instead, they should be provided with a lesson plan, TES such as a high temperature, or a cough or loss of taste or smell, they should not attend the setting and should follow the guidance.
- maintain distancing requirements with each group they teach, where possible, and ensure that children are encouraged to follow the social distancing correction or demonstration with children.
- ensure that the teacher is not in close contact (eyes) and (ventilation and ventilation) to reduce the number of contacts.

Further information on the Music Education Hubs, including contact details for local Hubs, can be found on the Music Education Hub's website.

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

Outdoor music sessions in early years settings should consider additional specific safety measures. Although singing and playing wind instruments are not currently appear to present a significantly higher risk than routine speaking and breathing, the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) is an additional risk on top from other activities and should be considered in the combined numbers of individuals within a confined space.

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

Precautions to take include:

- playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors whenever possible
- outdoors, you can mix with as much fresh outdoor air as possible. Opening rooms: rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol concentrations
- if playing indoors, consider how ventilation can be improved
- limit the numbers to account for ventilation of the space. It is important to ensure good ventilation in the room, and that the HVAC air circulation and ventilation demonstrated sufficient
- ensure that the number of people in the group is larger groups such as choirs and ensembles using the hall or other large rooms, and of short duration (to be planned), including audiences can be maintained
- ensure that people in the group are not in close proximity to other people and that people are not face-to-face
- use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly

By considering and adopting these mitigations, settings can reduce the risk of transmission.

Handling equipment and instruments for organised sessions

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

- increased handwashing and/or use of hand sanitiser (where appropriate) by being used by more than one person
- cleaning and disinfecting musical equipment whenever possible
- ensuring that instruments are used by the same individual or small group (including any pipes, microphones and music stands) and always between different groups, and that they are cleaned between uses
- consider limiting the number of people using shared instruments and equipment. Settings should agree with suppliers whose responsibility it is to clean instruments and equipment, including hire equipment. Instruments in a clean location if settings take delivery of their before use. Instruments in a Clean Room should be cleaned after being used with their colleagues
- create packages and shopping of collection points where possible, ensuring that instruments are not passed on to other people for a period of time

Individual lessons

Where settings offer individual lessons in music, dance and drama, these lessons can resume. This may mean teachers interacting with children from different bubbles. Teachers should be aware of the risk of this and take measures such as phone or video lessons where possible.

Specific safety measures for individual music lessons should include:

- extending social distancing between child and pupil/teacher: teacher should keep their distance from the pupil, ideally at least 3 metres (2 metres is appropriate, provided ventilation is possible and other measures are in place). Teachers should not sit next to pupils
- avoid sharing instruments and equipment wherever possible and place name labels on equipment to minimise the risk of transmission
- if instruments and equipment have to be shared, respiratory droplet from instruments, such as brass and woodwind instruments, should be handled with care. Following guidance on cleaning and handling equipment.

Children's attendance

Children self-isolating or clinically extremely vulnerable

Children who are normally access children are clinically encouraged to attend as they can get the support they need and benefit from being in school.

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 self-isolating
- they are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

There evidence long-term period that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19). This is in line with existing health conditions. Far fewer children should remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group than the original number of children identified with their clinicians.

The advice for children who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group is that they should not attend school or other settings. Children who are clinically extremely vulnerable should be shielded, or children under paediatric or NHS care (such as recent transplant or very immunosuppressive treatment) should be shielded. Children who are CEV or clinical risk to attend school or other settings.

The government may reintroduce more restrictive School measures for the clinically extremely vulnerable, if it is advised to do so by the chief medical officers from the Chief Medical Officer. This will only apply to some tier 3 areas. The government will keep the need for these measures under review. Clinically extremely vulnerable children and young people should continue to shield.

Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but themselves are not clinically extremely vulnerable, should be encouraged to attend school as normal.

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 children back to the setting and settings should put the right support in place to address this.

This may include:

- children who have themselves been relatively previously but have been shielding or have been in hospital
- those living in households where some family members are clinically extremely vulnerable
- those who have been disproportionately 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 encourage them to discuss their child's circumstances with their GP who will reassure they are justifying their concerns.

Clear communications with parents and carers regarding the measures settings are taking to ensure the safety of children and staff will be important in reassuring parents and carers about their child's return to school.

Settings could consider how to ensure communications are accessible to specific groups of parents and carers (such as those with English as an additional language) and those with disabilities or vulnerable children to encourage attendance of these groups.

