

Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare Covid-19 Update

No. 3 – 9 June 2020

As you'll be aware, we are replacing our monthly Programme Updates with regular Covid-19 newsletters for the duration of the pandemic response. We'll send these to you as often as we have news to share, and will look to build the sharing of good practice into future editions.

I'd like to reiterate the Scottish Government's thanks and appreciation for all that you are doing to support Scotland's children and families at this most challenging of times. I hope that you find this update helpful, and would welcome your feedback on how we can best ensure you get the information you need on a regular basis.

Take care

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Interim Director, Early Learning and Childcare

1. Key information, guidance and contact points

Throughout this update, we have provided links to the latest guidance and information. As you will appreciate, the situation continues to change so please continue to check the Scottish Government's website regularly for the latest guidance and information – see <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>

If you have any questions or issues you would like to raise with the team, please use the contact details below and we will respond as soon as we can. Please email:

- ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot for enquiries about **support for providers and parents**;
- outofschoolcare@gov.scot for enquiries about **critical childcare** and keyworker testing provision;
- ELCDeliverySupport@gov.scot if you work in a **local authority team** looking for advice or support about early learning and childcare, or contact your link person in the delivery team;
- ELCProgrammeOffice@gov.scot for any other queries.

To keep up to date with all the most relevant information and guidance, follow us on Twitter @ELCScotGov or join the Knowledge Hub.

Local authorities can register on the Knowledge Hub at <https://www.khub.net> and request to join [Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Expansion Scotland: Local Authorities](#).

If you would like to join the wider Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland - Discussion Forum and Documents Group, please email an expression of interest to ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

2. Phase 1 – Easing of lockdown in Scotland

On Thursday 28 May the First Minister announced that Scotland will begin to cautiously ease out of lockdown and move into Phase 1 of the [routemap](#). The Scottish Government published new guidance explaining the rules in place for [Phase 1](#).

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](#).

What this means for the childcare sector

Critical childcare for keyworkers and vulnerable children

If you are providing childcare to keyworker children and vulnerable families then you should continue to do so. During Phase 1 there may be an increase in the number of keyworker families looking for critical childcare provision due to other changes in their household circumstances. As was the case during the initial period of lockdown, settings (other than childminders and fully outdoor provision) should only open if required to provide critical childcare for keyworkers and vulnerable children.

Wherever possible, settings should provide critical childcare as part of the coordinated local authority offer. Settings can also provide critical childcare for eligible families on a private basis, but must be mindful that the public health advice remains that children should – wherever possible – still be at home.

Detailed guidance on the definition of keyworkers, and how decisions are made about provision can be still be found at: [School and ELC closures - guidance for keyworkers](#). If you have questions about the definition of keyworkers, the Keyworkers Brokerage Hub, who co-ordinate the most complex range of queries and issues relating to keyworker status, can be contacted at: keyworkers@gov.scot.

We expect a gradual transition process as we move away from a majority ‘childcare hub’ model to more childcare settings re-opening to provide critical childcare for children key workers and vulnerable families. This will be a local decision for local authorities to make and you will hear from your authority about reopening to provide critical childcare.

Childminding services and fully outdoor childcare provision

From Wednesday 3 June 2020 all childminders and fully outdoor childcare provision were able to reopen if they wished to do so. In allocating their spaces, continued critical childcare for keyworkers and vulnerable children should be the first priority. Beyond that, childminders and fully outdoor settings can use their discretion to allocate places to families. Further guidance to support the reopening of both types of service was published on Monday 1 June 2020.

- [The Childminder Services Guidance](#) supports childminders to safely operate during Phase 1, should they wish to.
- [The Fully Outdoor Childcare Providers Guidance](#) provides guidance for fully outdoor childcare settings who wish to reopen services from 3 June

There is no requirement for all childminding and fully outdoor services to reopen immediately or during Phase 1 at all. It is important that each provider takes the time they need to prepare to reopen if they wish to do so, based on their own business and personal circumstances.

Childminding services

Restrictions on the number of households whom childminders can care for at any one time continue to be in place to reduce the risk of transmission.

