

Children and Families, Early Years Division
Weekly News Bulletin: 24th February 2021

Early years appreciation day

Early years staff have worked incredibly hard to continue crucial care and ensure that our youngest children do not miss out on the early stages of their education during the pandemic.

Today we join the wider community in paying tribute to their vital work in caring for our youngest children. Thank you to all those working in early years and for the difference you are making every day for children and their families.

A message to our Early Years workforce from Michael Jarrett, Associate Director, Children and Families

"I would like to join other children's services leaders across the country in thanking our amazing early years workforce for everything they have done and continue to do during the pandemic and beyond.

The flexibility, resilience and sheer determination to keep things as ordinary as possible for our most youngest children and their families is deserved of the highest recognition possible so on behalf of Slough Borough Council, the very many families who depend on their support, a huge thank you and thumbs up!"



The Government response to coronavirus (Covid-19) and the easing of restrictions

The Prime Minister has set out the next phase of the government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19), including where some restrictions can be lifted as part of the [roadmap for leaving lockdown](#). The decision to ease restrictions is made on the balance of risk to public health and educational considerations.

We have published today the 13th iteration of 'actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' guidance which can be accessed via gov.uk at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>. In our guidance update, we have withdrawn [education and childcare settings: national lockdown from 5 January 2021](#) and transferred relevant sections into the updated guidance.

Please note that we will be updating guidance for parents and carers shortly.

The Main changes to the guidance for early years:

Face coverings

We have clarified the guidance on wearing of face coverings where social distancing between staff in communal areas is not possible.

Childminders for school-aged children

Childminders can continue to look after all early years children. Until 8 March, childminders should continue to only look after those school-age children (from reception onwards) who are vulnerable or children of critical workers. From 8 March, childminders will be able to look after vulnerable children as normal, and all other children where parents are using the provision to support them to work, seek work, undertake education or training, or attend a medical appointment or address a medical need.

Testing

We have added a section on asymptomatic testing to the guidance confirming that we are now expanding home testing kits to staff in all private, voluntary and independent nurseries, who should start to receive deliveries of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) home testing kits to offer to all their staff for twice weekly testing from next month. This will help to identify positive cases more quickly and break the chains of transmissions. Childminders can continue to access community testing, and the Department continues to work with colleagues across government to review the testing approach available for childminders. [Mass testing for secondary pupils as all schools and colleges fully reopen from 8 March - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

A letter of thanks from the Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP Secretary of State for Education



22nd Feb - SoS letter
to EY final.pdf

Message to education leaders from the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson

I would like to thank you for the huge effort that you have put in to provide remote and on-site education for pupils and students during these national restrictions, and indeed all of your hard work throughout the pandemic. I would particularly pay tribute to those leaders of special and alternative provision schools, and special post-16 providers, which have remained fully open to vulnerable children and young people throughout the latest lockdown. I recognise that this has been a very challenging time. I am continually impressed with, and immensely grateful for, the tremendous work in ensuring that schools and colleges have been able to ensure children and young people continue to receive the best education possible.

I am writing to set out in greater detail the easing of restrictions on face-to-face teaching announced today.

When the Prime Minister announced this lockdown, he was clear he would review the situation in mid-February and that the outcome of this review would be dependent upon the most vulnerable people being offered the first dose of the vaccine by 15 February, meaning they should have developed some immunity from the virus by about three weeks later, that is by 8 March.

I am pleased to say that, thanks to the efforts of the NHS, volunteers and scientists, the Government has achieved this target and, following an in-depth analysis of the virus prevalence data, and the data on NHS capacity, both suggest that infection rates have fallen across all ages, including in children and young people.

Today, the Prime Minister set out the next phase of the [Government's response to coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#), including where restrictions on attendance at education settings can be lifted. The decision to ease restrictions is made on the balance of risk to public health and educational considerations.