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 it. Local authorities should also approach local authorities that remain open and discuss how to put in place reviews settings. Important information should be provided by parent or carers to the setting to ensure that the setting can provide appropriate support. Settings expectations and responsibilities are set out in the safety, welfare and welfare of the child.

In the case of coronavirus (COVID-19), the closed setting should notify the local authority of the number of children who are attending and the number of children who need alternative provision. The closed setting should work with the local authority to ensure that children who need alternative provision can be placed in other settings.

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 the child. As a minimum, the receiving setting should, as appropriate, have access to a knowledge of the child's social worker, the child's GP, details of the child's EHC plan, the identity of the designated teacher for looked after children, and the child's social worker (Lord, for looked after children, know who the responsible person is for looked after children)
- the transfer of necessary information should happen within a short period of the new setting, after what is not possible, as soon as practicable after the child has begun attending the new setting. Where it is clear that the child's circumstances have changed, and a vulnerable child has become a vulnerable child, the receiving setting should, as appropriate, ensure that the child's circumstances are assessed and that the child receives the support they need. Early years

While providers must continue to have appropriate regard to data protection and keeping children safe in mind when sharing information, GDPR should not be a barrier to the purpose of sharing children safe. For more information please read the advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers.

Prioritising early years places

Since 20 July, normal group sizes have resumed as all children that are able can attend as normal. This means the prioritisation of places 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 key workers
- than 2 and 4 year olds, in particular those who will be transitioning to school
- followed by younger age groups

Considerations for operating the setting

Settings experiencing staff shortages due to sickness or self-isolation

Childcare settings that are experiencing staff shortages should:

- work with their local authority and other childcare providers in their area to put in place sharing staffing arrangements or consolidation of provision
- ensure necessary safeguarding checks are made on any staff, including a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checked staff from other childcare providers. Where a DBS check has not been completed, or has been closed, or only has a barred list check, settings should work with the local the setting - registered childminders (already do this under their DS registration) - and local authorities
- determine priorities, under staffing arrangements and consolidation on a weekly basis, rather than a daily basis, in order to limit contacts

Staff needing to self-isolate after returning from abroad

The general rule is that all returnees from countries not on the travel corridor exemption list must self-isolate for 14 days after the they have arrived. Guidance is available on how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK and quarantine when you return from a country on the list.

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

There is a list that where staff travel abroad, their return travel arrangements should be taken into account. Staff returning from countries not in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) such as Australia, New Zealand or Canada or travel in the place they are visiting.

Settings should consider the implication of staff travelling to self-isolate after they are due to return from a country on the quarantine list. It is possible to temporarily amend working arrangements to enable them to work from home.

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

Since 1 June, community centres, village halls and places of worship have been able to open for providers on the early years register which usually use premises.

Providers should ensure:

- they are acting in line with the guidance on safe working in education, childcare and other settings
- they are managing risks related to other users of the premises

Operating breakfast and after school clubs and other providers of unregulated childcare

All providers of unregulated childcare, and other out-of-school settings, are required to follow the guidance for childcare providers and other providers of safety measures in place.

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

- continue to follow this guidance
- ensure the premises they operate in set out for early years settings

Where wraparound providers are caring for children over the age of 5, they should follow the guidance for out-of-school settings providers. Guidance for out-of-school settings providers for coronavirus (COVID-19) is available, including on group sizes.

Providers caring for children under the age of 5 should ensure, as far as possible, that they are keeping children over the age of 5 in school consistent groups, in line with guidance.

Where providers have mixed groups of children under the age of 5 and over the age of 5, they should follow the guidance for out-of-school settings providers. Providers should also ensure that they are following the guidance for out-of-school settings providers in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for those children over the age of 5.

Where providers have mixed groups of children under the age of 5 and over the age of 5, they should follow the guidance for out-of-school settings providers. Providers should also ensure that they are following the guidance for out-of-school settings providers in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak for those children over the age of 5.

Use of private and public outdoor spaces

Settings should maximise the use of safe outdoor spaces.

Settings can take groups of children or trips to outdoor public places and do not need to be covered by a business plan.

