

## Frequently Asked Questions Day Care of Children, ELC and School Age Settings (except Childminders)

[Reopening of schools and childcare provision - Please see our FAQ for the re-opening of ELC childcare settings on our website here.](#)

### General Guidance links and signposting

Make sure you follow Health Protection Scotland's guidance for any issues in relation to coronavirus, COVID-19. This is available on [Health Protection Scotland's website](#). You can find information on our website [here](#). It is important that you check these websites daily to stay up to date.

We have captured some of the most frequently asked questions below. We are updating this regularly as more information becomes available. The response to the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak is complex and fast moving. It is important that you continue to check information on the relevant websites that we have linked to below.

### Personal Protective Equipment

Updated guidance is available [here](#).

Please note there is also PPE guidance on our website.

PPE access information for social care providers and unpaid carers can be found [here](#).

### What is the advice around face coverings?

Masks are not advisable for children under the age of five, particularly babies and toddlers.

A face covering must be worn by all people aged five and over when in a shop and on public transport, except where an exemption or 'reasonable excuse,' as defined in the [legislation](#), applies when the shop is open to the public.

Where adults cannot keep 2 metres distance from other adults and are interacting face-to-face with other adults for 15 minutes or more, face coverings should be worn. In these circumstances, some children may need additional support/reassurance about the reasons for adults wearing face coverings. Those clinically advised to wear a covering would be an exception.

Full guidance can be found [here](#).

### PPE

#### Should staff be wearing PPE when caring for children?

Staff do not need to wear PPE when providing general care for children. The use of PPE should continue to be based on a clear assessment of risk and need for the individual child or young person. This might

include where the care of a child already involves the use of PPE, for example wearing gloves and an apron for nappy changing, toileting accidents or cleaning up after a child has been sick or cut themselves (bodily fluids). More information can be found [here](#).

### We are having difficulties sourcing PPE, what should we do?

If services cannot source PPE after having fully explored local supply routes you can access PPE through one of two procurement processes:

1. If you are a local authority setting you will access through your usual route, most likely Scotland Excel.
2. Registered private, voluntary, and independent providers that cannot obtain PPE through their usual suppliers will be able to purchase PPE via the Lyreco agreement. If you wish to open an account with Lyreco, please complete the [attached form](#) which must include your Care Inspectorate CS number and return it to: [PPEDirectorate@gov.scot](mailto:PPEDirectorate@gov.scot). Once your CS number is confirmed as being a registered care service your account will be set up. This may take a few days depending on the volume of forms returned. Lyreco will then provide access to their online ordering site, where you will be able to see the full range of products available and current prices. Opening an account does not place you under any obligation to place an order.

### Infection control and health

#### What are the best products to clean toys, surfaces and equipment effectively and how often should they be cleaned?

You should refer to the following documents for guidance in relation to cleaning. [Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings \(Day Care and Childminding Settings\)](#) and [Core COVID-19 Information and Guidance for General \(Non-Healthcare\) Settings](#).

Toys and equipment that children access should be cleaned when groups of children change – e.g. between sessions (if groups are changing) and at the end of the day or in the morning before the session begins using standard detergent and disinfectant that are active against viruses and bacteria.

Settings should ensure regular (at least twice daily) cleaning of commonly touched objects and surfaces (e.g. desks, handles, dining tables, etc.)

It is recommended that children access resources and equipment that are easy to clean. We would discourage the use of materials which cannot be easily cleaned unless provided on an individual child basis or when used with a single group of children.

Ensure regular detergent cleaning schedules and procedures are in place using a product which is active against bacteria and viruses.

Can children under five years old be tested for COVID-19?

Children who are displaying potential coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms are eligible for testing through all routes including drive-in Regional Testing Centres, Mobile Testing Units and by ordering a home test kit.

COVID-19 Testing for all children under 11 years old should be completed by their parent or carer.

The children in my service play with sand, play dough and water. Can they still do this?

‘Resources such as sand, water and playdough can be used with regular cleaning of the equipment used. Water and playdough should be replaced on a daily/sessional basis, when groups change.’

Can children take part in baking activities?

Children can still participate in baking activities provided they do not share baking utensils or equipment. Any baking should only be eaten by the child or taken home. Enhanced hygiene procedures should be carried out.

Should we take children’s temperatures on arrival?

The presence of a temperature is only one of the common symptoms of coronavirus. Information from Health Protection Scotland states that some of the symptoms of the virus are a fever, a new persistent cough and a change or loss of smell and taste. It is important that all symptoms are considered, temperature checks on arrival are not recommended for early learning and childcare services. Information on fever in children can be found [here](#).

