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Guidance

COVID-19: Actions for out-of-school settings

Updated 27 August 2021

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Changes to the previous version

Changes to the previous version 19 July publication version:

- update to make clear that unvaccinated young people up to the age of 18 years and 6 months do not need to isolate when identified as a close contact of someone aged 18 years and 6 months (see Tracing close contacts and self-isolation)
- update to reflect that vaccinated people are exempt from isolating from PCR test results (see Tracing close contacts and self-isolation)
- updated information on contingency planning in out-of-school settings, with link to updated contingency Framework (see Stepping measures up and down)

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for all school and childcare providers and their staff, who provide for:

- community activities
- holiday clubs
- holiday clubs
- breakfast and after-school clubs for children

It applies to:

- providers that fall within the government's definition of an out-of-hours setting
- providers caring for children aged 5 and over and registered with Ofsted or other the compulsory or voluntary childcare register
- providers who use school premises but are neither an extension for children attending school nor a 16 to 19 provision (for example, a college)
- providers that offer breakfast, after-school clubs or extra-curricular activities in schools, who should refer to the guidance on actions for schools during the coronavirus (COVID-19)
- registered early years providers who care for children aged 5 and over, who should refer to the guidance for early years childcare providers during the COVID-19 outbreak
- providers of youth services and activities, who should also refer to the National Youth Agency's guidance for managing youth sector spaces and activities during COVID-19
- providers of the DfE funded summer holiday programme

There is separate out-of-school settings COVID-19 guidance for parents and carers.

Venue-specific guidance

Out-of-school settings can take place in many kinds of venues, from a private home to a school or college. Some of these venues will be subject to other guidance when they are working. Therefore, if your out-of-school setting takes place in one of the following premises, you should also follow the guidance for:

- classes of dance they
- community centres, village halls and other multi-purpose community facilities
- indoor and outdoor sports facilities and activities
- schools during the COVID-19 outbreak
- working safely during COVID-19 in other people's homes

About this guidance

This guidance explains the actions out-of-school settings should take to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 (coronavirus) within settings. This includes public health actions, advised by Public Health England (PHE).

We use the terms 'must' and 'should' throughout the guidance. We use the term 'must' when the person in question is expected to do something, and 'should' when the advice set out should be followed unless there is good reason not to.

Overview

The government will continue to manage the risk of serious illness from the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) through a range of measures, including the rollout of vaccines, ensuring space from clinical interventions and, in emergency days to day basis, towards advising people on how to protect themselves and others, alongside targeted interventions to reduce risk.

As COVID-19 becomes a virus that we learn to live with, there is now an imperative to ensure that children, young people and their families can lead as normal a life as possible, with as little disruption to education and childcare as possible. We know that children and families will find a first vaccine and the opportunity for them doses by mid September.

Our priority for you to deliver to be free, high quality provision to all children.

We have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE) to review the guidance.

Who can attend your setting

Out-of-school settings are expected to provide childcare and other provision to all children, without restriction on the reason for which they may attend.

Home education

Where children are currently home-educated (elsewhere) take part in an out-of-school setting, this guidance will apply. This is the case regardless of whether the setting is attended by children who are home-educated exclusively or in combination of children attending school and children being home-educated.

All children who are electively home-educated may attend out-of-school settings.

Staff and workforce

Out-of-school setting leaders are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of the children in attendance.

Contractors

You should ensure that key contractors are aware of your setting's control measures and steps of working.

Clinically extremely vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people are advised, as a minimum, to follow the same guidance as everyone else. It is important that everyone adheres to this guidance but CEV people may wish to think particularly carefully about the additional risk mitigations they may put in place, in line with the guidance. Further advice for the fully vaccinated CEV people who are CEV from COVID-19.

Social distancing measures have now ended in the workplace and it is no longer mandatory for people to maintain a distance from others in the workplace. You should take steps to assess the measures they have in place to keep CEV staff safe at work. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published guidance on protecting vulnerable workers, including advice for employers and employees on how to talk about workplace risks to vulnerable people.

We welcome your support in encouraging vaccine take up and enabling staff who are eligible for a vaccination or booster/flu vaccine appointment where they can.

