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To: All registered school age childcare providers

New guidance to support planning for wider reopening of School Age Childcare Services

Today we have published new guidance to support settings in planning for the safe reopening of school age childcare services in [Phase 3 of Scotland's Routemap](#).

- [Phase 3 Guidance for school age childcare](#) has been published on the Scottish Government website on 3 July 2020. This guidance will be kept under review as we progress through the routemap.
- From Wednesday 15 July 2020, all school age childcare providers can operate if they wish to do so, subject to confirmation on 9 July that Scotland has entered Phase 3 of the Routemap .
- In allocating their spaces, continued critical childcare for [keyworkers and vulnerable children](#) should be the first priority. Beyond that, providers can use their discretion to allocate places to families. Where possible, critical provision should be delivered as part of a coordinated local authority-led emergency response.
- There is no requirement to reopen immediately or during Phase 3 at all. It is important that settings take the time they need to consider if they wish to operate their service during Phase 3, based on their own business circumstances.
- Providers and staff must continue to follow public health advice, including the [advice for COVID-19 infected households](#) and the [Health Protection Scotland COVID-19 guidance for non-healthcare settings](#). Risk assessments of settings must take place, giving consideration to the relevant guidance.
- The safe reopening guidance has been created in collaboration with school age childcare sector stakeholders, Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, COSLA and ADES. It incorporates lessons learned from those settings who have been operating during COVID-19.
- The guidance is firmly based in public health advice. It will be kept under review and updated as scientific and public health guidance evolves. This guidance includes a number of links to wider public health guidance and we would encourage you to revisit these links regularly to ensure you are aware of the latest developments.

This guidance focuses on the practicalities and operational aspects of reopening that providers will wish to consider. We know that the re-opening won't be a one size fits all approach and that the guidance will have different impacts on individual settings.

Principal features of the guidance include infection prevention and control, small cohorts working, maximising use of outdoor spaces and supporting the wellbeing of children, families and staff. This guidance will be reviewed as scientific advice changes, and in line with any wider guidance for subsequent phases. School age childcare guidance will also be reviewed and updated, where required, by 30 July to ensure alignment with the guidance that will underpin the return to school. At this time, further consideration will also be given to transport and blended placements.

You know your settings, you know your own workforce and you know your children and families. This guidance is the first part of empowering you to feel confident to take local decisions about the reopening and safe operating of your setting once we reach Phase 3.

Financial and Business Support

It is possible that putting in place the public health measures outlined in the guidance will impact on the number of places that can be provided safely at one time. Employers will also need to consider carefully the particular circumstances of their own employees and the implications for staffing models.

The ELC and Childcare Sector Recovery Group is looking closely at the financial sustainability of the sector throughout the pandemic response. We know that this is fundamental to the ability of the sector to reopen. The Scottish Government has asked the sector representative bodies to work with their members to understand the impacts of the safe reopening guidance in terms of capacity and income generation; and the impacts of local funded ELC delivery plans as they are developed. The Group will provide input to the overall COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (which advises the Scottish Government and local government) on any further measures that may be required to support sustainability.

Please continue to check our dedicated gov.scot pages for the latest information on the financial and business support measures in place to support the childcare sector during closures and recovery: -

- [Private and third sector providers: financial support](#)
- [Childminders: financial support](#)

Test and Protect

Our priority is the safety of every individual in Scotland. The easing of lockdown is an indication that Scotland is now in a position to slowly and cautiously begin to move forward and out of the Covid-19 crisis. The virus still exists and it is important that we continue to follow the guidance around physical distancing (where possible), increased hygiene measures and that we self-isolate if you or members of your household have any symptoms of coronavirus. More information can be found at [NHS Inform](#).

Thank You

We fully recognise the critical role that school age childcare provision will play in our long term economic recovery from the pandemic, and to realising our shared commitment to improving children's outcomes through high quality learning and childcare. Thank you.