

## Frequently Asked Questions Childminding Services

### 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 [Health Protection 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.

Information on [Managing an Outbreak can be found here](#)

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

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?

Masks are not advisable for children under the age of five, particularly babies and toddlers.

A face covering must be worn by all people aged five and over when in a shop and on public transport, except where an exemption or 'reasonable excuse,' as defined in the [legislation](#), applies when the shop is open to the public.

Where adults cannot keep 2 metres distance from other adults and are interacting face-to-face with other adults for 15 minutes or more, face coverings should be worn. In these circumstances, some children may need additional support/reassurance about the reasons for adults wearing face coverings. Those clinically advised to wear a covering would be an exception.

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

### Will the childminder or assistants be wearing PPE?

Staff do not need to wear PPE when providing general care for children. The use of PPE should continue to be based on a clear assessment of risk and need for the individual child or young person. This might

include where the care of a child already involves the use of PPE, for example wearing gloves and an apron for nappy changing, toileting accidents or cleaning up after a child has been sick or cut themselves (bodily fluids). More information can be found [here](#).

### We are having difficulties sourcing PPE, what should we do?

If services cannot source PPE after having fully explored local supply routes you can access PPE through one of two procurement processes:

1. If you are a local authority setting you will access through your usual route, most likely Scotland Excel.
2. Registered private, voluntary, and independent providers that cannot obtain PPE through their usual suppliers will be able to purchase PPE via the Lyreco agreement. If you wish to open an account with Lyreco, please complete the [attached form](#) which must include your Care Inspectorate CS number and return it to: [PPEDirector@gov.scot](mailto:PPEDirector@gov.scot). Once your CS number is confirmed as being a registered care service your account will be set up. This may take a few days depending on the volume of forms returned. Lyreco will then provide access to their online ordering site, where you will be able to see the full range of products available and current prices. Opening an account does not place you under any obligation to place an order.

### Infection control and health

#### What are the best products to clean toys, surfaces and equipment effectively and how often should they be cleaned?

You should refer to the following documents for guidance in relation to cleaning. [Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings \(Day Care and Childminding Settings\)](#) and [Core COVID-19 Information and Guidance for General \(Non-Healthcare\) Settings](#).

Toys and equipment that children access should be cleaned when groups of children change – e.g. between sessions (if groups are changing) and at the end of the day or in the morning before the session begins using standard detergent and disinfectant that are active against viruses and bacteria.

Settings should ensure regular (at least twice daily) cleaning of commonly touched objects and surfaces (e.g. desks, handles, dining tables, etc.)

It is recommended that children access resources and equipment that are easy to clean. We would discourage the use of materials which cannot be easily cleaned unless provided on an individual child basis or when used with a single group of children.

Ensure regular detergent cleaning schedules and procedures are in place using a product which is active against bacteria and viruses.

#### Can children under five years old be tested for COVID-19?

Children who are displaying potential coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms will be eligible for testing through all routes including drive-in Regional Testing Centres, Mobile Testing Units and by ordering a home test kit.

COVID-19 Testing for all children under 11 years old should be completed by their parent or carer.

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

‘Resources such as sand, water and playdough can be used with regular cleaning of the equipment used. Water and playdough should be replaced on a daily/sessional basis, when groups change.’

[Can we take children to a play park where there will be shared equipment?](#)

Yes, however good hand hygiene measures must be followed when visiting shared play spaces. Staff should plan for children to enjoy active energetic play across the day and this may include making use of other areas near to the service. 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, or other adults who may be in the vicinity. Please be aware that hand sanitisers are not suitable for use by children under the age of 12 months. Running water and soap should always be used where possible.

[Can I meet up with another childminder and their minded children?](#)

Yes, a childminder can meet **one other childminder outdoors**, providing that all children in their care are under 12 years old. Following the first minister’s announcement on 22 September, children under 12 years old will not count towards the limit of six people meeting at one time or the total number of households. This is a change from previous guidance where children counted towards the number of households for social gatherings. Children age 12-18 are exempt from groups of six but are included in the two-household rule.

For further information please refer to the latest guidance on meeting up with others - [Staying Safe and Protecting Others](#)

[Should we take children’s temperatures on arrival?](#)

The presence of a temperature is only one of the common symptoms of coronavirus. Information from Health Protection Scotland states that some of the symptoms of the virus are a fever, a new persistent cough and a change or loss of smell and taste. It is important that all symptoms are considered, temperature checks on arrival are not recommended for early learning and childcare services. Information on fever in children can be found [here](#).