The guidance published on Monday 1 June confirmed that childminders who wish to operate during Phase 1 should limit the number of households for whom they provide childcare to a maximum of 4, in addition to their own household, at any one time. This is an increase from the restriction of 2 households during the lockdown phase. The guidance also highlights the enhanced cleaning and hygiene measures that must be put in place to reduce the risk of transmission. The guidance and restrictions will be reviewed again ahead of the wider reopening of early learning and childcare services during Phase 3.

There will be no change to the current Care Inspectorate arrangements for registration of services and the number of children a service can care for as detailed on the certificate of registration.

Fully outdoor childcare provision

Childcare services who are registered with the Care Inspectorate as fully outdoor can also re-open during Phase 1. We know that many of you have excellent outdoor space and may be able to fully utilise it with some adaptations or provide satellite provision, but in line with other aspects of Phase 1 of the routemap, at this stage only fully outdoor childcare provision can reopen from 3 June.

This should not be confused with settings which currently provide outdoor experiences as part of their provision of early learning and childcare or school age childcare. According to current Care Inspectorate registrations there are 26 registered fully outdoor nurseries and 1 fully outdoor out of school care setting operating in Scotland.

We have written to all fully outdoor childcare providers with a copy of the [guidance for the safe reopening of fully outdoor childcare providers](#). The guidance published on Monday 1 June highlighted the practical arrangements that would need to be put in place for these settings to safely operate during Phase 1. This includes guidance on caring for children in small cohorts of **up to 8** children, who should remain together and where possible be cared for by the same staff member(s), throughout each day.

We are aware of concerns raised by some fully outdoor childcare providers around the new guidance and arrangements for small group working and we are continuing to work with the sector and Public Health Scotland to clarify the guidance where helpful.

All other early learning and childcare (ELC) and school aged childcare provision

As explained above, childcare providers can remain open or re-open for the provision of critical childcare to keyworkers' children and for vulnerable families only, in line with the latest Health Protection Scotland guidance. If providers choose to open or re-open to provide critical childcare, unless there is an explicit agreement with the local authority, then providers should agree fee arrangements privately with parents.

The Scottish Government's Routemap confirms that wider reopening of early learning and childcare services can take place in Phase 3. The Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate will notify all providers of the earliest possible date for the wider reopening of childcare services. Depending on when we enter Phase 3, this may mean that childcare providers have the option of reopening before the schools return on 11 August, where this fits with their normal operating patterns. Term-time childcare settings would reopen in line with agreed term dates – there is no requirement or expectation that they will open earlier in Phase 3.

We are currently working collaboratively with the Care Inspectorate, COSLA, local authorities, childcare sector stakeholders and the unions to create guidance for the safe reopening of early learning and childcare and out of school care settings. We will issue guidance for the safe reopening and operating of early learning and childcare and school aged childcare provision on the 15 June 2020 in preparation for reopening.

We will contact all providers through the Care Inspectorate to confirm the earliest possible opening date for wider reopening, which will depend when it is considered safe for Scotland to move into Phase 3 of the routemap.

As we set out in our Strategic Framework, we do not consider physical distancing to be appropriate or desirable for children in early learning and childcare settings. The safe reopening of settings will involve:

- enhanced hygiene and cleaning practices,
- caring for children in small groups,
- minimising contact between those groups,
- maximising use of outdoor spaces, and
- physical distancing between adults in the setting, including parents at drop-off and pick-up times.

It is really important that we learn from settings who are currently providing childcare during Covid-19. We are working with these providers to also help us inform the guidance which will issue on 15 June 2020.

Return of staff

ELC and OSC staff working in local authority settings will hear from your local authority about plans for returning to work in June in line with teachers and other school staff. We do not expect staff working in the private and voluntary childcare sector (other than those required to provide critical childcare) to return to their settings in June. Guidance to be published on 15 June 2020 will explain the steps settings need to take to reopen safely during Phase 3, and providers will then be able to consider appropriate plans to prepare for reopening, taking account of the arrangements for staff who are furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Physical Distancing Guidance for Schools

On 28 May, the Scottish Government published physical distancing guidance for the reopening of schools. This guidance can be found [here](#). This guidance applies specifically to the reopening of schools and does not apply to early learning and childcare or school-age childcare settings.