Lots of children have coughs and colds. How will I know if they should be excluded because they could have the virus?

Information from Health Protection Scotland states that some of the symptoms of the virus are a fever, a new persistent cough and a change or loss of smell and taste. When children display these symptoms, the advice should be to stay at home. You should advise parents to book a test as per the [Test and Protect strategy](#). You can access information from NHS Inform about when to stay at home and how long for. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice>

Information on fever in children can be found [here](#).

We have children attending our service who have underlying health conditions, how do we ensure they are protected?

We understand the concern that providers have about the children attending their services, particularly young babies and those with underlying health conditions. Parents and carers may wish to have a discussion with their child's healthcare team if they are unsure or have queries about returning to settings because of their health condition. Following good practice in relation to infection prevention and hand hygiene are key to ensuring all children's wellbeing.

#### [Can we take children to a play park where there will be shared equipment?](#)

Yes, however good hand hygiene measures must be followed when visiting shared play spaces. Staff should plan for children to enjoy active energetic play across the day and this may include making use of other areas near to the service. Within any public spaces staff should be aware at all times of the need to keep children distanced from any other children who are not part of the setting, or other adults who may be in the vicinity. Please be aware that hand sanitisers are not suitable for use by children under the age of 12 months. Running water and soap should always be used where possible.

#### [Should we be asking visitors to disclose if they have had any cold, flu, or coughs?](#)

Only essential visitors to the premises should be admitted and these visits should be limited. It would be reasonable to ask these questions to inform your risk assessment and to have clear guidance for visitors displaying this and sending to people. Please refer to the Scottish Government's clinical guidance [for more information](#).

#### [What is the difference between physical distancing and shielding?](#)

**Physical Distancing:** This measure reduces social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of the virus.

**Shielding:** This is for people (inc. children) who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and need to be protected. The aim of shielding is to minimise interaction between individuals and others to protect them from coming into contact with the virus. If they did contract the virus, this could be very serious for them due to their underlying health conditions. Information on which people are in this category and what to do are on the NHS Inform website.

Guidance about physical distancing in educational and childcare settings can be found [here](#).

#### [Will there be physical distancing in ELC?](#)

Given the ongoing suppression of the virus, and updated scientific advice, management of children in consistent cohorts of 8 will no longer be required. Contacts should be limited by managing children within groups. Consistency of groups is beneficial, and efforts should be made to keep children within the same groups for the duration of the day or session, where possible. More than one group can use a

large space, but children should not mix freely with children in other groups, including in open plan settings. The management of groups should reflect the circumstances of the setting. Physical distancing between adults remains a fundamental protective measure that should apply at all times.

Is there a limit on group size?

The appropriate size of groups will depend on the age and overall number of children, and the layout of the setting. The general approach should be to minimise the size of groups where possible. The advisory sub-group on education and children's issues have said:

“The evidence base and the advice of the sub-group would be to support a move to cohort sizes for children under five in line with those aged 5-12 assuming the level of infection remains low, appropriate surveillance, test and protect and all the other appropriate mitigations and measures are in place.”

It would therefore be reasonable for children to be managed in groups of up to 25-30. Larger indoor groups should be avoided where possible and reasonable to do so. However, if required or considered appropriate, ELC settling can have groups of up to 33 in line with school guidance.

If the number of children in total across the day does not exceed the maximum group sizes of 25-33, do we need to clean after each session?

Yes, the guidance allows larger group sizes however this is a maximum, you may have two smaller groups. Mixing of groups is not advisable. The guidance around sharing of resources and cleaning after use by each group should be adhered to. More information can be found [here](#).

What if a child attending my service is confirmed as having the virus, can I tell the other parents?

You should not breach confidentiality of your families without express consent. Where there is a confirmed case the local health protection team will want to contact any close contacts of the children. This may include staff or the parents of children who have attended the service, as well as any other carers. Dependent upon individual situations, family members may also be included. You will be guided by your local health protection team who are well prepared to support this type of situation.

What do I do if a child or staff member shows symptoms?

If a child develops symptoms of Covid-19 while in the setting, a ventilated space must be available for the child to wait in until they can be collected by their parent. Where space allows, you should prevent contact between any other children in the setting. Care must be taken however to ensure the appropriate levels of supervision of all children. Read the advice on what to do if someone is symptomatic. All staff and parents and carers should be advised that anyone with a high temperature, new continuous cough, loss of (or change in) sense of smell or taste, or who has had contact with a family/community member with symptoms should not attend or should be asked to return home, and be tested.

