



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Day Care of Children, ELC, Outdoor Settings and School Age Settings (except Childminders)**

To make it easier to find answers we have created topic headings throughout this document. Remember you can use the search function to find key words or topics. The topics are:

- General Guidance Links and Signposting
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Environment
- Groups/Cohorts
- Infection Control (IPC) and Health
- Testing
- Food/Baking/Lunch/Snacks
- Visitors
- Travel/Trips
- Blended Placements
- Inspection
- Operational Guidance
- Registrations/Variations
- Notifications/Surveys
- Staffing
- Recruitment and Training

### General Guidance Links and Signposting

Make sure you follow Health Protection Scotland's guidance for any issues in relation to coronavirus, Covid-19. This is available on [Public Health Scotland's website](#). You can find information on our website [here](#). It is important that you check these websites daily to stay up to date.

We have captured some of the most frequently asked questions below. We are updating this regularly as more information becomes available. The response to the coronavirus Covid-19 outbreak is complex and fast moving. It is important that you continue to check information on the relevant websites that we have linked to below.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Updated guidance is available [here](#).

Please note there is also PPE guidance on our website.

PPE access information for social care providers and unpaid carers can be found [here](#).

### What is the advice around face coverings?

Face coverings must be worn by adults wherever they cannot maintain the appropriate physical distance from other adults (for example, in corridors and communal areas). Face coverings should also be worn by staff and visitors when not working directly with children, for example when in office and admin areas, canteens (except when dining), staff rooms and other confined communal areas, (including staff toilets) except where a person is exempt from wearing a covering. In these circumstances, a face covering must be worn whenever staff move away from a seated position.

Face coverings should be worn by parents and other essential visitors to the setting when entering the building and should be strongly encouraged when parents/carers drop-off and pick-up their children.

Full guidance can be found in the ELC guidance [here](#).

School aged childcare:

Face coverings should be worn by children of secondary school age (unless exempt) when in communal areas and when moving around the setting.

Full guidance for school aged childcare can be found [here](#).

### How do I wear and care for my face covering?

Clear instructions must be provided to staff on how to put on, remove, store and dispose of face coverings, to avoid inadvertently increasing the risks of transmission. The key points are as follows:

- Face coverings must not be shared with others.
- Before putting on or removing the face covering, hands should be cleaned by washing with soap and water or hand sanitiser if handwashing facilities are not available.
- Make sure the face covering is the right size to cover the nose, mouth and chin.

- When temporarily storing a face covering (for example, during sessions), it should be placed in a washable, sealed bag or container. Avoid placing it on surfaces, due to the possibility of contamination.
- Re-usable face coverings should be washed after each day of use at 60 degrees centigrade or in boiling water.
- Disposable face coverings must be disposed of safely and hygienically. They are not considered to be clinical waste in the same way that used PPE may be.

More information can be found [here](#).

A helpful poster on caring for your face covering can also be found [here](#).

### What PPE should I wear if I am caring for a child with suspected Covid-19?

The following PPE should be worn if caring for someone with Covid-19 symptoms:

- A fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn by staff if they are looking after a child who has become unwell with symptoms of Covid-19 and 2 metre physical distancing cannot be maintained while doing so.
- If the child or young person who has become unwell with symptoms of Covid-19 needs direct personal care, gloves and aprons, fluid-resistant surgical mask and eye protection (goggles or a visor) should be worn by staff.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning the areas where a person suspected of having Covid-19 has been.

Full information can be found [here](#).

## Environment

### Can we use public toilets and their hand washing facilities?

Yes, if public facilities are open and accessible, you should consider their suitability in line with your own risk assessment. However, public facilities may still be closed at this time. If this is the case, you must ensure that alternative, appropriate toilet and handwashing facilities are available for children and staff.