3. COVID-19 Education Recovery Group / Critical Childcare and ELC Subgroup

The Deputy First Minister convened the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) on 24 April 2020. This group is intended to be a collaborative endeavour, bringing together key stakeholders in school education and early learning and childcare, to support national and local government in the journey to re-opening education and childcare settings when it is safe to do so.

On 21 May the CERG published [The Strategic Framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision](#), which sets out a framework to be used at local level in conjunction with Local Phasing Delivery Plans for the reopening of schools and early learning and childcare. Details of the group's remit, membership and minutes of meetings are published on the Group's [webpage](#).

A Critical Childcare and ELC subgroup, chaired by Simon Mair (SG) and Laura Mason (ADES), has been established to take forward two of the ten work streams reporting to the CERG. These are; Critical Childcare and Early Learning and Childcare. The group membership includes COSLA, SOLACE, ADES, Education Scotland, Care Inspectorate, Early Years Scotland, EIS and AHDS. For further information on the subgroup, please contact ELCDeliverySupport@gov.scot

The subgroup is supported by a Working Group on ELC and Childcare Sector Recovery, chaired by Clare Furze/Ellen Leaver (SG), which brings together provider representatives from across the childcare sector, including Care and Learning Alliance (CALA), Early Years Scotland (EYS), National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) as well as Care Inspectorate, COSLA and Scottish Government. The Working Group met for the first time on 20 May and is currently meeting weekly. The Working Group is providing advice and input into: (1) development of guidance documents for the sector; (2) financial sustainability for the sector; (3) workforce; and (4) partnership working.

For further information on the Sector Recovery Working Group, please contact ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot.

Critical childcare surveys

We have set up two daily surveys to monitor the delivery of critical childcare during the Covid-19 outbreak – one which local authorities respond to and one which private and voluntary settings and childminders complete. Both surveys collect data on open settings, staff working at these settings, and the number of children receiving childcare. This information is analysed and used to support reporting and decision-making.

Contact info: Kate Smith and the Emergency Childcare team: outofschoolcare@gov.scot

4. Outdoor Play and Learning

We have recently published [guidance about outdoor play](#) in emergency childcare provision during the Covid-19 restrictions. Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director also recorded a couple of video messages for us – one providing advice about [outdoor play](#) and another about [social distancing](#) in childcare settings.

We have funded Living Classrooms (CIC) to deliver a **Virtual Nature School** programme for the ELC sector. The programme is designed to help practitioners support children who cannot attend their setting during covid-19. All practitioners who attend the course receive training on the pedagogy and practice of outdoor play. This is then put into practice with practitioners delivering nature based play sessions, via an online platform, to a group of children and families from their setting who are not currently able to attend. The VNS can support up to 2,000 practitioners and 20,000 families over 2 cohorts between 1 June and 18 September 2020. More information is available at www.virtualnatureschool.scot

If you need any further information get in touch with us at outdoorELC@gov.scot

5. Support for childcare providers and workforce

A range of financial and business support measures have been announced by the UK and Scottish Governments since March. Information about the different schemes that may be available to private and third sector providers and childminders is available on the Scottish Government's website and updated regularly at:

[Information for private and third sector childcare providers about business support](#)
[Information for Childminders about business and financial support](#)

The most recent updates include information on the changes, announced by the UK Government on 29 May, to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The key updates to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which will operate until October, are:

- from 1 July, employers will be able to bring back to work employees that have previously been furloughed for any amount of time and any shift pattern, while still being able to claim support for their normal hours not worked. From 1 July when claiming a grant for furloughed hours employers will need to report and claim for a minimum period of a week.
- changes to the level of reimbursement through HMRC for furloughing costs for the Scheme, with employers contributing to these costs from August, as follows:
 - until end of July 80% of eligible furloughed employees' usual monthly wage costs, up to £2,500 a month, plus the associated Employer National Insurance contributions and pension contributions (up to the level of the minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contribution) on that subsidised furlough pay.
 - In August 80% of wages up to a cap of £2,500, whilst employers will pay the associated employer National Insurance and pension contributions

