Children and Families, Early Years Division

Weekly News Bulletin: 24th March 2021



## **Deliveries of lateral flow device tests**

The majority of PVI nurseries will have received an initial delivery of lateral flow device tests, ready to commence the testing of staff from the **week commencing 22 March**. A further delivery will follow between **24 and 26 March** which will provide PVI nurseries with additional test kits to cover testing until early May.

PVI nurseries that have reported to us missing or damaged kit between 15 and 18 March will receive additional kits as part of this delivery. You will not need to take any specific steps to receive this second delivery. If a setting has received too many test kits they will be able to keep them as stock to use as and when required.

To report any missing or damaged items, please complete the [nursery rapid testing delivery supply form](https://form.education.gov.uk/service/rapid-delivery-supply-nursery), but please note that we will be supplying you with **further test kits automatically between 24 and 26 March.** You will need your nursery’s unique identification number to complete this form.

Guidance for PVI nurseries on how to reorder test kits will be made available at the beginning of April.

**Once the second delivery has been made between 24 and 26 March, you should have been sent enough test kits to maintain testing through the Easter holidays until early May.**

## **Further Information on the asymptomatic testing programme**

Further information on the asymptomatic testing programme in primary and early years settings can be found on the [document sharing platform](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1X4fLxy6_ppmpmKrv3hT2M6cduAN_GS54).

PVI nurseries also have access to an [introduction to rapid testing webinar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8p-x_HYHYN8) which provides information on the process of how the testing programme should be managed by settings.

If you have any questions, concerns or issues that are not addressed through the document sharing platform or webinar, please call the **DfE coronavirus helpline:**

**Phone: 0800 046 8687**

**Opening hours:
Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm
Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm**

## **Asymptomatic Testing for Childminders**

From today, there will be more options available to childminders to enable them to participate in the asymptomatic testing programme. This testing offer is also extended to anyone who works in an occupation related to a school, early years childcare provider, or college and their household, childcare and support bubbles. More information can be found [here.](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff)

From today, **all childminders** will be able to access asymptomatic twice-weekly testing by either:

* **Attending a test site** to get tested where they will be able to see how to take the test or pick up tests to do at home.
* **Collecting tests** to do at home, <https://find-covid-19-rapid-test-sites.maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/>
* **Order a test kit online -** More information can be found on [www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests](http://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests)

Testing will help to identify positive cases, particularly those who may have the virus and do not have symptoms. Those who test positive will then self-isolate, helping to reduce transmission of the virus.  All positive results from rapid tests undertaken at home **do need to be confirmed with a standard PCR test.**

In addition, the households, childcare and support bubbles of early years children are also able to access twice-weekly asymptomatic testing. More information can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff).

The asymptomatic testing programme does not replace the current testing policy for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms (even if they recently had a negative LFD test result), should still self-isolate immediately according to [government guidelines](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/if-you-need-to-self-isolate-or-cannot-attend-work-due-to-coronavirus). Those with symptoms should follow [guidance for households](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and book a PCR test.

**Asymptomatic Staff Testing in Primary Schools and Nurseries**

**Frequently asked questions**

##

## **Vaccinations of eligible staff in education settings**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines are the best way to protect people from coronavirus (COVID-19) and will save thousands of lives. We welcome the support of education and childcare settings in encouraging vaccine take up and enabling staff who are eligible for a vaccination to attend booked vaccine appointments where possible.

The vaccines have been through the same regulatory approval process as any medicines to ensure they meet strict safety standards and offer high levels of protection. They were tested on thousands of people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds and with different health conditions before being approved. The vaccine cannot give you coronavirus (COVID-19), and will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill. Some people may experience side effects from the vaccine – if you do, most of these are mild and short-term, lasting no longer than a week (but usually much less).

**DHSC** has published a blog on [Covid-19 vaccines – frequently asked questions](https://healthmedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/03/12/covid19vaccines-faqs/).

## **Shielding guidance paused for clinically extremely vulnerable people**

The government has [announced](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/shielding-advice-for-the-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-to-stop-from-april) that shielding guidance is being paused. From **Thursday 1 April**, clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people are no longer advised to shield. CEV people must continue to follow the [national restrictions](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home) that are in place for everyone.

**From Thursday 1 April, all CEV children should attend early years provision**, school, college, **wraparound childcare and out-of-school settings**, unless they are one of the very small number of children under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend.

CEV students who are enrolled in practical, or practice-based (including creative arts) courses should return to in-person teaching.

CEV staff are advised to continue to work from home where possible, but if they cannot work from home, they should now attend their workplace.

Where parents, carers, staff, or students are anxious about attendance, you should speak to them about their concerns and discuss the protective measures that have been put in place to reduce the risk and any additional measures that could be put in place.

There is [guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/schools-coronavirus-covid-19-operational-guidance) to assist school leaders in actions they should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their setting. This includes public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE).