Return

All schools, colleges and further education settings should allow full attendance from 8 March. Wraparound childcare, including childminders should also allow attendance for eligible children. School attendance will be mandatory for all pupils, with secondary schools and colleges able to phase return over the week of 8 March to allow students to be offered testing on return.

The usual rules and duties around school attendance are in place from 8 March (including mandatory attendance). All schools should communicate expectations about regular attendance to pupils and parents. Schools should identify pupils at risk of disengagement and develop plans to re-engage them.

Early years settings will continue to be open to all children, as they have throughout the period of national restrictions.

In further education settings, we expect that every 16 to 19 student (or 19 to 25 with an EHCP) will undertake the majority of their planned hours on site. For adults, as is best practice, further education providers should determine the appropriate balance of on-site and remote education and training, based on the type of programme and the student's ability to engage with the programme remotely.

Higher education providers should recommence in-person teaching and learning from 8 March for students on practical or practice-based (including creative arts) courses who need access to specialist equipment and facilities. The Government will review, by the end of the Easter holidays, the options for timing of the return of remaining students. This review will take account of the latest data and will be a key part of the wider roadmap steps. Students and providers will be given a week's notice ahead of any further return.

Based on the recent ONS data, the risks to education, childcare and HE staff are similar to those for most other occupations. Although the public health picture is improving, it remains crucial that steps are taken to reduce and mitigate any risks within education and childcare settings. DfE has worked closely with PHE to develop and refresh the system of controls to reduce the risk of transmission in education and childcare settings, based on scientific rationale.

Rapid testing

Since January, education leaders across schools, colleges and universities have been involved in a fantastic national effort to test their staff and students. Over 4 million tests have already been completed under your collective leadership and I would like to thank you for all the work you have done to set up the programme so far.

Rapid testing will continue to remain a vital part of the Government's plan to suppress this virus, in education and childcare settings and across society. This sort of testing means that asymptomatic people who might otherwise continue to attend educational settings are identified and self-isolate.

Twice-weekly asymptomatic testing is already available for secondary school, most college, primary school, special school, special post-16, school-based nursery and maintained nursery school workforce, including support staff such as teaching assistants and those supporting with wraparound childcare. Secondary schools and colleges have also been able to offer testing on return for their students, and we are now asking those leaders to put this in place for all students across the week of the 8 March as they return.

Today, we have also announced the further expansion of this asymptomatic testing programme to include offering regular twice weekly testing of secondary school and college students at home, home based testing for secondary staff. Home testing will also be available for Independent Training Providers and Adult and Community Learning Providers by the end of March.

Rapid testing is already in place for those arriving or staying at university. We ask HE providers to offer two tests to all students eligible to attend their university or HE institution upon their return, and twice weekly asymptomatic testing to all students eligible to attend on-site, as well as providing testing for staff.

All staff at private, voluntary and independent nurseries will have access to tests to use twice weekly at home, building on the testing already available to maintained nursery schools and school-based nurseries. Childminders can continue to access community testing, and the Department continues to work with colleagues across Government to review the testing approach available for childminders.

Safety measures

The return to on-site provision for all education, childcare and children's social care settings will be supported by a range of actions designed to minimise the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). I know how hard you have all worked to implement these measures and this continues to be vital.

We have worked closely with PHE to develop and refresh the system of controls to reduce the risk of transmission in education and childcare settings, based on scientific rationale. The system of controls supports you to assess risk and implement measures to mitigate risk, including ventilating occupied spaces, introducing enhanced cleaning and retaining bubbles of students. We ask pupils, students and staff to continue to do everything they can to adhere to these measures, because it is vital that they are implemented well and consistently.

In addition to the system of controls, where pupils in year 7 and above are educated, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and pupils where social distancing cannot easily be maintained when moving around the premises outside of classrooms or teaching spaces, such as in corridors and communal areas. In the same settings for a limited period, we recommend the use of face coverings in classrooms and other teaching spaces, unless wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example in PE lessons, or for those who are exempt from wearing a face covering as set out in Government guidance.

