
Covid-19 Pandemic:

Frequently Asked Questions

This set of frequently asked questions was updated on 7th April 2020 with responses based on the most recent information available from the Department for Education (DfE). These are included in green text.

It contains information on the following topics:

- Attendance
- Closure
- Bank Holidays, Weekends & Easter
- Learning and Assessment
- Business Continuity Plans and Finance
- Free School Meals
- Health & Wellbeing
- Staffing ratios
- Critical Workers
- Safeguarding
- SEND
- Providers Working Together

If you have a specific question which is not answered within the document, please contact us using the following details as appropriate:

Annette Brooker, Head of Early Years & Childcare Cambridgeshire:
earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Karen Hingston, Head of Early Years & Childcare Peterborough:
Karen.hingston@peterborough.gov.uk

Attendance

If only one parent of a child is classed as a key worker, should they continue to attend?

There is the option for pupils to remain in a setting if either of their parents work in one of the key industries identified by the Department for Education.

Are settings required to update the DfE with attendance details?

The local authority is required to regularly update the DfE with information, including that relating to opening and attendance. You do not need to provide the DfE with information directly; the Early Years team will contact you in the usual way for the information that they need. Timely returns are essential in order to meet DfE deadlines.

Do settings have a responsibility for vulnerable children who do not attend?

There is an expectation that vulnerable children who have a social worker will attend their early years setting, so long as it is safe for them to do so. If a parent does not want to bring their child and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and setting should explore the reasons for this directly with the parent. Social worker visits to vulnerable children will continue. Settings should ensure they have a process in place to check on the welfare of any child in need who does not attend on any day.

Closure

What happens if we need to close?

Settings should continually review their own risk assessments and business continuity planning. Where the risk assessment identifies that children and/or adults are not safe and indicates that closure is the most appropriate course of action, please inform the local authority via the email earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk, or [webform](#) [Cambridgeshire] or Karen.Hingston@peterborough.gov.uk [Peterborough] stating the **name of the provision** and the **likely closure period**. You must also inform Ofsted. It would also be helpful if you could provide a contact email address which will be in use during the closure. If settings are experiencing high demand for places or staff shortages, local authorities will coordinate support from other settings in the area. The government expects settings to be flexible and to work together where required. If a setting is unable to open, the local authority will try to coordinate provision for children in other settings. If this is not possible, we will consider working with neighbouring local authorities, keeping in mind the impact on children. If only one vulnerable or critical worker child attends and providing suitable care is not possible on that basis, arrangements should be made to merge provision with other settings, in consultation with the local authority.

The following advice applies to all **school premises**. Insurers would encourage whilst possible the implementation of existing procedures that are in place during holiday periods during this unprecedented time. The sudden closure of a property presents exposures that may be easily overlooked. Before leaving a property vacant or unoccupied, there are proactive steps that should be taken:

- Secure external doors and windows and activate the building security system.
- Maintain building heating systems to prevent water pipes from freezing or damage to sensitive equipment, ensuring electrical power maintained if it supports critical equipment.
- Keep the automatic fire protection systems on and in service.
- Notify the local police that the property will be vacant and provide emergency notification phone numbers to the police.
- While possible inspect premises at least fortnightly, noting any defects or damage and ensure these are remedied wherever possible.

This advice also applies to schools whose premises accommodate onsite Early Years settings. For any school that is accommodating an on-site Early Years setting but has not yet been in touch with us regarding its status, please email earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk, or Karen.Hingston@peterborough.gov.uk confirming the name of the setting.

Can childcare providers continue to charge parents during coronavirus-related closures?

The DfE urges 'all childcare providers to be reasonable and balanced in their dealings with parents' and states 'We will not be clawing back early years entitlements funding from local authorities during closures, or where children are withdrawn because of coronavirus...We will be keeping what further support businesses may require under close review.'

I'm a childminder: do I need to inform Ofsted I am closed?

At this time you do not need to let Ofsted know if you are closed due to COVID-19. This applies whether that is because you are not caring for children of a critical worker or a vulnerable child or because you are ill.

What kinds of things do I need to consider during the closure period?

For public safety, it is important providers comply wherever possible with the latest advice and guidance. Employers should have plans in place for short-term partial or total closure.

This is a difficult time for both employers and staff. During this period it is important to make sure staff have a way of communicating with their employers, and other people they work with. Ensure emergency contact information is up to date and consider appropriate communication channels.