Travel

A child's parents recently returned from a country on the quarantine list. The child did not travel and stayed at home; can we care for them?

Yes, you can care for these children and no isolation is needed.

The guidance on returning from travel from the Scottish Government states, 'It is important to avoid contact with other people in your accommodation in order to reduce the risk of transmitting coronavirus. The people you are staying with do not need to stay at home, unless they travelled from outside the UK with you.'

The guidance continues to state that those who travelled should avoid contact with others in the home and minimise the time you spend in shared spaces, like kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas.

They should stay in a well-ventilated room with a window to the outside that can be opened, separate from other people in the home.

Travel guidance can be found [here](#).

What is the guidance around travel?

Providers must ensure they follow the latest [travel guidance](#) and only travel where it is permitted within the [rules on staying at home](#). Where it is necessary to use public transport care must be taken to

minimise risk. Ensure hand washing immediately on arrival at the destination. Providers must also ensure they follow the latest [guidance on the use of face coverings](#), which is to wear them in specific circumstances, such as when on public transport.

### What is the guidance on transporting school aged children?

**Face coverings** should be worn on dedicated transport by all children age five and over, bringing in line with guidance for public transport.

During term-time, school age childcare services regularly care for children from a **range of different schools**. In many cases, the children are transported to the school age childcare service using private service operators, while other services rely on school buses to transport children, particularly in rural areas.

Dedicated transport used by the service should be regarded as an extension of the premises and physical distancing measures between children attending the service are not necessary (subject to continued low levels of infection within Scotland).

### Blended placements

#### School age children - blended placements

For children and young people who have blended placements, defined as arrangements where children are attending two or more settings, either in educational establishments, other childcare providers, or the wider community, consideration should be given to their groupings and an appropriate risk assessment conducted. Where possible settings should seek to keep groups consistent with schools and classes in order to minimise contacts.

It remains important to minimise the number of contacts and risk of transmission, where possible. However, the balance of scientific advice supports the use of more settings where required to ensure high quality childcare is available to children and in support of parents' needs.

Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to limit the number of settings their child attends. When children attend more than one setting (i.e. school and school age childcare), consideration should be given to ensuring their child only attends the same school age childcare setting(s) consistently. Consideration should be given to how children are supported to ensure good hygiene practices (washing hands, not sharing resources, etc.) when moving between settings, and how their interactions with other groups of children are managed, based on an appropriate risk assessment.

School age childcare workers may undertake drop-off and pick-up from schools but physical distancing with other adults must be maintained.

Where a child attends more than one setting, consideration should be given to record keeping of the other setting(s), to assist with any Test & Protect process (see below section on Test & Protect). Any records should be GDPR compliant.

### ELC Blended Placements

In order to minimise the number of contacts and risk of transmission, attendance at multiple ELC settings should be reduced as far as possible. Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to limit the number of settings their child attends, ideally ensuring their child only attends the same setting consistently.

However, the balance of scientific advice supports the use of more settings where required to ensure high quality childcare is available to children and in support of parents' need. For children who attend multiple settings, either ELC settings or childminders, consideration should be given to how they are supported to ensure good hygiene practices (washing hands, not sharing resources, etc.) when moving between settings, and how their contacts with other groups of children are managed, based on an appropriate risk assessment in each setting.

Where a child attends more than one setting, consideration should be given to record keeping of the other setting(s), to assist with any Test & Protect process (see below section on Test & Protect). Any records should be GDPR compliant.

### Operational Guidance

#### How should I manage the allocation of places in my ELC setting?

If capacity is reduced, careful consideration must be given to the allocation of places within a setting. Before making offers to parents, providers should consider the capacity within settings, and ensure that there is a clear and transparent approach to how allocations will be made. Where capacity is limited, settings should have regard to the principles for prioritising access to childcare set out in the [Strategic Framework](#) as stated below.

- key worker families requiring critical childcare
- children who may be provided with access to day-care services under section 2 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- children eligible for the funded entitlement of 600 hours of ELC i.e. eligible 2-year olds and all 3- and 4-year olds
- Local authorities and providers will have discretion over how to allocate overall capacity in line with these principles and the local GIRFEC practice model. Local authorities and childcare providers should work together in meaningful partnership to meet the needs of local children and families.

#### Sharing school premises and community premises

Many school age childcare services operate from school or community premises that are shared with others. Where services have their own entrance, exit and general facilities including toilets and kitchen facilities they should follow this guidance as a stand-alone service.