- it is for the purpose of education or childcare
- they remain within the COVID-19 rules
- they conduct a risk assessment in advance
- they have considered how to keep children safe (can remain socially distant) (reduce contact with people and other groups)
- good hygiene is maintained throughout
- children are supervised at all times when they are out of the setting
- the trip is carried out in accordance with relevant guidance, including guidance and coronavirus (COVID-19) secure measures on transport and the hospitality sector, where relevant.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has produced information for parents and schools on how to manage the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

settings have any questions about their case, we will contact them further if necessary. Ofsted inspectors will not visit.

Trips to indoor spaces (including soft play)

Settings may take children or trips to indoor spaces, for example, to a soft play centre, where these are permitted to open from 15 December.

Settings must ensure they have fully assessed the risks and have completed risk assessments for such trips.

Settings, parents and carers should work through the guidance on safer travel guidance for pupils and students, and should ensure that appropriate hand hygiene and other measures are in place.

Settings leaders should follow the guidelines relevant to the indoor centre they are visiting, such as:

Once inside:

- visiting leaders should remain with the children in their group
- the group should avoid distance from other individuals and groups
- children and staff should wash hands regularly and use hand sanitiser as needed
- adults (and children over 11 where it is required to follow the face covering policy for indoor spaces. This includes teachers and students in secondary schools and colleges) should wear a face covering when mixing or drinking at a table, or when entering / exiting in the playtime

Parents and carers should be informed of any trips that are planned to be undertaken by their children and their children's group. Groups should check for any updated guidance on the DfE website, and the DfE's Ofsted website, which local restrictions may apply to a particular postcode, over the week's trips. Find out the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in your area.

Parents and carers should be informed:

- Clinical negligence settings can operate in all-group socialising (see)
- community spaces, such as a library, or a museum, community centre or library, can operate in all-group socialising (see) and should follow COVID secure guidelines for those settings

Group leaders should ensure that they have a risk assessment in place to comply with the gathering and household mixing rules for the relevant local restriction tier.

Settings should follow the advice in this guidance to ensure their attendance does not cause a breach of the rule of 6 (or 2 households) applicable during the rest of coronavirus (COVID-19) for all children and adults in the setting.

It is important for group participants to remain:

- social distancing between adults who do not live together and who are not part of a bubble
- good hand hygiene. Parents should encourage their children to wash their hands regularly and use hand sanitiser as they arrive and 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 the updated guidance for schools, colleges and children's services).

Group leaders should ensure:

- a risk assessment is completed prior to groups and activities taking place
- groups are kept to the same people and activities each week, and that no group leader or volunteer attending an Ofsted-registered setting
- the venue uses and we establish a clear system to ensure children are only bookin and by these groups are cleaned after each use
- [illegible] all visitors to the setting

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

Since 23 July, normal group sizes have resumed so all children should be able to attend as normal, with the exception of those children who may still have to shield.

We recognise that many settings have already shared resources for children who are shielding, and we encourage this.

Settings should continue to:

- to continue to support the learning of children who do not attend settings because they are shielding, or who are shielding a member of their family and parent through the early years setting
- to support the learning of children who do not provide a positive learning environment at home

Settings can also direct parents to:

- the Parent Offer Portal, signposting to features tips and practical activities for parents and carers, and to provide advice to support their child learning. There are many simple ways to help children learn and develop, and the Parent Offer Portal provides a wide range of ideas and resources to help parents work together at home using difference to children's development
- settings can also signpost parents to the BBC's Tiny Happy People and the National Literacy Trust's Family Zone for free ideas and content.
- Ofsted's Inspecting the early years during coronavirus (COVID-19)

Settings should work with local authorities to provide the education for a vulnerable children who are not attending settings.

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

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

We will continue to monitor early years and childcare provision to inform policy decisions in early year childcare settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19).

We have published summaries of attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

We will:

- continue to run the early years and childcare data collection with further questions to inform policy decisions in early year childcare settings during coronavirus (COVID-19) and how the sufficiency duty
- keep the frequency and date of the data collection under review

Ofsted and Public have launched a survey to inform the data collection, the frequency of collection and how to contact us with any queries.

We have asked Ofsted to monitor which providers on the early years register are open and which are closed, and to collect information from early years and childcare providers. Ofsted will use this information to inform the setting level data's frequency to fulfill its safeguarding requirements as the sector reopens.

We updated Ofsted's survey to inform the data collection, the data requested, so, the majority of years, providers will not need to do anything extra to provide the data. We will ask providers to provide the data, which we are requesting from local authorities and Ofsted will place an ongoing reporting burden on providers.