### Sharing school premises and community premises

Where services have their own entrance, exit and general facilities including toilets and kitchen facilities they should follow this guidance. Where services share these facilities, they should consider the following:

- Engage in early discussion with the head teacher at the school, or the manager of the premises to agree use. (Make them aware of your conditions of registration, such as access to toilets.)
- Consider potential implications of other services' operating model.
- Maintaining physical distance with other users.
- Make arrangements for the use of outdoor spaces.

### What safety checks do we need to carry out before opening?

If premises have been closed for many weeks or if parts of the building have been out of use for a long period, the provider must undertake a health and safety check of the building concerned prior to reopening, including water quality sampling for legionella and other bacteria. Consideration should be given to the cleaning strategy to be adopted in the setting once it reopens. All cleaning should be carried out in accordance with [Covid-19 – guidance for non-healthcare settings](#) and [Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings](#) guidance.

## Groups / Cohorts

### Do we still need to care for children in cohorts and groups?

Minimising contacts through the use of groupings within settings should be considered in indoor spaces, wherever possible. The general approach should be to minimise the size of groups as far as possible and limit movement between groups unless that is absolutely necessary. You should regularly check the guidance [here](#).

When settings are making decisions about exact cohort size (within the maximum specified above), they should consider the impact on the number of children and staff required to self-isolate when one or more person in the group tests positive.

Providers should also review the layout of settings and consider **how many children can be accommodated safely at any one time** while meeting the requirements within the guidance. This may be below the normal Care Inspectorate registered capacity of the setting based on current floor space requirements.

### Can staff work between different groups of children over the course of a week?

Staff members should work with the same groups, wherever possible.

Limiting the number of children, and the number of groups that a staff member is in contact with is important. Where cover is required for breaks, toileting etc., this should be managed within the staff working with a particular group.

If staff are, through necessity, to work with other groups, this should be for limited periods, with appropriate risk mitigation measures adopted. Staff should ensure strict hygiene practices are carried out if they are caring for different groups.

## Infection Control and Health

### Do I need a CO<sup>2</sup> monitor?

Yes, contact your Local Authority to find out more. Contact information can be found [here](#).

### What if a child attending my service tests positive for Covid-19, can I tell the other parents?

If settings are informed of a positive case or cases amongst their staff or children, they should direct all other parents to the latest information letter for the group affected. However, personal details of the positive case should not be shared. Information letter templates can be found [here](#).

### Should we take children's temperatures on arrival?

No, temperature checks on arrival are not advised for early learning and childcare services. Information on fevers in children can be found [here](#).

### What do I do if a child or staff member shows symptoms?

If a child develops symptoms of Covid-19 while in the setting, a ventilated space must be available for the child to wait in until they can be collected by their parent. PPE must be worn by the staff member caring for the child displaying symptoms (this now includes eye protection). 'If the child or young person who has become unwell with symptoms of Covid-19 needs direct personal care, gloves and aprons, fluid-resistant surgical mask and eye protection (goggles or a visor) should be worn by staff'.

Read the full advice on what to do if someone is symptomatic [here](#).

### Are we still required to physically distance from other adults?

Yes, however when Scotland moves beyond Level 0, the physical distancing requirement for adults in ELC settings will be at least 1 metre. If settings already have 2 metre physical distancing arrangements that work well and do not limit capacity, then they should retain these for logistical reasons.

Young children are not required to physically distance from each other, or from adults.

### Can parents of new/settling-in children visit the service?

Visits must be necessary and proportionate, agreed in advance, risk assessed and with the permission of the manager or head teacher. The Scottish Government [guidance](#) has more helpful suggestions for children's transitions.