- Check your level of cover with your insurance company, and what is covered under your policy
- Check staff terms and conditions of employment with regards to short time working and lay offs
- Seek legal advice from ACAS or your membership organisation legal helpline
- Speak to your Human Resources (HR) service provider if you use one
- Contact the Charity Commission / Companies House / your membership organisation where relevant
- Check with your landlord regarding rental liability
- Review income and expenditure for the closure period
- Review your reserves, and identify what is restricted and what isn't

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-reserves-cc19>

Can staff continue to come in if the setting is closed?

If the building remains open and they staff are well, there is nothing to stop them coming in. This is at the discretion of the setting manager. Where a setting operates on a school site and the school is closed, you will need to liaise with the Headteacher, and site manager if appropriate.

Public health/closure – does the health protection team need to be involved?

In the event of an outbreak of infection, your local health protection team will recommend enhanced or more frequent cleaning, to help reduce transmission.

PHE East of England HPT: EastofEnglandHPT@phe.gov.uk; telephone: 0300 303 8537

Bank Holidays, Weekends, Easter

Should providers open for longer to care for the children of critical workers?

Providers should try to be as flexible as possible for critical workers who work shifts or atypical hours.

Are vulnerable children expected to attend during the Easter holidays?

Where possible, we would encourage settings and childcare providers to continue to look after critical workers' children and vulnerable children throughout the Easter holidays, including on Bank Holidays.

Learning and Assessment

Does the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to apply?

The EYFS statutory framework applies in full at this time, with the exception of the EYFS profile which has been cancelled for this year.

Do the EYFS learning and development requirements continue to apply?

A statement from the Secretary of State for Education can be found here: <https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-open-schools-wont-be-educational>. Mr Williamson has indicated that schools and settings should remain open as “safe places” for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Whilst settings will not be expected to provide education, early years and childcare providers should continue to have regard for the EYFS, with particular reference to welfare requirements, to ensure our youngest children remain within safe appropriate environments.

Do providers still need to meet the learning and development requirements in sections 1 and 2 of the EYFS?

Early years settings are required to deliver the learning and development as set out in the EYFS framework. Detailed curriculum or teaching approaches are not prescribed – settings can tailor these according to what is appropriate to the children in their care at this time.

Should settings share resources with parents whose children are at home?

The DfE is working with the BBC and other partners to provide advice and support, including online resources, for parents. Settings that can share resources should do so but this is not a formal requirement.

Will Early Years Foundation Assessments take place?

Early Years Foundation Assessments will not take place this year, and have been suspended until further notice.

Finance

What financial support will be available to childcare providers over this period?

The Government will continue to pay funding to local authorities for the free entitlements for two, three and four-year-olds, providing reassurance for many early years settings in light of COVID-19. The local authority will follow the DfE's position and to continue early entitlements funding for all childminders, schools and nurseries currently delivering funded hours to children in their setting, regardless of whether children are able to attend due to Coronavirus.

Nurseries will be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year, from 1 April.

Nurseries eligible for a charitable status relief will pay no business rates at all in 2020-21. Some settings will operate from shared spaces, who may now benefit from a 100% rates relief too. The government is to encourage those venues to reflect that saving in rent charges to nurseries who use those spaces.

The government is working with the sector to respond to the sustainability pressures caused when families who pay private fees withdraw their children from settings. In Peterborough and Cambridgeshire, providers will continue to be paid for all children claimed in the spring funding period, including those required to be cared for at home during the outbreak. Funding will also be paid for all children claimed as part of the interim payment in the summer funding period, irrespective of when children are entitled to attend the provision. Funding for places does not depend on which children fall into priority groups. Additional business advice is available on the [government website](#) and for Cambridgeshire settings on our [provider page](#) on Covid-19.

Do we have to take an 'all or nothing' approach to the furloughing of staff?

Please be aware that the decision to furlough staff can be made for some or all staff as required. It is independent of your insurance policy. It is also anticipated that staff will be able to move in and out of furlough as work requirements dictate. Providers are strongly advised to consider this approach in the first instance before making staff redundant, or moving to closure. If cash flow is a concern, you may apply immediately for a loan under the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. This will be interest free for 12 months.

Can providers continue to charge for consumables such as nappies?

Yes; providers can charge in line with national entitlements guidance, and should continue to consider the impact of charges on disadvantaged families.

What funding support is the local authority providing?