Safeguarding and welfare

Children may be experiencing a variety of emotions in response to coronavirus (COVID-19) and the lockdown, including: fear for themselves or family, participating the crisis for vulnerable family members or friends to a family worker. It is important to contextualise these feelings, as normal responses to a crisis, and to ensure that children are kept safe and that they receive signs of more severe psychological distress and that they are not underplaying any challenges. Attending the setting allows social interaction with other children and adult relationships with children.

Settings must continue to take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well during the crisis. Ofsted's Inspecting the early years during coronavirus (COVID-19) provides information about the DfE's safeguarding statutory guidance, which sets out the expectations for safeguarding children and young people in education and consider any referral to statutory services (and the police) as appropriate.

Reviewing and updating child protection policies

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

- how to identify and act on vulnerable children who are at risk from individual children as they return to school
- how to record and share information about safeguarding concerns
- any updated advice received from local authorities, for example, DfC and local authority children's services (LACS) and local authorities
- working arrangements with other agencies (including local authority virtual school head (VSH)
- what staff are concerned about if they have concerns about a staff member or volunteer, or other adult who has access to the setting
- how to report concerns about vulnerable children who are accessed their childcare, described in a coronavirus (COVID-19) annex

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

Changes to the role of the safeguarding lead

Settings must continue to have a practitioner designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding. It is acceptable for the designated lead not to be based on site if this is not practical. For example, they may be working from home or another location. In such cases, the DSL should be available to provide support, advice and guidance to the staff and parents and children. The children staff and volunteers have access to a designated safeguarding lead. Settings should make sure children know who they are and how to reach them.

Keeping children safe online

Settings should continue to consider what strategies they are using to keep children safe online during this period, including:

- checking apps, websites and online resources they are using with children
- supervising children when accessing the Internet

Further details can be found in the guidance for schools on protecting pupils from online harms, online safety guidance for practitioners.

This advice is also relevant for parents and carers.

Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing

Bearing in mind the unprecedented period and the impact this may have caused difficulties for some children, such as changes in behaviour or mood, settings should be alert to any concerns and support children.

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

- with additional or extended social, emotional and mental health needs to support as they return to school
- who have been further behind than we would be as a result of the loss of children settings, or missed elements as a result of a period of absence

Settings will need to ensure they have the capacity and resilience to support children who may be vulnerable. Children who are identified as being supported or at DfE/DCS, interim SENCO or a named individual with responsibility for supporting children with mental health issues.

From 17th to 31 July 2020, Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities and health commissioners to work with local authorities and health commissioners to ensure that children with 'exceptional emotional' to secure or arrange the specified special educational and health care provision contained in their EHC plans.

Following the expiry of the modification notice on 31 July 2020, we do not expect local authorities to be able to fulfill all EHC plan duties without change. The focus is now on supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who have EHC plans. EHC plans receive the support they need now that they are back in their settings.

Early years foundation stage and reforms

Publication and disapplication of the early years foundation stage framework

The DfE's statutory framework sets the standards that schools and childcare providers must meet for the education and care of children from birth to 5 years old.

Temporary amendments to EYFS legislation ended on 28 September 2020 and the EYFS 2020 framework, which incorporates the temporary amendments, is now in force. Providers should use the EYFS 2020 framework to plan for the next 7-to-9 month transition period for requirements relating to staff qualifications and Paediatric First Aid training (which were suspended in 2020).

Further government-imposed restrictions, or requirements relating to coronavirus (COVID-19), may be in place during the transition period for the EYFS. Therefore, new regulations, which come into force on 28 September 2020, will disapply the EYFS 2020 framework for providers (from 28 September 2020 onwards) if any coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions and the provision has deviated these restrictions to mean they are unable to deliver the EYFS 2020 framework.

Effect of the temporary amendments to the EYFS framework on the development assessment and safeguarding (including Paediatric First Aid) can be found in the guidance for early years providers. The DfE's guidance for local authorities should help familiarise themselves with the temporary guidance to ensure they understand the flexibilities available to providers.

Planning for and supporting children's learning

Where children are new to the setting, or no longer attend, have, priority should be given to ensuring that children are ready to learn and socialising especially where there have been children's absence from the setting.

