



E: ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

17 November 2021

To all registered childcare providers,

Supporting settings over the winter period and enjoying seasonal celebrations safely

This is a short update to thank you for all your hard work and signpost you to parts of the guidance that may be helpful as you think about planning for winter and the festive season.

I know that working in early learning and childcare during the pandemic has often felt difficult and challenging, and that many of you may be wondering when the impact of the pandemic will end. As the Deputy First Minister has said, the situation remains precarious and unpredictable. We do know that, unfortunately, COVID 19 is going to be with us for some time yet. As part of everyone's efforts to support and protect the NHS through a difficult winter, we will all need to continue to play our part in keeping levels of transmission low by adopting safe behaviours. Whilst the Scottish Government has not ruled out strengthening baseline protective measures **we are not making any changes to the guidance just now.**

I am sure that many settings will already be thinking about how to celebrate important events like Christmas or the Chinese New Year with their children over the next few months. These are wonderful opportunities to enjoy together and I know how important they are for children and their families.

As managers and practitioners, you know your children, families and communities best and I am sure you will be very familiar with the COVID-19 safety guidance by now. However, as my team has received some queries from the sector over the last few weeks I thought it would be helpful to provide some pointers to specific sections of the current guidance that may be helpful to you as you plan these celebrations (the links are to the ELC guidance, and similar advice is available within the guidance for [SAC](#) services):

- The section on [day visits](#) should be useful in helping settings make any plans involving taking children out.
- The sections on [enhanced hygiene](#) and [sharing resources](#) with the home will help settings to support children or families to exchange gifts or cards.
- The section on [specialist visitors](#) will help settings make plans for any arrangements they have for special visitors (including those in red suits with long white beards) to attend and meet children safely.
- As the current guidance on [parental visits](#) makes clear, unfortunately groups of parents are not able to attend events inside settings at this time but there are many other creative and COVID-safe ways that they can join in any planned celebrations or events like nativity plays or visits from Santa.

Childminders will no doubt also be thinking about gift giving and other celebrations, and the [childminder services guidance](#) makes similar provisions for how to do this in a COVID-safe way in a domestic setting.

I am sure you are well used to making informed [risk assessments](#) about how to plan and run activities at this point in time. I have heard of many wonderful approaches to celebrating important events with your children and involving their families in COVID safe ways since the pandemic began, and I have no doubt that you will come up with similarly creative ways to celebrate over the festive period whilst adhering to the guidance (e.g. through live streaming or sharing videos and pictures).

As ever, we will be keeping a very close eye on case rates in the coming weeks, taking advice from experts and engaging closely with the sector about whether any further changes to the guidance may be needed if the situation worsens.

In the meantime as the Deputy First Minister has recently said, there are three things we can all do to help protect each other. First, it is never too late to get vaccinated, or have your booster jab if you are eligible. Second, remember that all settings have access to regular at home LFD testing for their staff. Finally, we all need to continue to adhere to the rules across wider society that reduce the risk of transmission.

I hope this is helpful and thank you once again for everything that you and your teams continue to do for Scotland's children and families.

ALISON CUMMING

Director, Early Learning & Childcare

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alison Cumming', written in a cursive style.