All providers will continue to be paid by the local authority for funded children and hours to the end of the current funding period (spring 2020), regardless of where those children are. In the summer funding period, providers will be paid for all children entered on their interim payment as if they are open and the children are attending provision. This is set to be 60% of total funding due this term. We will

review the position regarding headcount on an ongoing basis. Providers who receive most of their funding in this way should be able to sustain their business and continue to pay their staff.

What government support may be available?

Your business may be entitled to funding support from the government relating to loss of income, through one or more of:

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (80% of pay for staff who remain employed)
- Cash grant for businesses receiving small business rate relief or similar
- Business rates holiday
- Business interruption interest free loan for larger organisations

It is vital that you understand the help on offer before you make any major decisions, especially regarding staff redundancies or closure.

In particular, if you wish to reclaim pay, you need to “furlough” staff rather than making them redundant. You can then reclaim 80% of their pay through HMRC.

Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses> and <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus> for more information.

Charities should refer to the specific Government guidance at the link below: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-the-charity-sector>

What about lay-offs and short-time working?

Further information regarding short time working and lay-offs is available from ACAS and GOV.uk on the links below:

<https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>
<https://www.gov.uk/lay-offs-short-timeworking>

Where an employer needs to close down their business for a short time, or ask staff to reduce their contracted hours:

➤ As an Employer

It is important for employers to speak to staff as early as possible, and throughout the closure. Staff will need to be paid during this period, unless it states otherwise in staff contracts of employment, or is mutually agreed otherwise.

➤ As an Employee

If staff are laid off and are not entitled to usual pay, they may still be entitled to a 'statutory guarantee payment' of up to £29 a day for 5 days in any 3-month period from the employer.

On days when a guarantee payment is not payable, employees might be able to claim certain benefits. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income/jobseekers-allowance-isa/before-you-claim-isa/check-if-you-can-get-isa/>

Using holiday

Employers have the right to tell employees and workers when to take holiday if they need to. For example, if they decide to shut for a week they are entitled to ask their staff to take these days from their holiday entitlement.

If the employer does decide to do this, they must tell staff at least twice as many days before as the amount of days they need people to take.

For example, if they want to close for 5 days, they must tell everyone at least 10 days before.

This could affect holiday staff have already booked or planned. So employers should:

- explain clearly why they need to close
- try to resolve any worries about how it will affect staff holiday entitlement or plans

If you are closing or partially closing,

Cambridgeshire providers please use our [webform](#) or email

earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk;

or for Peterborough, please contact Karen.hingston@peterborough.gov.uk to help us keep track of the level of impact. Please ensure we know how to contact you during your closure.

Food

What food do we have to provide?

Maintained nursery schools should continue to provide school meals to those who would normally receive them. In all other settings where free school meals do not apply, providers may charge for meals in line with national entitlements guidance.

We rely on key suppliers for food or essential consumables – what do we do if these suppliers have to restrict our supply due to the outbreak?

Each issue should be treated on a case by case basis, but providers should review their dependency on external suppliers as part of business continuity planning. Where an actual loss of supply represents a risk to the health or welfare of children or staff, providers should review their options, including restricting their offer of care, or temporary closure, informing parents, the local authority and Ofsted as appropriate.

Health and Wellbeing

What should schools /settings do if a child or member of staff in the provision displays symptoms of coronavirus?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-aboutcovid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

You can call Public Health England on 0300 303 8537.

How can providers continue to offer care if staff are sick or self-isolating?

Providers experiencing staff shortages should contact the local authority. Options include pooling staff with another setting, or taking on qualified and DBS checked staff from other educational settings (including local registered childminders) which have closed, or invite local registered childminders to work with them at the setting. Registered childminders can already do this under the 50/50 registration flexibility they have. Providers must obtain DBS checks for new members of staff including volunteers. If DBS disclosures do not arrive, new staff or volunteers must be supervised by someone who does have a DBS check at all times.

Should providers still take children outside?

Outdoor activity in private outdoor space should continue. However, childcare providers should follow the latest government advice and avoid using public spaces.

How often should children wash their hands during the day?

Children (and staff) should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently than normal, including on arrival at the setting, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing. Staff should supervise young children to ensure they wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water (or hand sanitiser if soap is not available or feasible in the particular situation) and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues. Bins for tissues should be emptied throughout the day. Consider how to encourage young children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition. Some children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities may require additional support in following public health advice, or may find frequent handwashing distressing. Staff will know where this is likely to be the case, and how they can best support individual children and young people.

How do we risk assess where staff have symptoms but we don't know the cause?