##  **Test and Trace support payment for parents**

Parents and carers of children who have been advised to self-isolate by their education setting or by NHS Test and Trace are now able to apply for a [Test and Trace Support Payment](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme?utm_source=22%20March%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) or discretionary payment of **£500**, if they meet the eligibility criteria. The extension of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, which is administered by district and unitary local authorities in England, ensures that parents receive the financial support they need if they are unable to attend work due to childcare responsibilities.

Parents and carers should apply to their local authority to receive a payment. Applications for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme are made via the local authority in which the parent or carer resides, not the local authority where the setting is situated, if these are different.

To be eligible applicants must meet all of the criteria that:

* they are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them while they self-isolate. This is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person’s self-isolation period
* they are employed or self-employed
* they cannot work from home while undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result
* they meet all the other means-tested eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or locally determined criteria for a discretionary payment

That their child or young person:

·       is aged 15 or under (or 25 or under with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC)) and
 normally attends an education or childcare setting

·       has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their education or childcare setting
 because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for
 coronavirus (COVID-19)

Nurseries, schools, colleges and further education providers are required to provide a letter to all parents or carers of the children advised to self-isolate, to support their application to the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. A template letter is available for early years and primary schools on the [primary schools document sharing platform](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1D4tI82_pvDmkAN-x7pX-Hja6Pf1PR69G) titled with the code RP81. The letter must detail the child’s name and date of self-isolation. Parents or carers will then be able to provide this letter to their local authority as evidence that their child is required to self-isolate.

Once an application for a payment has been received, the local authority will be in touch with your setting to verify the details of the child provided on the application. This will include a check of the child’s name, age, address and days of self-isolation. This check is to minimise the event of fraudulent claims. It may be conducted before or after a payment is made, depending on the arrangements the individual local authority has chosen to put in place. The letter you give to parents and carers should explain to them that their local authority will conduct a check with their child’s setting if they apply for a payment.

## **Targeted ransomware attacks on the education sector**

The Department for Education and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has been made aware of an increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infection affecting the education sector recently.

It is important that senior leaders in education settings understand the nature of the threat and the potential for ransomware to cause considerable damage to their institutions in terms of lost data and access to critical services.

The information below will support your ongoing cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

**What should I do if I am affected?**

1.   Enact your incident management plan

2.   Contact the [NCSC](https://report.ncsc.gov.uk)

3.   Contact your local law enforcement and [Action Fraud](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/)

4.   Inform the Department for Education by emailing: sector.securityenquiries@education.gov.uk

The Department for Education supports the National Crime Agency’s recommendations not to encourage, endorse, or condone the payment of ransom demands.

Payment of ransoms has no guarantee of restoring access or services and will likely result in repeat incidents to educational settings.

It is vital that you urgently review your existing defences and take the necessary steps to protect your networks from cyber-attacks.

Along with your defences, having the ability to restore the systems and recover data from backups is vital. You should ask your IT team or provider to confirm that:

·       they are backing up the right data

·       the backups are held offline

·       they have tested that they can restore services and recover data from the backups

Further information and supporting material includes:

1.   [NCSC Alert on the current cases of ransomware](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/files/NCSC-Alert-Further-targeted-ransomware-attacks-education-sector-March-2021.pdf)

2.   [Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/mitigating-malware-and-ransomware-attacks)

3.   [Offline backups in an online world](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/blog-post/offline-backups-in-an-online-world)

4.   [Backing up your data](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/small-business-guide/backing-your-data)

## 5.   [Practical resources to help improve your cyber security](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools)

## **PCR and LFD testing during Ramadan**

The British Islamic Medical Association’s view is that taking polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or lateral flow device (LFD) tests during Ramadan does not invalidate the fast.

People may feel more comfortable doing the tests when they are not fasting. In this case, with the move to home-testing, tests can be carried out at any time.

[**New survey on early years professional development needs**](https://ncb.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=93ca41ab24380caf57761bd37&id=97a6b60cb9&e=fcdf2b283c)

The Department for Education (DfE) has published a short [**survey**](https://ncb.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=93ca41ab24380caf57761bd37&id=01c3ece6c8&e=fcdf2b283c) on professional development, which will help the Department to identify critical professional development priorities in light of the impact of COVID-19.

The survey also asks for views on the overall impact of COVID-19, including time out of settings and the impact on children's development and wellbeing.

If you are an early years staff member, please take the time to fill in this short, anonymous survey. Have your say by Friday 26 March!

|  |
| --- |
| [**Complete the survey**](https://ncb.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=93ca41ab24380caf57761bd37&id=d244a18ae2&e=fcdf2b283c)  |

[**NCFE CACHE Early Years Educator (EYE) and Early Years Practitioner (EYP) qualifications ‘knowledge only' pathway**](https://ncb.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=93ca41ab24380caf57761bd37&id=1aa5114a51&e=fcdf2b283c)

To enable progression for learners who are unable to access a work placement due to the current restrictions, NCFE CACHE worked together with Ofqual, Department for Education (DfE), Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and UCAS to agree how learners can progress through a 'knowledge only' version of EYE or EYP qualifications.