Settings may want to:

- consider how stories, singing and games can be used to help children settle into new everyday routines
- consider how to provide the most appropriate ways about how they can support children who have been in the setting during the coronavirus period
- consider how to encourage children to learn and practise healthy habits through games, songs and stories

Settings can refer to the following helpful resources:

- Professional support for children and early years (PACEY), supporting children in our setting
- Early years alliance
- Training and activity
- Our best explore aims
- Guide to children's learning (COVID-19 Ofsted comparison)

As set out in the section on the suspension and disapplication of the early years foundation stage framework, the DfE has made the EYFS 2020 regulations to disapply elements of the EYFS 2020 framework if any coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, the learning and development and assessment requirements are not possible or may be harmful.

Where settings are impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19) related restrictions and are unable to deliver the EYFS 2020 framework, the DfE's EYFS 2020 may wish to focus on supporting communication and language areas of learning and development.

EYFS reforms

We have published the government response to the consultation on EYFS reforms, which sets out our proposals for the future of the EYFS.

We only discipline just a selected few early years reforms that we intended to make the changes in 2019 to 2021, ahead of statutory rollout to early years settings in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Postponement of the statutory implementation of the Reception Baseline Assessment

In response to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the statutory implementation of the Reception Baseline Assessment has been postponed for one year. The assessment will now be made available for schools to take part in a pilot from January, which took place in the second half of the 2020 autumn term to familiarise themselves with the assessment. Schools will notify parents before the Reception Baseline Assessment becomes statutory.

Requirements for Paediatric First Aiders (PFA) being on site

As set out in the section on the suspension and disapplication of the early years foundation stage framework, the DfE has made the EYFS 2020 regulations to disapply elements of the EYFS 2020 framework if any coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, providers must ensure a member of staff who holds a paediatric first aid certificate is on the premises present, as set out in the EYFS.

See the section on the suspension and disapplication of the early years foundation stage framework for further information.

Renewing paediatric first aid (PFA) certificates

If PFA certificates are qualification is due to expire, providers should work directly with coronavirus (COVID-19), or by complying with related government guidance, to renew their paediatric first aid certificate. Any certificates expired on 31 December 2019 or after, the date of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, providers should work directly with coronavirus (COVID-19) or by complying with related government guidance, to renew their paediatric first aid certificate. Providers should be in person registered on the General Childcare Register and do early years provision.

If asked to do so, providers should be able to explain why the first aider has not been able to renew their paediatric first aid certificate, for example, across the training. Employers or Ofsted may ask for evidence that they tried to arrange requalification training at the earliest opportunity.

Emergency first aid

The Health and Safety Executive published guidance on first aid during coronavirus (COVID-19). This guidance includes information for childcare providers to first aiders.

It is clear that treating any casualty properly should be the first concern. Where it is necessary for staff members to be administered to casualty, they should be able to do so, and should be able to do so without being concerned about potential consequences retrospectively afterwards, including being liable.

Varying staff to child ratios and qualifications

Paragraph 3.30 of the EYFS states:

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

We consider the extent of coronavirus (COVID-19) to be an exceptional temporary circumstance in which the staff to child ratios set out in the EYFS may be varied, for a period of time, to ensure that children can be cared for safely and receive the support they need to support their development.

Amendments made to regulations allow in exceptional circumstances for further exceptions to be made for qualifications that staff hold in order to be counted in the ratio requirements.

For more detail, see EYFS coronavirus disapplications.

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

The EYFS requirement to have separate baby rooms is a safety issue for the children in the setting. Providers should be able to demonstrate that Paragraph 3.48 of the statutory framework, the EYFS, is being met. Providers should be mixing of children when this is appropriate. If the layout of the premises means that it is not practicable to do so, the provision of a baby room may be justified if it provides safety for younger children.

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

The requirements set out in paragraph 3.71 of the EYFS remain in place.

Providers should undertake records checks for new members of staff (including volunteers) in accordance with paragraph 3.71 of the EYFS. Providers should make the risk assessment for staff and volunteers until such time as the provided they are supervised by someone who has a DBS check. Under no circumstances should a volunteer be left unsupervised.

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

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

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

- there is no requirement for the DBS check to be repeated. It is up to the employer to be satisfied that the person is suitable for the setting to support the care of children
- the employer is responsible for ensuring that the individual has been given a sponsor in their setting has had the required checks. this requirement is in place to safeguard the reputation of the sponsor from the current employer rather than requiring new checks.

Ofsted

Notifications requirements for settings providing childcare

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

This means Ofsted requires further information about which childcare providers are open or closed.