**Where services share facilities with schools, they should consider the following:**

- early discussion with the local authority to agree use of premises

- potential implications of the school operating model
- arrangements for cleaning
- maintaining physical distance from other users
- arrangements for use of the outdoor spaces

**Where services make use of community spaces and facilities, they should consider the following:**

- early discussion with local authority or landlord to agree continued use of premises or facilities
- potential implications of sharing spaces with other community groups including maintaining physical distance with other users
- arrangements for cleaning
- maximising use of outdoor spaces where available
- Risk assessments and associated measures should be consistent

[Children under 11 no longer need to physically distance indoors as well as outdoors does that mean we no longer need groups of children in ELC settings?](#)

As above children should be cared for in consistent groups. It is still important to limit children's contacts. However, a maximum number per group is stated as 25-33 children. This will reduce likelihood of direct transmission, to allow for more effective contact tracing through Test and Protect and reduce the overall number who need to isolate in the event of a child becoming ill with COVID-19.

The updated guidance can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-reopening-early-learning-and-childcare-services/pages/limiting-childrens-contacts/>

[Children under 11 years do not need to physically distance indoors and outdoors. Do older children in OOSC need to physically distance?](#)

Day care of children's services may include children up to the age of 16. [The guidance](#) states 'Contacts should be limited by managing children within groups. Consistency of groups is beneficial, and efforts should be made to keep children within the same groups for the duration of the day or session, where possible. More than one group can use a large space, but children should not mix freely with children in other groups, including in open plan settings. The management of groups should reflect the circumstances of the setting.'

[What kind of risk assessments do we have to carry out?](#)

Generally, a risk assessment would have to cover the risk presented to the children and staff from COVID 19. Staff should be reducing risks by following the guidance around COVID-19. The Scottish Government has [produced guidance](#) to support workplaces with this.

The Scottish Government has provided [additional guidance](#) on the risk and vulnerability assessment process in relation to the specific risk of COVID-19 to individuals in the workplace.

In particular, this is relevant to those staff members who are returning to work after shielding, those who are returning to normal duties after COVID-19 related restrictions, those who are returning to the workplace after working from home or anyone who has a concern about a personal vulnerability to COVID-19.

The tool can be used to assess the risk and enable employers to support staff by introducing suitable controls. The assessment tool allows the employee to complete an individual risk assessment with their manager using the [COVID-19 occupational risk assessment tool](#). This will support staff and managers to agree a course of action on working duties.

Further guidance on Covid-19 individual risk assessment for the workplace can be found [here](#).

#### [Can our nursery and school staff ask to be tested, even if they are not showing signs of COVID-19?](#)

Teachers, nursery and school staff can now be tested for COVID-19 on demand if they are concerned, they have been at risk from infection, even if they show no symptoms.

The step has been taken to provide additional reassurance to teachers, nursery and other staff as children and young people return to the classroom and to early learning.

#### [Can children take home artwork?](#)

Yes, they can. Risk assessment should consider minimising the number of people that touch the artwork. Parents and children should maintain strict hand washing.

#### [Can we ask parents to complete paper records?](#)

Risk assessment should determine the process for this considering practice that will minimise the risk of transmission. For instance, asking parents to use their own pen, effective hand washing or use of hand gel.

#### [Do we need to submit the staff absence notification on a Tuesday?](#)

Yes, this now also applies to daycare of children services (including nurseries, family centres, playgroups and out of school care).

#### **Childminding services do NOT need to complete this.**

We are asking that every Tuesday, services complete the COVID-19 staff absences notification. This notification asks about staff who are absent from work due to COVID-19 related reasons.

We are sorry to place this extra burden on you at this time, but this information will help us support you better. It will also help the Scottish Government understand the challenges you are facing more fully, and plan for the solutions you need.

It is important that you submit this each week on a Tuesday as we will have to disregard information submitted any other day. This is in order to ensure we gather data that is accurate and consistent.

We would like to thank you for undertaking this. You can access the notification through your eForms account [here](#).

### Registration

[If I have a COVID-19 condition stated within my registration certificate after the 6 months period is up, will I need to apply for a new variation to have it removed?](#)

Yes. The Care Inspectorate developed intermediate guidance to support settings during the pandemic. Some settings may have a time limited condition to support children and families at this time. The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 requires providers to apply for a variation to remove or vary a condition of registration. There is no cost to the applicant.

