

Supporting you to operate in a safe environment during the festive period

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Christmas is a time of traditions, celebration and exciting activities for all early learning and childcare (ELC) settings including childminders and school aged childcare. It is important that this year children and families can have the best experience possible while services continue to operate in a way that mitigates the spread of COVID-19.

The current guidance issued on 30 October 2020 is still in place and you must continue to operate and implement this guidance when planning your festive activities. The most recent guidance can be found here:

- [Guidance for early learning and childcare services](#)
- [Guidance for childminding services](#)
- [Guidance for school aged childcare services](#)

We have had many enquiries in relation to the provision of ELC over the festive period and we hope to support you to provide a wide range of Christmas activities using the core public health measures that underpin the operation of provision:

- enhanced hygiene and cleaning practice
- active engagement with Test and Protect
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/test-and-protect>
- physical distancing between adults in the setting including parents at drop-off and pick-up times
- maximizing the use of outdoor spaces
- limiting children's contacts

The following are some suggestions that may assist staff to provide a safe, festive and exciting environment.

Remember always to consider your risk assessment in all that you provide.

Children's Christmas activities including any parties must continue to be provided with their existing cohorts.

Staff must continue to maintain physical distance between staff, parents and any other adults. Appropriate use of PPE and face coverings, as outlined in the current guidance, is crucial.

Cleaning

To prevent the spread of infection, cleaning will be an important aspect of any items you bring into the children's environment. You should ensure that decorations and equipment used, or that are in reach of children, continue to be easily cleaned and cleaned between usage by groups of children.

Your cleaning schedules must include all decorations, as per the COVID-19 cleaning guidance, published within the Scottish Government's Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance, using standard detergent and disinfectant that are active against viruses and bacteria.

Christmas trees

Christmas trees are difficult to clean regularly, therefore you should ensure that these are not in reach of children. For example, by using furniture to prevent children approaching. This will depend on the age of children understanding the reasons why they should not touch the tree. This is something you would consider every year. For example, you would not have a tree where young children could pull decorations off the tree or reach edible decorations on the tree.

Decorations

Decorations can be displayed in most areas. It is known that decorations stuck or adhered to walls or ceilings can also leave a residue when the item is removed which compromises cleanliness it is therefore important to remove any loose adhesions, such as tape.

Decorations must not be placed in any area where personal care take places. For example, toilet or changing facilities.

Christmas lights must be able to be cleaned with a damp cloth and detergent when unplugged.

Avoid over-cluttering of surfaces as this will make them more difficult to clean in between cohort use.

Should an outbreak occur in an area when Christmas decorations are on display, then you should consider removing and cleaning these before reintroduction.

Consider using outside space more to promote Christmas, for instance, having Christmas lights and a tree outside.

Singing

The guidance still applies, and singing should not happen indoors as an organised, large group activity. However, it is recognised that children sing naturally in the course of activities and play, and should not be discouraged from doing so, and that singing can also be used to comfort young children when necessary.

You may continue to use recorded or live Christmas music in the setting to enhance children's experiences.

Christmas cards/Christmas work

If children are sharing cards or children are taking their work home, you could consider the following:

- Agree approach with parents
- Post boxes could be used for Santa letters or Christmas cards. They could be stored in the post box for 72 hours before going home
- Items can be stored in cleanable containers, so that they can be cleaned as they leave the setting and cleaned before taking into the home

Parents and carers

It is usual within ELC settings to invite parents and families into the setting to see children in panto, nativity plays and concerts. During this period, the COVID-19 guidance should be followed and parents should not be invited into the setting for events. It is important that the guidance must be adhered to in relation to drop off and collection of children, the wearing of face coverings and physical distancing.

If parents collect children at an entrance it is not advisable to have this area decorated as it prevents the appropriate cleaning of the area.

We wish all the staff, children and parents in the ELC wider sector a fun, happy and safe festive season.

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