We recognise that staff may be absent with flu-like symptoms and will not be tested. Staff absence should be monitored in line with your risk assessment, and you may need to consider short-term or partial closure. Funding will not be clawed back in cases of closures backed up by a robust risk assessment.

What about daily cleaning regimes?

The DfE recommends that all educational settings follow the Public Health England (PHE) guidance on [cleaning for non-healthcare settings](#). Settings should clean and disinfect equipment, toys and surfaces more regularly. This includes keyboards, mouse, tables, chairs, door handles, light switches and bannisters.

When should we carry out a 'deep clean'?

Where there are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, all surfaces that the person has come into contact with must be cleaned, including surfaces and objects contaminated with body fluids, and potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones. If a person becomes ill in a shared space, these should be cleaned using disposable cloths and household detergents, according to current recommended workplace legislation and practice. All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, and masks if used, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It should be put in a safe place and marked for storage until the result is available. Should the individual test positive, you will be instructed what to do with the waste. If the individual tests negative, this can be put in the normal waste.

What if I have a vulnerable member of staff with underlying health condition/s?

You must ensure you discharge your duty of care by completing an appropriate health risk assessment. You should take advice from your HR provider if you have one.

How can social distancing be enforced in an EY setting?

Recent DfE advice acknowledges the particular difficulties faced in this regard by EY settings but says the following guidance should be followed as far as possible:

- tell children, parents, carers or any visitors, such as suppliers, not to visit the education or childcare setting if they are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- consider how children arrive at the education or childcare setting and reduce any unnecessary travel on coaches, buses or public transport
- ensure group sizes reflect the numbers of (qualified) staff available and are kept as small as possible
- stagger lunch times, break times and the movement of children around the setting to reduce large groups of children gathering
- discourage parents from gathering at the entrance
- try to follow the [social distancing guidelines](#)
- make sure anyone who is feeling ill stays at home. See the [guidance on isolation for residential educational settings](#)
- ensure all staff and children wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds frequently, and are encouraged not to touch their face, while using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and using bins for tissue waste. If children or young people have trouble washing their hands, ensure help is available

- inform parents and communities about the measures that you are taking and get their help to implement them
- increase cleaning of surfaces in rooms, including tables and handles, and within toilet and changing areas, adhering to guidance on cleaning of non-healthcare settings
- for children and young people with an EHC plan, work with the local authority as well as with parents to decide how best to continue supporting these children and young people to stay healthy

Staff should pay particular attention to handwashing before and after supporting children who need help with nappy changing, toileting or eating, as well as avoiding touching their own face whilst at work. Staff may want to use age and developmentally appropriate ways to encourage children to follow social distancing, hand-washing and other guidance, including through games, songs and stories. They should encourage parents/carers to reinforce these messages at home, by asking them to remind their children.

As much as possible, settings should seek to prevent the sharing of food, drink, utensils, equipment and toys. Equipment, toys and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently.

Do we need personal, protective equipment (PPE)?

The scientific advice indicates that educational staff do not require personal protective equipment. This is needed by medical and care professionals providing specific close contact care, or procedures that create airborne risk, such as suctioning and physiotherapy, for anyone who has coronavirus (COVID-19), and is displaying symptoms. If you are not providing this care to someone with the virus, and displaying symptoms, PPE is not needed. Asymptomatic people (people with the virus but not displaying symptoms) have a reduced viral load and so risk of transmission is considerably reduced. The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. These droplets are too heavy to hang in the air. They quickly fall on floors or surfaces. The advice for settings is to follow steps on social distancing, handwashing and other hygiene measures, and cleaning of surfaces.

Some children, and young people with special educational needs, may be unable to follow social distancing guidelines, or require personal care support. In these circumstances, staff need to increase their level of self-protection, such as minimising close contact (where appropriate), cleaning frequently touched surfaces, and carrying out more frequent handwashing.

Childcare practitioners do not need PPE. They should care for children as normal, although increasing the frequency of handwashing (and always doing so before and after, for example, feeding children or changing nappies) and cleaning of surfaces and toys. Soft toys should not be shared between children. If a child displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), they should not come to the setting, or should be sent home with their parents/carers if symptoms arise during the day. Staff should clean as normal after this.

Staffing ratios

Can providers vary staff to child ratios?

The DfE has confirmed that paragraph 3.30 of the EYFS applies, so the ratios can be changed if necessary. However, childcare providers or schools remain responsible for ensuring the safety and security of children in their care. Ofsted's guidance is that an appropriate risk assessment is undertaken. This needs to look at the specific children in your care and ensure their needs are able to be fully met with this ratio of supervision.