### Can children be given Calpol (paracetamol)?

Yes, the advice states that children can be given Calpol once it has been confirmed that their symptoms are not Covid-19. Use of Calpol:

- No child who is unwell with any suspected infectious disease should attend nursery, but parents should be free to give a child medicine to treat a non-infectious ailment such as sunburn and toothache and have them attend nursery as long as infectious causes are not suspected.
- If a child has symptoms of Covid-19 they should be kept from nursery and tested, or otherwise given a diagnosis by a clinician. This is in line with current guidance for Covid-19.
- Public health recommends that children be kept at home for 48 hours after their symptoms have disappeared to determine if the child has another infectious disease other than Covid-19.
- All children with fever should be tested for Covid-19. If a child has received a negative PCR test result, then it is unlikely that they have Covid-19. As long as they are not suspected to be suffering from another infectious disease e.g., with respiratory symptoms or with diarrhea and vomiting, then they can attend the service.
- Children with symptoms should **not** be tested with an LFD which are for asymptomatic use only.

### The children in my service play with sand, play dough and water. Can they still do this?

Yes, toys and equipment that children access should be cleaned daily or, if groups of children change during the day, on a sessional basis. Water and playdough should be replaced daily or, if groups of children change during the day, on a sessional basis. This will minimise cross-contamination.

Sand need not be changed on a daily basis and standard cleaning and changing protocols should suffice if good hand hygiene is carried out prior to and following use of the sandpit. Standard cleaning and changing protocols should be implemented in the event of any visual contamination of the sandpit or its contents Sand should be removed and replaced in the event of an outbreak.

### Can we ask parents to complete paper records?

Wherever possible, records should be completed online – an email can be used as a record of signature. When completing paper records, risk assessments should determine the process for this considering practice that will minimise the risk of transmission. For instance, asking parents to use their own pen, effective hand washing or use of hand gel.

[Lots of children have coughs and colds. How will I know if they should be excluded because they could have Covid-19?](#)

The National Clinical Director has written an [open letter](#) to parents and carers providing guidance on how Covid-19 symptoms differ from those of other infections circulating.

### Testing

[Does waste from testing with lateral flow devices need to be double bagged and stored for 72 hours?](#)

No, waste from lateral flow device testing is not considered infectious waste and therefore does not need to be double bagged and stored for 72 hours even in the event of a positive test, including testing undertaken at home.

### Food/Baking/Lunch/Snack

[Can children take part in group baking activities?](#)

Children can participate in group baking activities. Equipment used by children should be cleaned thoroughly after use. Enhanced hygiene procedures should be strictly followed.

[Can children help to prepare snacks?](#)

Yes, it is vital that effective hand washing, and respiratory hygiene is in place. Children should be directed to wash their hands as often as needed to minimise the risk of cross-contamination. You may also wish to have a smaller group of snack helpers so that staff can supervise more closely.

[Do staff have to clean packed lunch boxes?](#)

There is no specific Covid-19 guidance relating to the cleaning of packed lunch boxes. For general information on best practice for storage and serving of foods see [Setting the Table](#) and [Food Matters](#).

Guidance from [Food Standards Scotland](#); Cook safe should continue to be followed.

### Visitors

[Should we be asking visitors to disclose if they have had any cold, flu, or coughs?](#)

Yes, it would be reasonable to ask visitors if they have any Covid-19 symptoms. These questions would inform your risk assessment.

Can I invite parents to attend celebrations?

A letter from Scottish Government with regards to ‘supporting settings over the winter period and enjoying seasonal celebrations safely’ can be found [here](#).

**Travel and trips out of the service**

Can we take children to a play park where there will be shared equipment?

Yes. However, within any public spaces, staff should be aware at all times of the need to keep children distanced from any other children who are not part of the setting, and/or other adults who may be in the vicinity.

The current guidance on the use of outdoor spaces can be found in the Scottish Government [guidance](#).

A child's parent recently returned from a country on the quarantine list. The child did not travel and stayed at home; can we care for them?

Policy on international travel is updated regularly. Detailed and up-to-date guidance is available [here](#). Providers should engage with children and their families to ensure they follow legal requirements. Local health protection teams are available to offer further support where providers have concerns.

Can we go on day visits out of the service?

Day visits are visits which go beyond a local excursion and that do not include an overnight stay. Until we know more about the new Omicron variant, settings are encouraged to exercise caution about arranging day visits.