- In September, 70% of wages up to a cap of £2,187.50. Employers will pay the associated employer National Insurance and pension contributions and 10% of wages to make up the 80% total up to a cap of £2,500.
- In October 60% of wages up to a cap of £1,875. Employers will pay the associated employer National Insurance and pension contributions and 20% of wages to make up the 80% total up to a cap of £2,500.
- the Scheme will close to new entrants from 30 June. From this point onwards, employers will only be able to furlough employees that they have furloughed for a full 3 week period prior to 30 June. **This means that the final date by which you can furlough an employee for the first time will be 10 June, in order for the current 3 week furlough period to be completed by 30 June.**
- Further guidance on flexible furloughing and how employers should calculate claims will be published by the UK Government on 12 June.

We are aware that there continues to be uncertainty and concern amongst providers in Scotland as to what level of overall support they are entitled to through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme if they are also receiving payments for the funded ELC. The links above provide more detail, but the key information for providers in Scotland is:

- There is no change to Scotland's position on ELC payments, and payments for funded ELC hours will continue for the duration of closures. The Scottish Government sees these payments as a vital part of safeguarding our childcare sector for the pandemic recovery, and achieving our 1140 ambition for Scotland's children together.
- You can receive support through both: (1) continued payments for statutory (funded) ELC hours; and (2) the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.
- Support cannot be claimed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for staff costs that already covered by other forms of public funding (the payments for statutory ELC hours).
- You can access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to cover up to the proportion of your pay bill which could be considered to have been paid from private income.

Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)

The UK Government announced on 29 May that the scheme is being extended. Those who are eligible will be able to claim for a second and final grant in August 2020. If you're eligible, the second and final grant will be a taxable grant worth 70% of your average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering a further 3 months' worth of profits, and capped at £6,570 in total. You do not need to have claimed the first grant to receive the second grant.

If you're eligible and want to claim the first SEISS grant, but haven't done so yet, then **you must make your claim on or before 13 July 2020.**

We continue to seek further clarification from the UK Government on aspects of this guidance, and following this we will provide further updates to our own guidance as soon as we possibly can.

We know that there are still many questions to be answered, and we are working through questions that being shared by individual providers and the representative bodies. It is important to be aware that many of the financial support schemes are the responsibility of the UK Government rather than matters on which the Scottish Government can reach its own decisions. This means it may take us longer to establish answers as we work across administrations.

Please continue to share your questions with Euan Carmichael's Service Models Team through the ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot mailbox. We are working through them as quickly as we can.

Workforce Support

One of the sub-groups of the Education Recovery Group is looking specifically at the Workforce Support needs of the entire education workforce, including early learning and childcare and all-ages childcare, as we move towards recovery and reopening of settings. The aims of this Group are:

- to develop a directory of support available to those working within the different areas of the education and childcare workforce, in terms both of wellbeing and professional learning needs at this unparalleled time.
- to create opportunities for practitioners to come together virtually for professional dialogue and peer support
- to establish, through surveying the workforce, where there are gaps in wellbeing and professional learning support, and to develop/share resources to address those gaps

The ELC Directorate is working with national partners to ensure that the directory of support reflects the full range of professional learning and wellbeing support which is available across the sector, and to ensure that all registered daycare of children staff, and childminders, have the opportunity to contribute to the survey.

We would also welcome good practice examples from local partners showcasing measures that have been put in place to support the wellbeing and professional learning of staff during these challenging times.

If you have any questions on this work please contact Kathryn Chisholm at: Kathryn.Chisholm@gov.scot

Guidance issued for those assessing ELC students

Guidance has been issued for those who are assessing students currently undertaking ELC related qualifications. That guidance, covering SVQs and HNCs, has been posted on the SSSC website and links to both documents are provided below:

<https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/hnc-covid-19-guidance>

<https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/guidance-svg-assessment>

If you have any questions on this, please contact Scott Sutherland at Scott.Sutherland@gov.scot

6. Support for parents

Parent Club Scotland (www.parentclub.scot) has created an extensive digital hub to provide advice for parents and carers around coronavirus. This includes critical childcare for keyworkers and vulnerable children and the ELC expansion, as well as information on a range of topics including mental health and wellbeing, home learning, keeping active, eating well, child safety and tips for working from home.