All CEV children and young people should attend their education or childcare setting unless they are on the very small number receiving shielding advice from their specialist paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend.

Group sizes

Wraparound childcare and other organised activities for children may take place in groups of any number.

Group sizes for children under 5

Providers caring for children:

- under 5 years only should refer to the guidance for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic
- both under 5 years and aged 5 years and over, in mixed groups together, should follow this guidance

Risk assessment

As a provider, you are likely to have a legal duty of care to ky to ensure the environment is safe for people who visit or attend. This means you have a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that people will be safe using the venue for the purposes for which they are invited to be there. Risk assessment is a tool to help you understand the risks that there is "being documented", as the circumstances in your setting may change and require advice changes. This should include promotion or what to do if a child or staff member becomes unwell with COVID-19 (coronavirus) while at your setting. The government provides COVID-19 secretary to buy a security tool (and having to be accessible in place to review where the controls are effective and working as planned.

Risk assessment is a tool to help you understand the risks that there is reasonable to health and safety risk assessments and risk mitigations, including fire safety risk assessments and keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and holiday.

Mixing and 'bubbles'

We are no longer recommending that it is necessary to keep children in consistent groups or 'bubbles' or to ensure that children and staff do not mix with any other children or staff members.

You should make your own judgments (pulldown management) on whether the possibility that in some local areas it may become necessary to reintroduce 'bubbles' for contagious purposes. Maintain mixing between groups.

Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of 'bubbles' should not be taken lightly and should be based on the assessment impact they can have on the delivery of education.

Tracing close contacts and self-isolation

Close contacts will be identified by NHS Test and Trace and will not necessarily will not be expected to undertake contact tracing. As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the setting to identify and manage close contacts. Contacts from an out-of-school setting will only be contacted by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case specifically identifies the individual as a close contact. Close contacts will be identified on a case-by-case basis. Children who attend an out-of-school setting COVID-19 test to the relative of the school setting. They may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, or currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

Self-isolation

Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone with COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are aged under 18 years and 6 months
- they have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and be advised everyone to take a PCR test if advised to do so.

Staff who do not need to self-isolate, and children and young people aged under 18 years and 6 months, will be contacted by out-of-school setting, and be asked to identified as a close contact, can continue to attend the setting as normal. They do not need to self-isolate unless they are identified by NHS Test and Trace as a contact. Staff and children who are identified as a close contact by NHS Test and Trace may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, or currently happens in managing other infectious diseases.

Children who are identified in NHS Test and Trace, what to do if you are contacted and in the out-of-home guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Vaccinated people will be treated the same way as children, until 6 months after their 18th birthday. They will be able to continue to attend their setting as usual, at the point they will be subject to the same rules as adults. If they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Settings will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak. Local health protection teams may ask your setting to take certain actions, utilising the more intensive use. Operating measures as well as part of the government offers the area an enhanced response package, a director of public health might advise a setting to temporarily reintroduce some control measures.

Face coverings

Face coverings are no longer advised for children, parents, staff and visitors either in classrooms or in communal areas.

The government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you do not normally meet. This includes public transport and dedicated transport to school or college.

In circumstances where face coverings are recommended

Face coverings are recommended for staff and visitors to wear in your setting (for information, see Operating measures as well as part of the government offers) might advise you that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas or classrooms (except when eating or drinking, unless exempt). You should follow any contingency plans issued by your local authority.

In these circumstances, transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate, or who is deaf or hard of hearing, should be worn by those who are not exempt from wearing the approved of COVID-19. However, the evidence to support this is currently limited. Face coverings should be worn by those who are able to do so in line with guidance. We trust that people will do the right thing and comply with all mandatory requirements of filtering substance particles.

The main benefit from wraparound face covering is that they can aid communication, for example, by allowing someone to lip the full visibility of facial expressions. Transparent face coverings may also be more comfortable than fabric face coverings that contain plastic, which may mean that the face covering is less breathable than layers of cloth.