Short local excursions which promote outdoor learning (such as a short visit to a local park or green space) can take place as long as these excursions are appropriately risk assessed against the latest guidance. The appropriate size of any group travelling off site to undertake outdoor learning should also be considered.

Settings should exercise judgement as to what constitutes a short local outdoor excursion and what constitutes a more substantial day visit. More substantial day visits should be undertaken in line with the guidance [here](#).

What is the guidance on transporting school aged children?

**Face coverings** should be worn on dedicated transport by all children aged 12 and over. During term-time, school age childcare services regularly care for children from a **range of different schools**. In many cases, the children are transported to the school age childcare service using private service operators, while other services rely on school buses to transport children, particularly in rural areas. Dedicated transport used

by the service should be regarded as an extension of the premises and physical distancing measures between children attending the service are not necessary (subject to continued low levels of infection within Scotland).

### Blended placements

#### ELC settings and School aged settings

All blended placements can go ahead. However, blended placement must be supported by a refreshed risk assessment that has been undertaken in collaboration with parents and all providers involved in the care of the child.

If there is an outbreak within the child's cohort arrangement in either of the settings that the child attends, blended placements, should, where possible, be suspended until after the outbreak. A cluster or outbreak of Covid-19 occurs when a setting has two or more confirmed cases of Covid-19 within 14 days. The local health protection team should be notified. The decision about which one setting the child should attend while the blended placement is suspended should be made in discussion with the family and the settings involved.

See the Scottish Government [guidance](#) for more information on ELC settings. For school aged childcare, refer to this [guidance](#) for more information.

### Inspections

#### I have had a Covid-19 inspection, will I be inspected again this year?

No, you should only receive one inspection per inspection year (April 2021 - March 2022). However, services can be re-inspected to offer support where concerns have been identified. At the start of the pandemic, we paused our usual inspection programme. In September 2020, we resumed inspections of ELC settings using Key Question 5. We have now returned to inspections using our quality themes and Covid-19 infection prevention and control procedures will still be considered under the theme of Care and Support.

### Operational Guidance

#### What kind of risk assessments do we have to carry out?

Employers must protect people from harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect staff, children, young people and others from Covid-19 within the education setting.

To help with setting-level risk assessments, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has [an example Covid-19 risk assessment](#) which provides a general framework for all business sectors. Guidance on how to undertake individual level risk assessments for members of staff is available in [guidance produced by the Scottish Government](#).

### Registrations/Variations

If I have a Covid-19 condition stated within my registration certificate after the 6 months period is up, will I need to apply for a new variation to have it removed?

Yes. The Care Inspectorate developed intermediate guidance to support settings during the pandemic. Some settings may have a time limited condition to support children and families at this time. The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 requires providers to apply for a variation to remove or vary a condition of registration. There is no cost to the applicant. You can find information on our digital portal [here](#).

What if my setting does not fit the definition of an outdoor setting but I want to provide one?

You will be unable to adapt your existing premises-based setting however, if you wish you can apply to be registered to provide an outdoor setting. You should find the guidance [Out to Play](#) helpful when considering the expectations of a good quality outdoor setting.

You must apply to the Care Inspectorate to register to provide this new setting and we will process your application.

### Notifications and Surveys

If I need to close or re-open my service due to Covid-19, what notification do I submit?

You should complete a “Changes to Service Delivery due to Coronavirus (Covid-19)” notification via E-forms. This is needed when you close and re-open. For all other information about notifications please visit our [web page here](#).

Do I need to submit an “Outbreak - end of confirmed case(s)” notification for every positive case?

No, you only need to inform us once about an end of outbreak. You should submit this when all people who have been confirmed as having Covid-19 have shown no symptoms for 14 days.

Do we need to submit the staff absence notification on a Tuesday?

Yes, this now also applies to day care of children services (including nurseries, family centres, playgroups and out of school care).