Therefore, certificates need to be carefully checked as the ‘knowledge only' pathway does not allow the holder to practice as an early years educator or early years practitioner.

The NCFE CACHE have issued a [**statement**](https://ncb.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=93ca41ab24380caf57761bd37&id=bdfff47846&e=fcdf2b283c) with further information about this and DfE have updated the early years qualification [**list**](https://ncb.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=93ca41ab24380caf57761bd37&id=ec486e3160&e=fcdf2b283c) and [**spreadsheets**](https://ncb.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=93ca41ab24380caf57761bd37&id=6f7ac0b6ce&e=fcdf2b283c) showing the impacted qualifications.

[**Read the statement**](https://ncb.us9.list-manage.com/track/click?u=93ca41ab24380caf57761bd37&id=04a35e7618&e=fcdf2b283c)



## [**EYFS staff:child ratios – DfE approved qualifications**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eyfs-staffchild-ratios-dfe-approved-qualifications?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=99a3e866-9e09-4802-823c-03d71322803e&utm_content=daily)

**Page summary:**Lists of qualifications that meet DfE’s criteria for counting in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework staff:child ratios.

**Change made:**
“Updated spreadsheets with the qualifications affected by changes to NCFE CACHE early years educator (EYE) and early years educator (EYP) qualifications where the certificate shows ‘knowledge only pathway’.

**Time updated:**2:25pm, 22 March 2021

## [**Check early years qualifications**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=3069c003-b8c7-41f3-96cb-f432909cb610&utm_content=daily)

**Page summary**:
Find out if a person’s qualifications allow them to work in an early years setting, and if you can include them in staff:child ratios.

**Change made:**
Added information about the qualifications affected by changes to NCFE CACHE early years educator (EYE) and early years educator (EYP) qualifications.

**Time updated:**2:25pm, 22 March 2021

## [**Survey of childcare and early years providers and coronavirus (COVID-19): wave 3**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/survey-of-childcare-and-early-years-providers-and-coronavirus-covid-19-wave-3?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=efdbffa9-a157-4a22-9f8d-59116e19fc50&utm_content=daily)

**Page summary**:
Wave 3 of research with childcare providers in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19).

**Change made:**First published.

**Time updated:**12:01pm, 18 March 2021

## [**Use of free early education entitlements funding during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/use-of-free-early-education-entitlements-funding-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=96ec7ed2-8ddd-4c6b-a441-7111772bb477&utm_content=daily)

**Page summary:**Funding for local authorities and early years providers through the early years dedicated schools grant (DSG).

**Change made:**
Update: the government’s plans for funding local authorities in the 2021 spring term and for the financial year 2021 to 2022.

**Time updated:**
12:45pm, 18 March 2021

## [**Ofsted: coronavirus (COVID-19) rolling update**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsted-coronavirus-covid-19-rolling-update?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=0eac8a6a-6bc2-47d0-84e5-90c0e11ea245&utm_content=daily)

**Page summary**:
Ofsted guidance and information relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) for schools, early years, children’s social care and further education and skills providers.

**Change made**:
Added a short section about Area SEND in ‘Current activity’. This sets out our plans from April 2021.

**Time updated**:
10:20am, 19 March 2021

[**Reported coronavirus (COVID-19) notifications by registered early years and childcare settings**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reported-coronavirus-covid-19-cases-by-registered-early-years-and-childcare-settings?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=d201ebea-04f4-4535-96d0-5d9599326659&utm_content=daily)

**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 22 February and 1 March 2021.

**Time updated:**
9:30am, 22 March 2021

**Updates for Parents**

## **Ofsted - Updated guidance for parents**

We have updated our guidance on [what parents need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/what-parents-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-covid-19?utm_source=17%20March%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19).

The guidance now includes information on returning to boarding school from overseas, including arrangements for pupils to quarantine on arrival in the UK. It also provides additional information to support parents considering elective home education for their child.

We have also published a collection of [guidance providing information for parents and carers](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/information-for-parents-and-carers-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_source=17%20March%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) of children attending early years settings, schools and colleges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

This collection brings together information and guidance for parents on:

* essential information for the spring term
* coronavirus (COVID-19) testing
* clubs and out-of-school settings
* home schooling and remote education support for children and young people

**Test and trace support Payment**

Parents and carers of children who have been advised to self-isolate by their education setting or by NHS Test and Trace are now able to apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment of **£500**, if they meet the eligibility criteria.”

To be eligible applicants **must meet all of the criteria that**:

* they are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them while they self-isolate. This is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person’s self-isolation period
* they are employed or self-employed they cannot work from home while undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result
* they meet all the other means-tested eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or locally determined criteria for a discretionary payment

**That their child or young person:**

·       is aged 15 or under (or 25 or under with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC)) and
 normally attends an education or childcare setting

·       has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their education or childcare setting
 because they have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for
 coronavirus (COVID-19)