### Notifications and surveys

[I am re opening my service, what notification do I submit?](#)

The Scottish Government guidance states that prior to recommencing your service, you must complete a “Changes to Service Delivery due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)” notification [via e-forms](#). You should also complete the Scottish Government’s early learning and childcare (ELC) monitoring return weekly every Tuesday. You can access the survey [here](#).

For all other information about notifications please visit the Care Inspectorates’ [web page here](#).

### Staffing

[Some of our staff have several jobs in care, for instance working in a nursery during the day and an after-school club in the afternoons, can this continue?](#)

The guidance from Scottish Government and Health Protection Scotland states that, ‘Peripatetic Staffing and movement of staff between different ELC settings should be avoided, except in circumstances where the individual works with the same group of children, or where necessary to provide specialist support, for example for children with additional support needs.

Where settings use agency or bank staff they should ensure that staff do not move between settings where possible.

It is recognised that the above restrictions on movement of staff between settings may impact on the ability of some practitioners to continue with the patterns of work they would have chosen prior to the

Covid-19 response period. Where this is the case, employers/heads of centres should undertake early engagement with staff who will be affected, and unions where appropriate.

[We have many peripatetic managers registered in services. Are they able to move between their services to fulfil their management and leadership responsibilities where possible, without being part of any groups?](#)

Yes, it is important that managers are able to fulfill their role to support services. They must not work with children at this time due the nature of their role which requires them to move around services. Their visits to the service should be considered as part of the cleaning schedule. Offices/workspaces must be fully disinfected before and after use. Physical distancing must be adhered to and frequent hygienic practices, e.g. hand washing.

[How do we process a disclosure during the pandemic?](#)

Disclosure Scotland will prioritise checks for the workers Scotland needs to deal with the coronavirus.

You do not have to pay for disclosures for coronavirus response workers. This will remain in place until midnight on Friday 25 December 2020.

If the disclosure is not for a coronavirus response worker, you can [apply by email for routine disclosures](#).

Who is a coronavirus response worker?

A coronavirus response worker is someone:

- in a role only supporting the response to coronavirus
- working in a qualifying sector
- who only needs a disclosure because of their coronavirus work

[What are the Care Inspectorate expectations around the recruitment of staff, if our staff are off sick or at home self-isolating?](#)

Update (05/10/20) - we have re-instated flexibility allowing providers to deploy staff pending employment checks being returned. Providers should continue to request PVG checks and references, but no longer need to wait for these to be returned satisfactorily before deploying individuals to regulated roles directly supporting and caring for people.

We understand sudden change is challenging, particularly during this pandemic. If and when, after careful consideration, our position on pre-employment checks needs to change again, we will give you advance notice so you can prepare.

We understand the concerns you may have around staffing. We ask that you plan contingencies for how to staff your service as normal in the event colleagues are unwell. Child to adult ratios feature in our registration and inspection of early learning and childcare (ELC) settings. We expect the staffing numbers, and skills and experience of staff to reflect the needs of people who use services.

### [Flexible Childcare Services Scotland: national sessional staff bank for childcare](#)

We know that the coronavirus continues to pose challenges for day care of children services and that staff shortages may occur as a result of test and protect measures now in place.

Scottish Government have supported Flexible Childcare Services Scotland to develop a [national sessional staff bank for childcare](#).

This free service can be used by practitioners seeking employment terms that fit with their existing work commitments and offers childcare providers the ability to identify and connect with available practitioners in their area.

For more information and to sign up visit [www.flexibilitypathway.org.uk/connect](http://www.flexibilitypathway.org.uk/connect)

### [My first aid certificate is due to expire, what should I do?](#)

Staff should continue their professional learning through a range of methods. This may include online courses/webinars; reading; self-evaluation or peer reflections. Some face to face learning events may begin to take place from August 2020 onwards.

## [Miscellaneous](#)

### [How do childcare agencies fit into the route map?](#)

On 9 July 2020, the First Minister announced that households could begin meeting indoors from 10 July 2020, subject to some restrictions. This change will allow for childcare provided in the child's home to resume, subject to certain restrictions.

From 10 July 2020, the changing restrictions around meeting indoors mean that nannies and babysitters will be able to resume their services. They should do so in line with the guidance on households meeting indoors: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/seeing-friends-and-family/>

### [Will there be separate guidance for childcare agencies?](#)

There is currently no plan to publish childcare agency guidance. Childcare agencies should follow the current ELC guidance from Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Government when planning the delivery of their service.

### [Providing care is my main source of income, where can I get advice if I am struggling financially as a result of coronavirus COVID-19?](#)

Guidance is available on the UK Government's [website](#).