Critical Workers

Which occupations feature on the list of critical workers and how will we know if a child's parent is a critical worker?

Nurseries, childminders and registered childcare providers are being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Guidance for education and childcare settings on maintaining provision, including who should be considered a critical worker is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-localauthorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>.

Do I need to verify if the parent is a critical worker?

If you do, then please request a letter from the employer or accept a copy of their workplace ID.

Are EY staff defined as critical workers?

Nursery workers and teachers are included. Recent guidance from the DfE indicates that 'childcare practitioners are critical to the coronavirus response, so can send their children to school or childcare settings. However, every child who can safely be cared for at home should be.

Can we accept those who aren't vulnerable or the children of critical worker parents if we have the capacity?

No. The government wants to limit the spread of the virus by only providing places for the two groups, as defined above.

Vulnerable Children

What is the definition of a “vulnerable child”?

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with EHC plans. The government has confirmed that it will continue to pay local authorities for the free entitlement hours, and expect councils to pay providers regardless of closures or non-attendance. The DfE's guidance indicates that those with an EHC plan should be risk assessed by settings in consultation with the local authority and parents, to decide whether they still need a childcare place, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home.

Are Early Years Pupil Premium children classed as vulnerable?

Early Years Pupil Premium children are not classed as vulnerable pupils, and as such they should not attend unless absolutely necessary.

Should children in receipt of Special Educational Needs Inclusion funding be classed as vulnerable pupils?

Children who attend Early Years settings and are in receipt of SENIF funding should not be classed as vulnerable pupils.

Safeguarding

Do we need to implement the usual safeguarding procedures?

Settings that remain open to provide care for critical worker children should continue to implement all usual safeguarding and safer recruitment policies and procedures. Settings should create an ethos in which children feel secure, their viewpoints are valued, they are encouraged to talk and they are listened to. They can achieve this in the following ways:

- Have a clear, written Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Be vigilant to the inappropriate behaviour of staff or adults working with children and ensure that all staff, adults and volunteers know the allegations procedure and relevant contacts.
- Ensure that other relevant safeguarding policies are in place such as e-safety, use of mobile technology, intimate care, whistleblowing and behaviour management and staff code of conduct.
- Provide all staff, parents and children with suitable support and guidance.
- Ensure all staff are trained regularly, especially the DP, to ensure skills and knowledge are up to date.
- Be vigilant in cases of suspected abuse - recognise the signs and indicators, know and adhere to procedures. Be alert to any changes, however small, in children's physical appearance and/or behaviour.
- Monitor children who have been identified as being at risk or vulnerable
- Contribute to an interagency approach to child protection by working effectively and supportively with other agencies.
- Endeavour to raise children's awareness and actively promote self-esteem building so that children have a range of strategies and contacts to ensure their own protection.
- Actively teach personal safety and assertiveness skills.
- Work with parents to build an understanding of your setting's responsibility for the welfare of the children.
- Have a clear set of guidelines about physical contact between children and staff, which maintains a balance between support and preventing abuse.
- Have a clear understanding of the types of bullying and act promptly to combat it.

- Be a positive role model to children and young people by respecting children's needs and modelling appropriate boundaries.

What about referrals during this period?

During these unprecedented times it has been necessary for Children's Services to make some immediate changes to the way in which services will be delivered. We need to reduce the volume of work coming into the Front Door so that we can ensure that our reduced resource is absolutely able to focus on the children and families that require immediate support and intervention.

Significant Harm

We will continue to receive telephone referrals for significant and immediate risk to children and a written referral should follow this phone call within 24 hours. These are the cases that are likely to require immediate safeguarding action to be taken.

Section 17 Support

We will continue to receive referrals for children who require a comprehensive assessment of need, where there are concerns about parental capacity to meet their needs effectively and where there is a risk of harm. **This is an intervention that requires parental consent** and therefore we would ask that this is obtained and that all other appropriate resources have been utilised/explored to support the child/children and their family before a referral is made. We would ask that to assist us in triaging and prioritising these cases that you are clear what the impact of the current situation is on the child and why statutory intervention is needed. **If there is no parental consent obtained and there are no identified safeguarding concerns the referral will be rejected and returned to referring professional for follow up**

MASH

MASH staff will focus on completing enquiries on those cases where further information is required to filter out whether a statutory intervention is absolutely required. It is appreciated that partner agencies may be challenged to contribute fully to MASH information gathering but we would ask that proportionate and relevant information is provided as a minimum and within the requested timescales to ensure that decisions as to what is required can be made.

