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Wednesday 24 June 2020

NOTE FOR ALL CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

To all registered childcare providers,

Today the First Minister made a statement to the Scottish Parliament setting out some updates to [Scotland's routemap through and out of the crisis](#). The First Minister announced that subject to scientific and public health advice that all childcare providers will be able to reopen from 15 July 2020, if they wish to do so.

Yesterday in a statement to the Scottish Parliament the Deputy First Minister gave an update about education recovery and the reopening of schools and childcare services. You can read that statement [here](#). The statement again makes clear that the scientific assumptions underpinning education recovery will be reviewed as part of the statutory three-weekly review process. This will include reviewing the approach to physical distancing in schools and equivalent measures in early learning and childcare.

What does this mean for the childcare sector?

A number of providers continue to provide critical childcare during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to key worker families and vulnerable families, I truly thank you for that.

All childcare providers

Today's announcement gives all childcare providers an indicative date for reopening and time to plan for their reopening, get staffing and other arrangements in place and to present a clearer picture to parents of how and when services will reopen. This date will be confirmed subject to the evidence and the criteria for moving to Phase 3 being met.

We acknowledge that today's announcement does not answer all the questions you will undoubtedly have. We know that not all services will choose to reopen immediately on 15 July. In particular, term-time settings are expected to open in line with agreed term dates. Critical childcare will continue to be provided over the summer holiday period in line with the Strategic Framework

We issued [guidance](#) on Monday 15 June 2020 to support the reopening of wider ELC services. We understand that you are working hard on preparations to implement the ELC recovery guidance and I wanted to confirm that, at this time, there are no changes to this guidance. We await the updated scientific advice and will share this with you through revisions to the suite of guidance on ELC recovery, Childminding, Fully Outdoor Settings and the upcoming Out of School Care guidance, as soon as this is available.

Out of School Care Services

As announced today as part of the Phase 3 routemap, out of school care services can also reopen from Wednesday 15 July 2020 if they wish to do so. We are currently working on guidance to support reopening of these services, which will issue early July. This guidance will take account of all the available and up to date scientific and public health advice to ensure the safe reopening and operating of out of school care services in Scotland.

Childminders

Childminders were able to reopen from Wednesday 3 June 2020 if they wished to do so. Childminders were issued with [guidance](#) on Monday 1 June 2020 and should continue to follow this guidance when operating. We will review the guidance and will update this in line with scientific and public health advice.

Fully outdoor childcare providers

Fully outdoor childcare providers were able to reopen from Wednesday 3 June 2020 if they wished to do so. Fully outdoor childcare providers were issued with [guidance](#) on Monday 1 June 2020 and should continue to follow this guidance when operating. We will review the guidance and will update this in line with scientific and public health advice.

The ELC Expansion

We remain united in our determination to achieve our ambition of increasing access to high quality funded early learning and childcare, because we know that is a cornerstone to improving outcomes for all children, especially those growing up in more disadvantaged circumstances.

We are continuing to work with Local Authorities and partners to revise the timetable for the expansion. On Monday 22 June 2020, the ELC Joint Delivery Board met to discuss plans for the ELC expansion. Minutes and papers from the meeting will be uploaded [here](#) in due course.

What to tell parents

Understandably parents and carers have a lot of questions and also want to be absolutely sure that it is safe for their child to go back to ELC and school aged childcare. It is important for ELC settings to be safe for children, but equally important for them to be high quality and nurturing environments. Settings are being supported to ensure that wellbeing is at the heart of their planning.

I am sure that you will be in touch with parents and carers from your settings when you have information to share with them about what will be changing, and communicating your plans for reopening the setting. In the meantime, Parent Club is a fantastic resource with lots of information and advice for parents and carers. They have a dedicated page which has FAQs for parents about the reopening of ELC and schools - www.parentclub.scot/articles/reopening-schools-faqs. This is regularly updated with new information.

Next steps

We will continue to keep you updated through the Care Inspectorate as new information and guidance is produced.

We await the updated scientific advice and will share this with you through revisions to the suite of guidance on ELC recovery, Childminding, Fully Outdoor Settings and the upcoming Out of School Care guidance, as soon as this is available.

Thank you for everything you do for Scotland's children and families.