Face visors or shields can be worn by those exempt from wearing a face covering but they are not an equivalent alternative in terms of source control of virus transmission. Face visors or shields may be worn by those who are not exempt from wearing a face covering but who prefer to the purpose for ways of smaller organisations to have a face covering. Face visors or shields may be worn by those who are not exempt from wearing a risk assessment for the specific situation and should always be cleaned appropriately.

The use of face covering may have a particular impact on those who rely on lip reading signals for communication. Those who communicate with or provide support to those who rely on lip reading should be encouraged to wear face coverings in communal or children settings.

Where appropriate, you should discuss with children and parents, the types of reasonable adjustments that are being considered to support a child.

No child should be denied education or childcare on the grounds of whether they are, or are not, wearing a face covering.

Stepping measures up and down

You should maintain contingency plans (pulldown management) ready to be prepared to implement if and when the government advises that it is necessary to do so. Local lockdowns may be required to control the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus). Given the anticipated impact that restrictions on education and childcare can have on children and young people, any measures in out-of-school settings should be the last to be considered, after all other measures have been taken. Local authorities should provide, and for the most amount of time possible.

Central government may offer local authorities of particular concern an enhanced response package to help local increases in transmission.

For most settings it will make sense to think about taking extra actions if the number of cases in children and staff in your setting is increasing or is expected to increase, and you do consider taking additional action, and the steps you should take are set out in the framework for the contingency frameworks.

The contingency framework describes the principles of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 (coronavirus) and the local authority and public health, director of public health (DPH) and PHE health protection teams (HPTs) can recommend measures to prevent, control and manage COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreaks in educational settings, or a small cluster of settings, as part of their outbreak management responsibilities.

Control measures

You must:

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone
2. Promote appropriate cleaning using standard products such as detergents
3. Keep occupant spaces well ventilated
4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone

Hand hygiene

The return to a thorough hand cleaning should now be regular practice. You should continue to ensure that children clean their hands regularly. This can be done with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

Respiratory hygiene

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important.

The e-bug's COVID-19 website contains free resources, including materials to encourage good hygiene and respiratory hygiene.

Use of personal protective equipment (PPE)

Staff should use personal protective equipment (PPE) beyond what they would normally need for their role. The guidance on PPE in schools, colleges, children's services and children's social care settings provides more information on the use of PPE for COVID-19.

2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products, such as detergents

You should put in place and maintain an appropriate cleaning schedule. This should include regular cleaning of areas and equipment (for example, fabric pop, dolls), with a focus on those most touched by children. PHE has published guidance on the cleaning of non-healthcare settings.

3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated

When your setting is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and that a comfortable childcare or learning environment is maintained.

You should identify and implement ventilation actions, as part of your risk assessment and control measures. Ventilation is a key control measure for COVID-19 (coronavirus) when holding events where visitors such as parents are on site, for example performances.

Mechanical ventilation is a system that uses a fan to draw air from an area into a room. These should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible and be maintained in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations. Ensure they are outside air is circulated.

If possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air. If this is not possible, then systems should be operated as normal as long as they are working properly and are maintained in accordance with manufacturers' instructions.

Where mechanical ventilation systems exist, you should ensure that they are maintained in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

Opening external windows can improve natural ventilation, and in addition, opening internal doors can aid airflow and mixing throughout all of the building. Ventilation opening doors may also be used (if they are not fire doors and where safe to do so).

You should balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature.

Refer to the Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak and CIBSE's COVID-19 ventilation guidance.

CO2 monitors will also be provided to aid safer ventilation within schools. Further information will be issued as monitors are rolled out.

The government has also launched a trial of air purifiers in 50 schools in Bradford, which is designed to assess the technology in education settings and whether they could reduce the risk of transmission.

4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19

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

Children, staff and other adults should follow public health advice on what to self-isolate and what to do if someone becomes ill with COVID-19 (coronavirus) or if other reasons requiring them to stay at home. Most children and young people aged under 18 years 6 months are required to be quarantined or have a positive test).

If anyone in your setting develops COVID-19 symptoms, however mild, you should send them home and they should follow public health advice.

Ask everyone with symptoms, they should not use public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household.