Parent Club is updated regularly based on new public health advice so we recommend linking to this for any parent communication around coronavirus.

New pages have been added to Parent Club around changes to Coronavirus restrictions and what this means for school and ELC. There is an [FAQ](#) that has been updated to include questions about informal childcare and nannies, as these are frequently asked at the moment. **These pages are regularly updated so please let us know if there is additional information that you think would be beneficial.** Please contact Katherine.Tierney@gov.scot with suggestions.

The Parent Club coronavirus hub can be found here: www.parentclub.scot/coronavirus and on social media: @ParentClubScotland on Facebook and @parentclubscot on Twitter.

Parentline Scotland also has a helpline for parents and carers who would like advice and support. Tel: 08000 28 22 33.

7. 1140 hours expansion

On Wednesday 1 April, [The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(Modification\) \(No. 2\) Revocation Order 2020](#) was approved by the Scottish Parliament. The order revokes the change to the 2014 Children and Young People's Act that requires education authorities to secure 1140 hours of ELC provision for all eligible children from August 2020, rather than 600 hours. It effectively means that there will be no statutory duty to provide 1140 hours from August.

On 30 March 2020, the Minister for Children and Young People and COSLA spokesperson for Children and Young People issued a [joint statement](#) about the early learning and childcare expansion. The Minister for Children and Young People also released a video on Twitter explaining the decision.

The decision to re-phase the expansion programme and revoke the statutory duty to roll out 1140 hours of ELC was very difficult for everyone involved in the expansion. However we are committed to ensuring that the expansion will still be delivered in full, just to a different timetable than originally envisaged.

We know that everyone in the early learning and childcare sector in Scotland will be working to do this as soon as is practical. High quality and nurturing early learning and childcare is the foundation from which every child can develop socially, emotionally and educationally, enabling them to reach their full potential, and the expansion of hours will give children greater access to all of those benefits.

At this point, we cannot reasonably assess when full delivery may be achievable and will not be able to do so until the extent and duration of the impacts of the pandemic are clear. Through the Joint Delivery Board, Scottish and Local Government will work together to bring forward new implementation proposals at the appropriate time.

To support this, the delivery assurance team will:

- Continue to work closely with local authorities to understand progress to 1140, and where Covid-19 issues have delayed this
- Work with ADES, COSLA and other bodies to gather data, resolve operational issues, and jointly assess how delivery will continue once more normal provision resumes

- Work jointly with ADES, COSLA and other bodies to discuss a reasonable future timetable for delivery of 1140 hours for all children, and provide advice in due course to the Joint Delivery Board.

Please use the ELCDeliverySupport@gov.scot mailbox for support and queries regarding 1140.

Information for parents on 1140

Parents will be keen to find out what this means locally, and local authorities will be putting out their own communication as early as possible. In the context of the work on the immediate response to the Covid-19 pandemic, it may take time to work through how local plans will be affected and communicate with parents and carers.

Parent Club (www.parentclub.scot/ELC) has been updated in the meantime to explain the suspension of the legislation and that local authorities will be in touch with parents when they can. Parent Club also includes Frequently Asked Questions which we will continue to update. <https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/early-learning-and-childcare-in-scotland-is-changing>
Please contact Katherine Tierney's Uptake, Eligibility and Engagement team through the ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot mailbox with further suggestions for the FAQ or other parental communication.

8. SEEMiS Early Years

The SEEMiS Early Years project is continuing despite the COVID-19 outbreak and the delay to the 1140 hours expansion. The developers are making progress with the system build remotely, although there is now going to be a delay to delivery of the new system. The exact new date is still to be finalised but a communication around this will be circulated shortly.

Thank you for your engagement on the Knowledge Hub site specifically for the development of SEEMiS Early Years. We continue to welcome questions and comments from local authorities through this communication tool. SEEMiS is planning to upload a video shortly with more information on the system functionality and a glimpse of what it will look like. We are also looking to share other content from the cancelled SEEMiS Early Years LA Readiness event on the site.