Early Help

In respect of Early Help support within Cambridgeshire the Early Help District Teams will continue to function albeit on a reduced level to offer support to children and families and within Peterborough the MASG panels will continue to operate virtually.

To assist us in dealing with the priority cases we would ask that you do the following:

- Review the **LOCAL OFFER** and signpost families to resources that are available to support them
- Please only complete an Early Help Assessment if you feel that by not doing so at the current time, the children could be placed at risk of potential harm

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are unsure about whether an Early Help Assessment is required please email earlyhelp@peterborough.gov.uk or early.help@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
<p>Will all checks and referrals continue to take place?</p> <p>We will be suspending the following checks and referrals for <u>12 weeks</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic Abuse referrals that are judged to be standard by police Requests for Information on whether children are known or have been known to our service Chaperone checks Any new EHCP requests or associated paperwork Background checks for example for Ofsted/CAFCASS IDVA notifications Court orders where there is no safeguarding risk or action to be taken
<p>I am concerned that unregistered childcare settings are springing up. What can I do?</p> <p>Ofsted will consider legal enforcement action against those who set up unregistered childcare, in line with our duties as a regulator. This is in order to keep children as safe as possible. Ofsted's EY team advise that anyone who is concerned that an unregistered setting might be operating to email enquiries@Ofsted.gov.uk with the details, including 'Early years setting – possibly unregistered' in the title bar.</p>
<p>What changes do I need to my safeguarding policy?</p> <p>See FAQ 2 April edition for a template C-19 'addendum' to your safeguarding policy. It is not a requirement that you adopt this template.</p>
<p>What if I don't have a Designated Person on site?</p> <p>The guidance recognizes that a Designated Person may not be available on site. It suggests that where this is the case, a trained colleague working from home could be contacted by phone or online video. Alternatively, sharing a trained Designated Person with another setting, who is available to be contacted in the same way, is an option. It is for the Early Years setting to decide on their arrangements according to circumstances, and ensure all staff are aware of what these arrangements are.</p>
<p>What should staff do if they have a safeguarding concern?</p> <p>If staff have a safeguarding concern about any child they should continue to follow the setting's usual safeguarding procedures. This includes the Child Protection procedure which requires staff to advise a DP immediately about concerns they have about any child, whether in the setting or not. COVID-19 means a need for increased vigilance due to the pressures on services, families and young people, rather than a reduction in our standards.</p> <p>It is essential that unsuitable people are not able to enter the children's workforce and/or gain access to children and children should continue to be protected when they are online.</p>

You will need to have in place specific safeguarding arrangements in respect of the following groups:

- Children in Care
- Previous Children in Care
- Children subject to a child protection plan
- Children who have, or have previously had, a social worker. There is an expectation that children with a social worker must attend the setting (or another setting by arrangement), unless in consultation with the child's social worker and family it is agreed this is not in the best interests of the child.
- Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Children on the edge of Social Care involvement or pending allocation of a social worker. Where required, these children will be offered a place at setting (or another setting by arrangement).
- Other children the setting considers vulnerable. More children may be added to this group in response to concerns raised with the DP. These children can be offered care at the setting if required.

What should we do if we are concerned about attendance?

Where a child is expected and does not arrive the setting should make contact with the family which could be via a range of methods (ensuring you are compliant with GDPR and your setting's code of conduct). If you are unable to make contact with a family about a child about whom you have concerns after a reasonable number of attempts, if there is a Social Worker involved they should be informed. If not you may need to consider a safe and well check to the home. A risk assessment should be undertaken to consider how to manage the implications of COVID-19 alongside other risks perceived to the child. The risk of COVID-19 does not override the duty on the setting to ensure children are safe.

What should I do if new or temporary staff join during this period?

Staffing

With such different staffing arrangements in place, for example, where settings are sharing staff or recruiting new staff, children could be at greater risk of abuse from staff or volunteers. New starters must have an induction before starting or on their first morning which should include, as a minimum, being asked to read the setting Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, local referral processes and the name of the Designated Person.

If staff or volunteers are transferring in from other childcare settings for a temporary period to support the care of children, you should find out from their previous setting that:

- the member of staff has completed relevant safeguarding training in line with other similar staff or volunteers
- the appropriate DBS check has been undertaken by that setting, you will undertake a written risk assessment to determine whether a new DBS would need to be undertaken

Volunteers may not be left unsupervised with children until suitable checks have been undertaken.