Ensure that children who are sent home are kept safe and their care if possible and safe to do so. A package is being rolled out to provide free or subsidised Wraparound Appropriate PPE should also be used if close contact is necessary, further information will be issued in the use of PPE guidance. Any rooms they are using should be cleaned after they leave.

The household (including any siblings) should follow the PHE stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

Asymptomatic testing

Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within settings. That is why, which some measures are eased, others will remain, and if anything, testing will be ramped up. Testing will be a key part of the new approach to living with COVID-19 (coronavirus) and will be used to identify cases in the community and to help control outbreaks.

Over the summer, staff and secondary age children should continue to test regularly if they are attending settings that remain open.

If you are operating on a limited to a school, you may wish to discuss with that school how your staff can continue to access regular asymptomatic testing to the rules. Secondary schools will be providing their students with a home test kit to use during the summer period unless they are taking part in a school run out-of-school activities.

However, testing is widely available for anyone who does not have access to school sites. Staff and secondary age children can collect home test kits other than local authority test sites, community test sites, pharmacies and workplaces. Home test kits should continue to be used twice a week, as they have been.

There is no need for primary age children (those in year 6 and below) to test over the summer period. They will return to Bubble Tests at the start of the autumn term. Lateral flow tests will be offered twice a week for a year. Schools may choose to continue to test their secondary school students, including on a voluntary basis, depending on their local circumstances.

Confirmatory PCR tests

Staff and children with a positive LFD test result should self-isolate in line with the stay at home guidance. They will also need to get a free PCR test to check if they have COVID-19.

Whilst awaiting the PCR result, they should continue to self-isolate.

If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, the individual can end self-isolation immediately and return to school or work if they are able to do so, as long as the individual does have COVID-19 symptoms.

Admitting children back to your setting

In most cases, parents and carers will agree that a child with symptoms should not attend your setting. In exceptional circumstances, where a parent or carer is insistent that a child attending your setting, you can take the decision to refuse the child if it is your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other children and staff from possible infection with COVID-19 (coronavirus). This should be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and current public health advice.

Safety measures for activities in out-of-school settings

Parental attendance

We no longer advise that children limit the attendance of parents and carers at sessions. You should continue to ensure that you have parents' and carers' mind up-to-date contact details in case of an emergency.

Sports provision

All sports provision, including competition between settings, should be planned and delivered in line with the guidance.

Providers of sports activities should also refer to:

- guidance on exercise courts for clubs and sport providers and guidance from Sport England
- advice from organisations such as the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust
- information on school swimming, water safety and returning to swim guidance from Sport England
- using changing rooms safely

Performances and events

If planning an indoor or outdoor face to face performance in front of an audience, you should follow the guidance on the DCMS website and the DfE's COVID-19 live performance guidance.

If delivering sporting or other organised events, more information can be found in COVID-19: Organised events and large gatherings.

Educational visits and trips

Out-of-school settings and organised childcare providers may undertake educational visits or groups of any number and children will no longer need to be kept in bubbles or to keep a distance from other children.

Staff absence and cover

Out-of-school settings and organised childcare providers may undertake educational visits or groups of any number and children will no longer need to be kept in bubbles or to keep a distance from other children.

groups. Given the likely gap in COVID-19 related cancellation insurance, if you are considering booking a new visit, whether domestic or international, you are advised to ensure that any new bookings have adequate financial protection in place.

We continue to recommend you do not go on any international visits before the start of the school autumn term. From the start of the new school term, you can go on international visits that have previously been deferred or postponed and organise new international visits for the future from when the new school term starts.

You should be aware that the travel list (and broader international travel policy) is subject to change and green list countries may be moved into amber or red. The travel lists may change during a visit and you must comply with international travel legislation and should have contingency plans in place to account for these changes.

You should speak to either your visit provider, commercial insurance company, or the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) to assess the protection available. Independent advice on insurance cover and options can be sought from the British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA) or Association of British Insurers (ABI).

Safeguarding

It is important that you and your staff are aware of safeguarding issues and the signs to look out for. Further information is available in the guidance for keeping children safe during community activities, after-school clubs and tuition.

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