We are asking that every Tuesday, services complete the Covid-19 staff absences notification. This notification asks about staff who are absent from work due to Covid-19 related reasons. We are sorry to place this extra burden on you at this time, but this information will help us support you better. It will also help the Scottish Government understand the challenges you are facing more fully, and plan for the solutions you need. It is important that you submit this each week on a Tuesday as we will have to disregard information submitted any other day.

This is in order to ensure we gather data that is accurate and consistent. We would like to thank you for undertaking this. You can access the notification through your eForms account [here](#).

### Staffing

Some of our staff have several jobs in care, for instance working in a nursery during the day and an after-school club in the afternoons, can this continue?

Peripatetic or agency staff can still be used but staff and managers are strongly encouraged to minimise working across settings wherever possible, particularly if there is an outbreak in one setting.

The use of peripatetic staff should be included in the settings' joint risk assessment and mitigations should include reducing the number of children and other staff that staff members work with across settings. More information can be found [here](#).

Can we have college/university students into the setting for placements?

There is an expectation that HNC Childcare students can be accommodated. Students may attend the setting for a placement block provided they are attending only one setting.

We have many peripatetic managers registered in services. Are they able to move between their services to fulfil their management and leadership responsibilities where possible, without being part of any groups?

Yes, it is important that managers are able to fulfill their role to support services. They must not work with children at this time due to the nature of their role which requires them to move around services. Their visits to the service should be considered within the risk assessment. Offices/workspaces must be fully disinfected before and after use. Physical distancing must be adhered to and frequent hygienic practices such as effective hand washing undertaken. There is guidance on peripatetic management [here](#).

Is there advice for pregnant employees?

Yes, there guidance available [here](#).

## Recruitment/Training

### How do we process a disclosure during the pandemic?

Disclosure Scotland advise that if providers have had no response from them about PVGs within 14 days, you should highlight the case details immediately to their operations management via [DSoperations@disclosurescotland.gov.scot](mailto:DSoperations@disclosurescotland.gov.scot) and they will take action as a priority. The Care Inspectorate and the SSSC will review these temporary measures on an ongoing basis and tell providers when they change.

### What are the Care Inspectorate expectations around the recruitment of staff, if our staff are off sick or at home self-isolating?

To support providers, who are reporting significant numbers of staff needing to self-isolate at short notice as a result of Covid-19, we'd like to reiterate the position on short notice recruitment and redeployment of staff to maintain levels of care and support.

We are continuing to apply the following:

- Providers can deploy staff while awaiting the outcome of recruitment checks. Providers are reminded they must carry out a risk assessment and staff whose checks are pending should be mentored and supervised at all times.
- Staff can work in a service for up to 12 months without being registered with the SSSC. This means new staff don't have to register straight away and staff registered on one part of the Register can be redeployed into roles that fall into other Register parts. In these circumstances, providers should carry out an individual risk assessment and ensure an appropriate level of induction is given.

We understand sudden change is challenging, particularly during this pandemic. If and when, after careful consideration, our position on pre-employment checks needs to change again, we will give you advance notice so you can prepare.

We understand the concerns you may have around staffing. We ask that you plan contingencies for how to staff your service as normal in the event colleagues are unwell. Child to adult ratios feature in our registration and inspection of early learning and childcare (ELC) settings. We expect the staffing numbers, and skills and experience of staff to reflect the needs of people who use services.

### My first aid certificate is due to expire, what should I do?

The Care Inspectorate appreciates that during the pandemic some training has not been available. Where training is not available due to the pandemic then we would not expect childminders to update their first aid certificate.

We do however expect individuals to keep abreast of matters and keep themselves skilled and knowledgeable in the administration of first aid safely within their setting. When we undertake scrutiny of services, we will consider more than the date of a certificate. The skills, knowledge, and ability of individuals to fulfil the role is the most

important factor during a time when formal learning opportunities are not always available.

We would expect that as we move through the pandemic, training for the sector will resume and childminders will be able to update their first aid certificates.