What if there are allegations or concerns about staff?

With such different arrangements in place children could be at greater risk of abuse from staff or volunteers. Remind all staff to maintain the view that 'it could happen here' and to immediately report any concern, no matter how small, to the Designated Person. The arrangements for contacting the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at the local authority remain unchanged. If necessary the setting should continue to follow the duty to refer to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) any adult who has harmed or poses a risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult. Peterborough LADO: Tel 01733 864038 or email lado@peterborough.gov.uk Cambridgeshire LADO: Tel 01223 727967 or email lado@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

What information do I need to get about new children joining the setting?

Where children join your setting from another setting you will need to ask whether they have a child protection file or SEND statement/EHCP and request if this can be transferred securely with parental permission as appropriate. At a minimum you should have access to any EHC plan/CIN plan/CP plan. In the case of Looked after children (LAC) please contact the relevant Virtual School. Information provided must include contact details for any appointed social worker. Safeguarding information about children placed in the setting should be recorded and the file securely returned to the placing setting on completion of the child's placement with you so there is a continuous safeguarding record for the child. The DP should undertake a risk assessment in respect of any new information received, considering how risks will be managed and which staff need to know about the information.

What happens if staff need to review their paediatric first aid certificates?

If certificate requalification training is prevented owing to the coronavirus or by complying with government advice, the validity of current certificates can be extended by up to three months. This applies to certificates expiring on or after 16 March 2020.

My Paediatric First Aid is due to run out: can I still mind?

If your paediatric first aid certificate is due to expire, see the advice from the Health & Safety Executive. It has announced a three-month extension to the validity for all certificates coming up for renewal on or after 16th March.

What about mental health?

These are unusual difficult times and some children, parents or staff may become very anxious and have Mental Health issues due to worry or anxiety around the uncertainty. You can signpost to the NHS [Every Mind Matters](https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters) website for support.

What about vulnerable children who do not attend?

Please phone each family where a child is deemed to be vulnerable and is not attending your setting due to setting closure/family or self-isolation/illness etc. If you are calling from your home or personal mobile, use 141 as a prefix so that 'No caller ID' is displayed. Record the information you receive on these calls, as well as when they were made. The April 2nd edition of the EY FAQs document included a template that you may wish to use for recording.

What about Local Authority training and networking events?

The Early Years and Childcare Service is postponing sessions in line with our Council's guidance. We will however be making arrangements for essential Designated Person Training. If you are at risk of closure because you don't have a Designated Person please email earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or syreeta.payne@peterborough.gov.uk.

What about safeguarding if we have to close?

Ensure all staff have telephone contact details for the Designated Person/s.

Consider setting up a secure safeguarding email inbox that is accessible only to the Designated Person (DP).

Include the Designated Person (DP) contact details on "out of office" email replies, phone messages and the setting website. This will enable partner agencies to contact the DP if necessary.

Children and families

The Government policy is that providers should continue to offer care for vulnerable children if at all possible.

If closure is unavoidable:

- Identify your most vulnerable children and those currently open to Social Care and Early Help. This could also include families where there is Domestic Abuse. Contact the relevant professionals to make them aware that the setting has closed and agree any further action required.
- For children who are currently on a Child Protection Plan, the DP should have daily contact if the setting is closed, ideally by phone. If there are any concerns, the DP should contact the child's social worker as normal.
- For children open to Social Care under Child in Need (CIN), the contact should be 2-3 times a week. For all other vulnerable children, the DP should have weekly contact and depending on the child's individual circumstances, more frequently if required.
- In exceptional circumstances, where a phone call may not suffice there may need to be some face-to-face contact, consider using Skype or similar platform. If using Skype or webcams from home, ensure there are no identifiable features in the background – use a blank wall/curtain, and make sure confidentiality is maintained.
- Full written records should be maintained as usual detailing any contact with the child and family and any agreed actions.

Staff

Ensure all staff have clear guidance as to the procedures they should follow if they have concerns about a child/young person while the setting is closed including the safeguards mentioned above.

How will CP conferences work during COVID-19?

Detail on this was contained within the April 2nd edition of the EY FAQs document.

SEND

Which children with SEND should be attending?