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

- let Ofsted know by sending an email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk with 'change in operations' in the subject header
- in the body of the email, confirm the unique reference number for each provision (for example, the URN for childcare on Ofsted's register, the setting registration, maintained nursery, etc. and Ofsted inspection reports)

In addition, any confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting should inform Ofsted immediately. If a child attends a setting and is found to be sick, should be swiftly reported to Ofsted through the usual notification process.

Ofsted inspections during coronavirus (COVID-19)

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

The safeguarding responsibilities of settings have not changed, and Ofsted's expectation is that providers will continue to safeguard children and young people. Ofsted's Inspecting the early years during coronavirus (COVID-19) Ofsted's plans for the spring term. Routine graded inspections will not resume before January 2021.

Resuming Ofsted inspections

The Secretary of State for Education announced the suspension of routine inspections of childcare from 17 March 2020. On 23 March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced plans for a phased return to routine early years inspections.

From January 2021, Ofsted will conduct assurance inspections under the new inspection framework. These will be short inspections to assure parents that school is the place for children to be. Early years setting and childminder assurance that provides continue to meet registration requirements and inspection judgements, will be carried out on the same cycle as for all providers the childcare system.

During these assurance inspections, Ofsted will consider the requirements of the EYFS, which sets the standards that early years providers must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

These inspections will result in a 'met' or 'not met' outcome. Ofsted will provide a written report to the setting, which will include a judgement on the course a high-quality setting which is welcoming, safe and stimulating, and where children can grow in confidence.

Ofsted will also continue with its regulatory work in relation to early years and childcare providers.

Ofsted plans to resume inspections of childcare for early years providers from the start of the summer term (April 2021).

Ofsted action on unregistered provision

The health, safety and wellbeing of children is our first consideration, and the government expects schools to be open to more children than only registered settings.

See Ofsted's response to coronavirus (COVID-19) at Ofsted: coronavirus (COVID-19) updates and for more information.

Childminders

Early years entitlement funding for childminders

On 17 March 2020, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State confirmed the government would continue to pay early years providers for their early years entitlement places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds.

On 23 July, we announced that we will continue through the autumn. We will continue to fund childcare at the level we would have done before coronavirus, until the end of the 2020 calendar year. This gives nurseries and childminders the certainty they need to plan for the future, regardless of how many children are attending.

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

Childminder eligibility for the Self-employment Income Support Scheme

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

- you are self-employed or a member of a partnership
- have lost profits due to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- have been trading before April 2019

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will contact individuals who are eligible and invite them to make a claim.

Childminders working with other childminders to look after more children together

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

However, if:

- more than 3 childminders work together they will need to apply to Ofsted to register childcare on domestic premises.
- childminders and assistants are working in premises, or in more premises than those registered with the childminder and assistant(s) can work together in the same domestic premises, which would enable them to care for larger groups of children and their families to socialise together.

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

Quality assurance visits

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Vicky Ford MP, wrote to Ofsted's Chief Inspector about supporting childminder providers. Ofsted's Chief Inspector has confirmed that quality assurance visits to childminders will not been carry out as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). This ensures that childminder agencies (and their childminders) can focus their time and resources on providing childcare in protective measures and coronavirus-related activities.

The safeguarding responsibilities of childminder agencies (CMAs) and their childminders have not changed. CMAs must continue to provide effective oversight of their registered childminders if they have concerns about the quality of care, or if they receive information that raises concerns about the safety of children in their registered childminders' care.

In the summer term, as CMAs are expected to resume their quality assurance visits, Ofsted will not expect childminder agencies to carry out the same requirements of their registration to carry out the relevant minimum number of quality assurance visits to their registered childminders every year.

This is alongside Ofsted's plans to resume its routine inspections in the summer term (announced on 3 December 2020).

Further information for CMAs is available at Childminder agencies: expectations during coronavirus (COVID-19).

Childminder with household member self-isolating

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

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

- only as a result of coming into contact with a positive case
- the household member is not showing symptoms of coronavirus
- the household member does not require a test

The childminder can continue to provide childcare at their registered setting. The childminder should ensure they keep open communication with parents and current children attending during about the self-isolation period.

The household member who is self-isolating must not have any contact with children in the childcare setting. The childminder and household member must use a separate bathroom where possible. If the person self-isolating has to use a shared bathroom or other communal areas, these must be thoroughly cleaned after every use.