In primary schools and early years settings, face coverings should be worn by staff and adult visitors where social distancing between adults is not possible. Children in primary schools do not need to wear a face covering.

Education recovery and qualifications

I know you are completely aware that missing face-to-face education has severe impacts for children and young people, with clear evidence that time out of face-to-face education is detrimental for cognitive and academic development, learning, health and wellbeing. That's why the Government has been clear that restricting attendance in education settings was a last resort, and why education is being prioritised as we begin to ease restrictions.

We will be setting out further measures for immediate support to children, early years settings, schools, colleges and local authorities later this week.

I and Ofqual will also be setting out very soon further details of the alternative arrangements to exams. This follows the consultation which received over 100,000 responses, including from so many of you and your students.

I am very pleased that we are able to return children and young people across England to their classrooms and colleges, to allow them to spend time with their friends and teachers and get back into the rhythms of the school or college year. I would like to thank you again for all the hard work you have done and continue to do to ensure that children and young people can return to face-to-face learning as smoothly as possible.

The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Definition update to educational settings 16th February 2021

The Department of Health and Social Care have today announced the addition of a third category to the definition of Clinically Extremely Vulnerable. The definition has been expanded to include a new group of adults who have been identified through the [Covid-19 Population Risk Assessment](#) as potentially being at high risk of serious illness if they catch the virus.

The [national lockdown guidance](#) applies to everyone in England, including the clinically extremely vulnerable. Any individuals identified as CEV through this risk assessment are advised to follow additional [guidance for clinically extremely vulnerable](#) people, to help protect them from COVID-19. Anyone newly identified as part of this group will be written to and notified.

The model has identified 820,000 adults between 19 and 69 years, who will now be prioritised for a vaccination. Where a member of staff who works within an education setting is written to and advised to shield, they and their employer should discuss how they can best be supported, including working from home.

The shielding guidance will now be extended until 31 March.

If individual settings are facing operational challenges in allowing children, pupils, or students to attend, they should work with the local authority (childcare and early years settings), RSC (schools) or ESFA territorial teams (FE providers) to discuss their individual circumstances and seek support. Sector-specific guidance outlines a number of options for settings to consider if they are facing staff shortages or capacity issues.



Department
for Education

The Department for Education (DfE) has published the new draft Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework and draft statutory instrument (SI) for comment by 18 March 2021, in line with legislative consultation requirements under the Childcare Act 2006. This is the revised EYFS that is due to come into force from September 2021.

New draft EYFS framework for comment

As part of the legislative process needed to enact the reforms to the EYFS, DfE recently sought views from local authority representatives, sector bodies and a number of early years providers on proposed minor changes to the safeguarding and welfare section of the revised EYFS statutory framework.

The draft framework has now been published and will be available for one month from the date of publication for comment (as required by the Childcare Act 2006).

Please note that DfE are not seeking further views on the changes to the EYFS framework that were confirmed in the [government's official response](#) to the 2019 EYFS reforms consultation.

[Find out more](#)

New draft statutory instrument for comment

DfE has also sought views from local authority representatives on amendments to [The Early Years Foundation Stage \(Learning and Development Requirements\) Order 2007](#) (EYFS L&D Order 2007) in respect of local authorities obligations, to reflect the removal of statutory local authority moderation. Feedback has been carefully considered and the revised proposals have been reflected in the draft SI.

The draft SI has now been published and will be available for one month from the date of publication for comment (as required by the Childcare Act 2006)

Please note that the draft SI also covers the Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA). However, **DfE are only seeking views on the EYFS aspects of the SI** as the RBA aspects have been subject to a separate consultation process.

[Find out more](#)

Have your say!

The draft EYFS framework and draft SI will be available for comment until **18 March 2021**.

Please send your comments to EYFSP.REFORMS@education.gov.uk.



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

Page summary:

What childcare services early years settings, childminders and local authorities need to provide during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Change made:

We have withdrawn the 'Education and childcare settings: national lockdown from 5 January 2021' guidance and transferred relevant sections into the updated 'Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak' guidance.

