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22 December 2020

## Childcare Provision Notice – For Period 26 December to 18 January

To all registered childcare providers

Following the [First Minister's announcement on Saturday, 19 December](#) that further public health measures in response to the new strain of COVID-19 are to be put in place we are writing to confirm the guidance which will apply from 26 December 2020 until at least 18 January 2021. Mainland Scotland will enter Level 4 from 26 December and the island authorities will enter Level 3 restrictions.

### What does this mean for the childcare sector?

The following will take effect from 26 December:

- Childminders (other than those caring for 12 or more children) can stay open to all children and should operate in accordance with Level 4 guidance (or Level 3 in Island authorities and other designated island communities in Argyll and Bute and Highland).
- Nurseries and all other regulated childcare providers, including childminding services caring for 12 or more children, should open only to key worker and vulnerable children.
- Informal childcare can continue in accordance with Level 4 guidance (or Level 3 in Island authorities and other designated island communities in Argyll and Bute and Highland).

We expect all children to be able to return to regulated childcare from Monday 18 January, but we need to assess the impacts of the new strain of the virus before we can confirm return arrangements for the sector.

### Supplementary Guidance

We have published [supplementary guidance](#) which sets out what settings should do between 26 December and 18 January. This guidance makes clear that settings can remain open, but only children of key workers and children who are vulnerable should attend at this time. It is important to note that this is not the same arrangement as in March when the sector closed – the childcare sector will remain open from 26 December but we are asking you to limit the number of children who attend your setting(s).

Children who attend settings will continue to benefit from their ELC funded entitlement or to pay for additional childcare, according to their usual pattern of attendance.

The guidance provides information about the definition of key worker and vulnerable children.

Providers have discretion to apply the definitions of key workers and vulnerable children contained within the guidance. Some points to note:

- If you are a local authority provider, you should have reference to your local authority's overall approach in determining which children can attend after 26 December.
- Places can be allocated to children with parents or carers in any category of the key worker definition.
- In general, both parents or carers in the household should be key workers who cannot work from home in order for their child to continue attending, but individual providers have discretion to consider what is in the best interests of the child and their family.
- We are updating the guidance today (Tuesday 22 December) to make particular reference to ensuring that children who are eligible for a funded 2 year old place can continue to access provision, even if they do not strictly meet the definition of vulnerable children.

## Safe Operating Guidance

We published revised guidance for the childcare sector on 30 October 2020. This guidance supports the most up to date public health advice and scientific evidence and aligns with the Strategic Framework levels approach.

While operating during this period early learning and childcare settings, childminding services and school aged childcare settings should continue to operate in line with the current core guidance for your setting type and local authority protection level which can be found here –

- [Early Learning and Childcare](#)
- [Childminding Services](#)
- [School Aged Childcare](#)

It is important that providers continue to follow the public health measures as set out in the guidance which place child and staff safety and wellbeing at their heart. These are:

- enhanced hygiene and cleaning practice
- limiting children's contacts
- maximising the use of outdoor spaces
- physical distancing between adults in the setting including parents at drop-off and pick-up times
- face coverings worn by adults when not working directly with children, or where physical distancing with other adults cannot be maintained
- active engagement with Test and Protect

## Business support

We are considering with Local Government and the childcare sector representative bodies what other financial support will be needed while the supplementary guidance remain in place.

In the meantime, we would encourage you to keep in touch with your representative body and /or the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): support to childcare sector - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) to find out what support you can access just now. This includes information on and links to available support schemes, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme.

## Parents and Families

We would encourage any parent or family wishing to keep in touch with developments to visit our [guide to childcare](#) on the Parent Club website which includes access to frequently asked questions and other information that they may find helpful. This is updated as new information becomes available and now reflects the changes made in the supplementary guidance.

Thank you again for everything you do for Scotland's children and families, particularly as we continue to adapt and adjust our response to the extraordinary needs brought about by this global pandemic.

Alison Cumming  
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