The childminder must:

- comply with health and safety law, which requires a risk assessment. Risk assessment must demonstrate that the prevention of childcare is their last resort. Guidance on Health and Safety in childcare settings can be found on gov.uk/guidance/health-and-safety-for-childcare
- put in place proportionate control measures - for more information on control measures, see the guidance on health and safety risk assessments, please see part 4 of the guidance for schools.

The childminder should:

- thoroughly review their health and safety risk assessment
- ensure the household member self-isolating is kept as far away as effective, working as proposed, and substantial separation (for example when eye issues are identified, or where there are changes in public health advice)

Further guidance on risk assessments and keeping children and staff safe can be found in the section on infection control and system of controls.

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 where the childminder's household member has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

The childminder should also take the necessary action for responding to and reporting confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the setting, as set out in system of controls.

A childminder cannot care for children in their home because all household members must self-isolate.

The household must self-isolate for at least 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive and follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Funding and business support

Funding for free childcare places

On 17 March 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer confirmed the government was continuing to pay early providers for free early years entitlement places for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds.

On 23 July, we announced that we would continue to fund childcare, at the level we would have done before coronavirus, until the end of the 2020 calendar year. This gives nurseries and childminders the certainty they need to plan for the future, regardless of how many children are attending.

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

It is important for local authorities to ensure sufficiency of childcare and delivery of the early years entitlements for all children - not just vulnerable children and children of key workers.

Until the end of the 2020 calendar year, local authorities should fund providers at the level they would have done before the 23 March 2020 (the date we announced we would continue to fund providers during coronavirus (COVID-19)). They should also fund providers which have been asked to close, or have voluntarily closed, because of a local or national lockdown. Local authorities should fund providers which do not, or cannot, offer a public health session, from the start of the 2020 autumn term.

Early years entitlement funding for local authorities during 2020 to 2021

On 23 July, we announced that we would continue to fund childcare, at the level we would have done before coronavirus, until the end of the 2020 calendar year. This gives nurseries and childminders the certainty they need to plan for the future, regardless of how many children are attending.

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

Local authorities should fund providers at the level they would have done before the 23 March 2020 (the date we announced we would continue to fund providers during coronavirus (COVID-19)). They should also fund providers which have been asked to close, or have voluntarily closed, because of a local or national lockdown. Local authorities should fund providers which do not, or cannot, offer a public health session, from the start of the 2020 autumn term.

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

Temporary changes have been made to the 30 hours free entitlement and Tax Free Childcare, which will be eligible for parents and carers, including critical workers, who lost disadvantaged during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Parents, including critical workers who temporarily lost their eligibility for the minimum requirement for 30 hours free childcare or Tax Free Childcare as a direct consequence of the coronavirus outbreak will be treated as if they had not lost their eligibility. Parents and carers will be treated as if they had not lost their eligibility for the free childcare entitlements, such as the 2-year-old Childcare Entitlement.

Parents who lost out of eligibility for 30 hours free childcare due to job loss or severely reduced income because of coronavirus, will be given a period intended to ensure children do not need to immediately leave childcare because their parents have lost their entitlement. This will allow time for income losses to prevent a current circumstances from being assessed against a grace period and they become eligible. they can reconfirm through the HMRC portal. This will allow time for income losses to prevent a current circumstances from being assessed against a grace period and they become eligible. they can reconfirm through the HMRC portal.

Grace period dates can be checked with a parent's childcare provider and are based upon an individual's last date of eligibility. Parents having lost of eligibility and due to reconfirm between 31 October and 31 December 2020 will have their grace period ending on 31 January 2021. Those who lost eligibility between 1 November and 31 December 2020 will have their grace period ending on 31 March 2021.

If, after the grace period, a parent has not reconfirmed their eligibility for 30 hours, they remain eligible for the 15 hours universal entitlement for 3 and 4-year-olds. If they are in receipt of Universal Credit, they may also be eligible for the free childcare entitlements for disadvantaged 2-year-olds. For example, eligible families can get help with up to 85% of their childcare costs through Universal Credit, subject to a monthly cap of £646 for one child and £1,108 for 2 children.