Time updated:

4:19pm, 22 February 2021

Reported coronavirus (COVID-19) notifications by registered early years and childcare settings

Page summary:

This data is published fortnightly. It gives the number of registered early years and childcare providers reporting one or more confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) by week.

Change made:

Added data for weeks beginning 25 January and 1 February 2021.

Time updated:

9:30am, 22 February 2021

Data on COVID-19 visits: registered early years providers

Page summary:

Data about Ofsted's visits to registered early years providers during the interim phase of our return to inspection.

Change made:

Published transparency data to 31 December 2020.

Time updated:

9:30am, 18 February 202



Evidence summary: COVID-19 – children, young people and education settings

Page summary:

DfE paper summarising evidence in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, particularly around children, young people and education settings.

Change made:

First published.

Time updated:

7:17pm, 22 February 2021

Visitors attending early years and childcare settings

This is a reminder to all early years providers of the statutory duty to have in place rigorous safeguarding procedures to check the identity of all visitors to your setting.

Please remain vigilant for unauthorised persons; legitimate visitors will not mind you checking with their organisation before you allow them to enter your premises. Please report any suspicious concerns to the relevant organisations like the local safeguarding team or emergency services if applicable.

Your procedures **MUST** have regard to Working Together to Safeguard Children. This was last updated in 2020 and can be found [here](#)

Early Childhood Unit – News Bulletin

The ECU February 2021 Bulletin is compiled and edited by the Early Childhood Unit at **NCB**, and is now available to download.

[Click here to download your ECU Bulletin](#)

National Children's Bureau

New webpage on healthy eating and safe food preparation

This includes preparing food hygienically, providing meals that are healthy, balanced and nutritious, as well as making sure that food is prepared appropriately for babies and children of different ages, for example mashed, pureed or cut into appropriately sized and shaped pieces where it could be a choking hazard. The EYFS learning and development requirements also state that children must be helped to make healthy choices in relation to food.

Early years practitioners may find it useful to refer to this guidance when reviewing policies surrounding food and drink in their setting, or when inducting new members of staff to the EYFS requirements.

[View the guidance & resources](#)



17th February 2021

PACEY has updated its [Coronavirus FAQs](#) to reflect the latest government advice and [updated guidance](#) on who is considered clinically extremely vulnerable, following changes announced yesterday and to reflect the latest information we have on [vaccination](#).

17th February 2021

Liz Bayram, PACEY Chief Executive writes to the early years and childcare sector regarding the difficulties experienced over the last week around access to coronavirus vaccinations.

[Letter to Early Years & Childcare Sector](#)

World Book Day 4th March 2021

Ideas for World Book Day 2021 as well as resources for celebrating reading for pleasure all year round in one handy place.

<https://www.worldbookday.com/schoolsandnurseries/>

Updates for Parents and Carers

Guidance for parents and carers on safeguarding children in out-of-school settings

Page summary:

Questions for parents and carers to ask to help them choose out-of-school settings for their children.

Change made:

Added translations for Gujarati and Punjabi.

Time updated:

3:10pm, 17 February 2021

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Keeping children safe from abuse and harm

Page summary:

Advice for parents and carers about the main risks children may be particularly vulnerable to at this time and information about available help and support.

Change made:

Added extra links to support to help keep children safe.

Time updated:

1.57pm, 22 February 2021

Coronavirus (COVID-19): keeping children safe online

Page summary:

Advice and guidance to help parents and carers to keep children safe online during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Change made:

Links to extra resources added to help keep children safe from online harm.

Time updated:

1:57pm, 22 February 2021

SEND

Contact run free family workshops for families with children with additional needs. They are currently running workshops on various dates in March.

[Family workshops - Contact](#)

Families

University College London (UCL), in partnership with Save the Children, have developed some fun and engaging activities parents can do with their children at home to support

[Maths@Home - Developing young children's maths abilities through everyday play](#)