



Department  
for Education

# **Coronavirus-related support for submitting an Early Years Census 2021 return**

**January 2021**

## Summary

This document is designed to supplement the [Early Years Census 2021 Guide](#) in order to support early years PVI providers and local authorities to make their Early Years Census 2021 returns accurately and consistently.

As announced on 4th January 2021 by the Prime Minister, early years provision should remain open to all children to attend their expected hours, as agreed with parents/guardians. This is currently the default position for all areas irrespective of national lockdown restrictions.

Open providers must ensure that they are able to meet statutory requirements to ensure safe and high-quality early education and childcare, in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage (taking into account the disapplications and modifications in place) and COVID systems of control.

The Early Years Census 2021 is intended to reflect the provision made available to parents/guardians, and a provider's usual expected attendance in the week commencing 18th January 2021. This remains the guiding principle behind all the following scenarios outlined. The intention is to ensure parity of approach to counting of funded entitlements across both the School Census and the Early Years Census.

Where a provider is counting a child on the census, the place must be genuinely 'available': this means a provider **must not** count a child where they have furloughed the staff who would be required to deliver the child's place.

The first section relates to open PVI settings within which children are benefiting from their funded entitlements in census week. We anticipate that attendance will be lower than previous years within these settings.

- In summary we have taken the view that where a child is reasonably expected to attend Early Years provision, and that provision is made available to them by the provider, their expected hours should be recorded in the Early Years Census. This means children who, were it not for the impact of coronavirus on either their own personal circumstances or on the operation of their Early Years setting, would be attending Early Years provision. This includes children who have previously attended the provision and children who were expected to start attending the provision in January.

The second section relates to closed PVI providers, where children are therefore not benefiting from their funded entitlements in census week.

- Where the provider chooses not to offer the entitlements – i.e. to close, or only offer a limited provision to children of key workers - then they should not make a return for a child who is not being offered a place.
- Where the provider is temporarily closed due to circumstances such as staff infections or isolation periods, they should return their expected levels of provision for census week.

Compliance with the full Early years census 2021 Guide remains statutory.

Guidance relating to recording stretched entitlements remains the same as previous years and is not impacted by the support outlined below for either universal or extended entitlements.

## **Early Years counting in the School Census**

School census guidance is available [Complete the school census - Guidance - GOV.UK](#). This support document is targeted at Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers returning on the Early Years Census. The same coronavirus-related eligibility criteria exist for both the School Census and Early Years Census to ensure parity of funding across PVIs and School-Based Providers.

## **Academies**

Academies should follow School Census guidance for registered pupils, and Early Years Census guidance where the child is not a registered pupil.

Below, a selection of common scenarios are outlined and how providers and local authorities are expected to count funded entitlements in their census return.

## **The PVI provider is open in census week**

The provider should make their census return as they have in previous years. The census is designed to reflect the situation as in census week, the week commencing 18th January 2021.

Where children are attending their contracted/expected hours during census week, no change is required from previous years.

Under the establishment details for any provider making a return, the expected levels of staff during census week should be recorded.

## **The child is temporarily absent in census week**

Annex B, on page 47 of the official annual guidance states “Please record the normal situation during the week beginning 2021-01-18. If children are temporarily absent, for example, sick or on holiday, please include them. If the provider was temporarily closed for any reason, record the situation which would have applied during the week.”

This principle remains the basis of the Early Years Census 2021.

Therefore, please record the expected weekly hours a child usually would have received in situations where the child is:

- self-isolating due to exposure to coronavirus (usually a period of 10 days) in census week.
- ill in census week.
- absent due to parent/guardian caution (fear of child catching coronavirus), if the provider remains open to the child and they have not altered their parental declaration relating to expected hours with the provider.
- absent due to parent/guardian choosing to care for child at home, only if the provider remains open to the child and the parent/guardian has not altered their parental declaration relating to expected hours with the provider.
- clinically extremely vulnerable and is therefore shielding in line with government advice.

Where the child is unable to attend their usual PVI provider due to restrictions on attendance made by the provider, the setting is considered closed to that child.

Therefore, the provider should follow the support listed below for closed providers in this instance, and not make a return for that child unless this restriction is due to specific government guidance.

## **The child's expected hours have changed**

Please record the child's new expected hours accurately at the time of the census where:

- the parent/guardian has informed the provider that they are reducing their child's hours (i.e., a change in the parental declaration).

In the situation that the parent/guardian has informed the provider that they are formally withdrawing the child from the provider's register, this means that the child's expected hours would now be zero, and so a return should not be made for that child:

- this includes situations where the parent/guardian has chosen to withdraw the child due to the parent/guardian shielding.

## **The PVI provider is closed in census week**

There are various reasons why a provider may be closed in census week (the week commencing 18th January 2021).

Annex B, on page 47 of the official annual guidance states "Please record the normal situation during the week beginning 2021-01-18. If children are temporarily absent, for example, sick or on holiday, please include them. If the provider was temporarily closed for any reason, record the situation which would have applied during the week".

This principle remains the basis of the Early Years Census 2021.

Therefore, please make a census return for 2021, recording the contracted/expected hours provided in the situation where:

- the provider has attempted to remain open, but has closed for a period of time for reasons such as:
  - staff shortages due to illness.
  - staff shortages due to self-isolation.
- the provider has closed due to government guidance, for reasons such as:
  - temporary inability to access the site premises (for example, a PVI setting whose landlord or trustees have temporarily refused permission to operate on the site for COVID-related reasons).
  - numbers of staff shielding make it impossible to provide the funded entitlements.

Under the establishment details for any temporarily closed provider making a return, the expected levels of staff during census week should be recorded.

Please do not make a census return for 2021 in the situation where the PVI setting has chosen to close and not provide the entitlements due to:

- limited anticipated attendance.
- staff caution.

These are settings which have not attempted to remain open and therefore have no expectation of attendance in the setting.

Where the setting has chosen to restrict the attendance of some children (e.g. offering places only to critical workers' children or vulnerable children), please do not make a return for children for whom the funded entitlements are not being offered.



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