We have set the Childcare Grant, Nursery Provision Fees of Charged Childcare Entitlement for Disadvantaged Two-year-olds Regulations 2020 to benefit those critical workers who exceed the maximum income threshold (£47,500). Under the Childcare Grant, Nursery Provision Fees of Charged Childcare Entitlement Regulations 2015, due to increased income every withdrawal of 1 pound from childcare entitlement, 1 pound is lost from the grant. Under the temporary changes, parents are deemed to take up 30 hours free childcare. We have set a new upper threshold of £100,000. The change will be effective for the tax year starting with 6 April 2020 and ending with 5 April 2021.

Applying for, or recertifying, the 30 hours entitlement or Tax Free Childcare when a child is not currently attending a setting

All eligible parents and carers will continue to apply for, and recertify, their 30 hours and Tax Free Childcare entitlement. There is further information on 30 hours free childcare and Tax Free Childcare.

Business support for early years and childcare settings

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) will be extended until the end of April 2021. The CJRS will pay up to 80% of wages, up to a cap of £2,500 a month. This information about the scheme is part of a collection of guidance for employers and businesses.

Further guidance includes:

- furlough scheme extended and further economic support announced
- claim for wages through the coronavirus job retention scheme
- coronavirus job retention scheme: step-by-step for employers

The guidance sets out how parents providers can access the CJRS remains as published: coronavirus: financial support for education, early years and children's services.

The launch of the Job Support Scheme has been postponed because of national decisions related to coronavirus (COVID-19).

In addition:

- we are continuing to work with the sector to understand how the early years sector can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, high-quality childcare is available for those who need it, including those who work, now and in the future, while remaining financially viable.
- the Job Retention Bonus will no longer be paid in February, as the CJRS has been extended until the end of March 2021. Job Retention Bonus: what you need to know.

Early years and childcare settings are eligible for a business rates holiday for one year. Business rates: coronavirus (COVID-19) relief. Government and Ofsted are providing the £127m set out for charged childcare providers.

- VAT payments due after 23 March 2020 for businesses in the childcare sector were deferred. UK VAT registered businesses will not need to make payments until 2021.
- working tax credit has been increased by £1,000 a year.
- the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (closed to the Coronavirus Credit standard advances on 23 March) has been extended, and an increase in the Local Housing Allowance rates for Universal Credit and housing Benefit claimants so that it covers the lowest third of rents in each area.
- some early years settings may be eligible for the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund, subject to the scheme set up by your local authority. Find out more in the guidance for the Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund.

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 parents' and carers' fees. In light of these unprecedented circumstances, we have provided some additional guidance.

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

The CMA guidance can be found in the CMA case bulletin to the early years sector. Parents and carers who have concerns about businesses behaving unfairly during coronavirus (COVID-19) can report it to the CMA using the online form. If parents and carers think that a business may have breached competition or consumer protection law, the CMA will take enforcement action if warranted.

Charging for consumables

Settings may charge for consumables, such as nappies, in line with the guidance. Parents and carers should be asked to buy sundries. As per the guidance, they should consider the impact of charges on disadvantaged families.

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

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

Business Interruption Insurance

For childcare providers which have a policy that covers government ordered closures of premises, the Government's guidance on social distancing measures may be sufficient to allow business to make a claim against their insurance, provided the other terms and conditions in their policy are met.

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

- handling claims fairly and promptly
- providing reasonable guidance to help a policyholder make a claim
- not relying on time limits if they are unreasonable
- settling claims promptly once settlement terms are agreed

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

Customers who feel they have not been treated fairly should:

- first raise a complaint to their insurer
- refer the matter to the Financial Ombudsman Service if they do not feel satisfied with the response they receive, after six weeks.

Businesses that have not purchased the appropriate level of cover should consider whether they can make a claim against their business interruption insurance, if it includes measures such as business rates holidays, small business grants, and the CJRS.

Public liability insurance

Providers must carry the appropriate insurance (for example, public liability insurance) to cover all premises from which they provide childcare, including childminding. Some existing public liability policies may have been written or renewed in the belief that they would not be required to cover the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) and may not provide cover for claims related to coronavirus (COVID-19) when offering public liability policy renewals.

Parents should check the terms of their child's public liability public liability insurance policies and consult with their insurance providers and brokers to ensure they are covered for the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). Parents with different insurers may take a different view. Therefore settings are encouraged to shop around to seek the most suitable cover at the best price.

For general advice on insurance matters (but not on specific policies) parents can contact the Financial Ombudsman Service. They can be contacted by phone on 0207 964 0500 or email at info@fos.org.uk.