During this period we are aware that provision will look different; some settings will be joining together to ensure there is continued provision available, in a few circumstances children may transfer to another setting as a temporary arrangement. It is important to note that children with SEND will only be attending a setting at this time if they have:

- an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and/or
- a parent/carer who is a critical worker and/or
- they fall into another vulnerable group.

What should I consider for all children with SEND?

- Ensure essential information is shared
- Does an additional risk assessment/ risk reduction plan need to be undertaken?
- Ensure essential supports such as visual timetables, PECS books etc. are available.
- Ensure there is consistency where possible with staff, we appreciate that this may be challenging but consider ways around it e.g. daily key person
- Try to keep to daily routines where possible.

What about SEND plans?

Ensure appropriate plans are created/available and shared and key staff have been given time to read essential plans to ensure the safety and well-being of all children. The following need to be in place (where relevant):

- Care plan
- Positive interactions plan
- Risk assessment/ risk reduction plan
- Medical protocols
- EHCP

What about children with SEND who have EHCPs?

Children with an EHCP should only attend a setting if their parents are critical workers or would be at significant risk if the provision named in the EHCP did not continue, namely those who could not safely be supported at home. Alongside the views of parents settings need to risk to make a risk assessment to consider the provision for children with an EHCP.

Settings will need to consider a number of different risks to each individual, including:

- the potential health risks to the individual from COVID-19, considering underlying health conditions. Seek advice from an appropriate health professional where required

- the risk to the individual if some or all elements of their EHC plan cannot be delivered at all, the risk if they cannot be delivered in the normal manner or in the usual setting
- the ability of the individual's parents or home to ensure their health and care needs can be met safely
- the potential impact to the individual's wellbeing of changes to routine or the way in which provision is delivered.

What about children who are on the Early Support Pathway

In addition to all the above, where the setting is the lead professional for a child on the Early Support Pathway the above contact would apply.

TAF meetings should NOT take place on a face to face basis. If absolutely necessary, a lead professional can talk to the family to identify needs, contact those involved to seek response and then type up a plan.

Cambridgeshire Early Support Co-ordinators will still be available for urgent enquiries; in Peterborough, contact susan.ishmael@peterborough.gov.uk.

If you are concerned about supporting the needs and managing the risk for children with SEND, or if a child with SEND is going to be accessing care at an alternative provider then please contact the Early Years SEND Team for Cambridgeshire ey.send.cambridgeshire@gov.uk or for Peterborough, lynne.jennings@peterborough.gov.uk, emma.brader@peterborough.gov.uk or andrea.gamman@peterborough.gov.uk.

The SEND Knowledge Hub will be kept up to date with important SEND information for Cambridgeshire providers.

What about children with SEND who have medical needs?

Where the administration of medicine requires medical or technical knowledge there must be a staff member who is trained to do so. Clearly identify where medication is being stored, ensure this is transferred from another setting if needed.

Providers Working Together

What are the rules about agency staff and COVID-19?

The rules over self-isolation apply to all staff who work in your setting. The responsibility for supporting sickness cost rests with their employer i.e. the agency or third party.

Can childminders get involved in supporting the continuation of provision for priority children?

Under existing registration arrangements, childminders can work for up to 50% of the time on non-domestic premises. Those without such approval will need to seek it from Ofsted, after seeking initial support from the local authority. If childminders have capacity, they could help support with staff shortages in centre-based childcare provision.

Can childminders work with other childminders to look after more priority children together?

Up to 3 childminders (or a mix of up to 3 childminders and assistants) can work together in the same domestic premises. If more than 3 work together they will have to apply to Ofsted to register childcare on domestic premises. Four or more childminders (or a mix of 4 childminders and assistants) can work together in the same domestic premises which would enable them to care for larger groups of children and still meet ratio requirements.

We are a school - what do we do about our early years setting?

Schools directly managing an early years and/or childcare setting should focus on whole school risk assessment and business continuity planning. Settings using school buildings with an independent registration will need to conduct their own view of business continuity and work in partnership with school leaders.

Where the risk assessment identifies that children and/or adults are not safe and indicates that closure is the most appropriate course of action, please inform the local authority

- via the email earlyyears.service@cambridgeshire.gov.uk, or [webform](#) [Cambridgeshire]
- or Karen.Hingston@peterborough.gov.uk [Peterborough]

stating the **name of the provision** and the **likely closure period**. You must also inform Ofsted.

It would also be helpful if you could provide a contact email address which will be in use during the closure.

Where closure has taken place in line with a robust and documented risk assessment, the local authority will continue to pay for any funded places.