



E: [ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot](mailto:ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot)

10 December 2021

To all registered childcare providers,

### **Update on the Omicron variant**

I wanted to get in touch as I know you will be concerned about the Omicron COVID-19 variant that has recently emerged. You are probably considering what impact this will have on the childcare sector, and the implications for your own setting.

As the First Minister has said this week, there is still much that we do not know about the variant, but the Scottish Government is taking a precautionary approach until we do.

I am attaching a joint letter being issued today to all schools and ELC settings, from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and Councillor Stephen McCabe on behalf of the *COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG)*. This letter outlines the importance of adhering to current mitigations within education settings and across wider society. It also provides updates on vaccination, testing, and the need for enhanced vigilance. Please take the time to read this letter and note the important information it contains.

Although the letter emphasises that we may need to reinstate some of the protections that were present within ELC settings last year, I would like to emphasise that at this point we are not making any further changes to the guidance for the ELC sector. We must, however, all redouble our efforts to **ensure that we adhere to all current mitigations within the safe operating guidance for the childcare sector.**

[Early learning and childcare services](#)

[School age childcare services](#)

[Childminder services](#)

The letter confirms that there has been a change to the self-isolation policy. As the First Minister outlined in her statement today, from Saturday 11 December **household contacts of all cases, regardless of which variant is suspected, must isolate for 10 days. This applies to everyone in the household, irrespective of age, testing negative or being vaccinated.** The First Minister also referred to the application of exemptions for critical services, and more information on those will follow shortly.

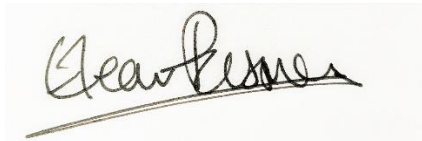
The eligibility criteria for the Self-Isolation Support Grant will be updated by tomorrow to reflect this change. More information can be found [here](#).

The COVID ELC reference group will meet next week to discuss the Omicron variant and we will continue to work closely together to identify issues and solutions.

**This is a fast moving situation and as it develops there may be changes for the childcare sector or more generally for wider society.** We will keep you updated through the usual channels.

I would once again like to thank you for all of your hard work this year, and all that you are continuing to do to ensure that children enjoy the festive period in circumstances that none of us would have wished to see.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is cursive and reads "Eleanor Passmore".

**ELEANOR PASSMORE**

Deputy Director, Early Learning and Childcare