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

Information from Health Protection Scotland states that some of the symptoms of the virus are a fever, a new persistent cough and a change or loss of smell and taste. When children display these symptoms, the advice should be to stay at home. You should advise parents of children to book a test as per the [Test and Protect strategy](#). You can access information from NHS Inform about when to stay at home and how long for. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-general-advice>

Information on fever in children can be found [here](#).

[We have children attending our service who have underlying health conditions, how do we ensure they are protected?](#)

We understand the concern that providers have about the children attending their services, particularly young babies and those with underlying health conditions. Parents and carers may wish to have a discussion with their child's healthcare team if they are unsure or have queries about returning to settings because of their health condition. Following good practice in relation to infection prevention and hand hygiene are key to ensuring all children's wellbeing.

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

It would be reasonable to ask these questions to inform your risk assessment and to have clear guidance for visitors displaying this and sending to people. Please refer to the [Scottish Government's clinical guidance for more information](#).

[If a minded child or their family displays symptoms, do I have to close?](#)

The guidance does not state that the childminding service would need to close. However, you may be contacted through the test and protect process and advised to close and self-isolate. More information can be found on the NHS website here: [test-and-protect](#)

[Will there be physical distancing in my childminding service?](#)

Physical distancing between adults remains a fundamental protective measure that should apply at all times. However, physical distancing when caring for young children simply isn't desirable or appropriate, either practically or in terms of child development.

Individual physical distancing applies to adults from different households in the setting, including between a childminder and their assistant, if they are not from the childminder's own household, parents or carers, and any other adults who may attend the setting. In addition, adults who reside in the childminder setting and are not an assistant should physically distance from adults and children from different households in the childminding setting, where possible. The [latest physical distancing advice](#) should be checked regularly for updates.

### [Are parents permitted to enter my home?](#)

Adults should practice physical distancing and yes you should keep parents out with your home wherever possible. However, this is not always possible when young children are passed between adults. Where close contact between two adults occurs, the childminder should ensure that they thoroughly wash their hands after contact and consider wearing a face covering.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-childminder-services-guidance/>

### [A child is settling into my service, what arrangements can be put in place?](#)

During this period, new children may be enrolled into the childminding setting. It is important to maintain physical distancing between adults. A childminder may wish to provide a virtual tour of their home to parents prior to the child attending. Wherever possible, children should be settling into the service in a garden area with the parent or carer away from other children. It is important that relationships are developed and the settling in period is the foundation of that trusting relationship between the family and childminder. The childminder should consider how best to introduce a new child into the setting with limited physical contact between adults wherever possible.

### [What is the difference between physical distancing and shielding?](#)

**Physical Distancing:** This measure reduces social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of the virus.

**Shielding:** This is for people (inc. children) who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and need to be protected. The aim of shielding is to minimise interaction between individuals and others to protect them from coming into contact with the virus. If they did contract the virus, this could be very serious for them due to their underlying health conditions. Information on which people are in this category and what to do are on the NHS Inform website.

Guidance about physical distancing in educational and childcare settings can be found [here](#).

## Travel

### If a child has not travelled but their household members have recently returned from a destination out with the exempt countries can I/we care for them?

Yes, you can care for these children and no isolation is needed.

The guidance on returning from travel from the Scottish Government states, 'It is important to avoid contact with other people in your accommodation in order to reduce the risk of transmitting coronavirus. The people you are staying with do not need to stay at home, unless they travelled from outside the UK with you.'

The guidance continues to state that those who travelled should avoid contact with others in the home and minimise the time you spend in shared spaces, like kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas.

They should stay in a well-ventilated room with a window to the outside that can be opened, separate from other people in the home.

Travel guidance can be found [here](#).

### What is the guidance around travel and transporting children between settings?

Childminders must ensure they follow the latest [travel guidance](#) and only travel where it is permitted within the [rules on staying at home](#). Where it is necessary to use public transport care must be taken to minimise risk. Ensure hand washing immediately on arrival at the destination. Childminders must also ensure they follow the latest [guidance on the use of face coverings](#), which is to wear them in specific circumstances, such as when on public transport.

## Reopening of schools and childcare provision

### How many families can I provide childcare for?

Childminders can return to their normal operating model in line with the Care Inspectorate guidance on [adult to child ratios for childminding](#) services. There is no restriction on the number of households the children belong to. Childminders can use their discretion to allocate places to families, based on their usual operating model. Childminders who have contracts in place with a local authority to deliver childcare, for example to deliver funded early learning and childcare (ELC), will need to agree these placements with the local authority before they are agreed with parents and carers.

Large childminding services registered for more than eight children can care for more than eight children at any one time. However, when they are caring for more than eight children at any one time, these settings should follow the guidance for [large childminder settings](#).

### [School age children - blended placements](#)

For children and young people who have blended placements, defined as arrangements where children are attending two or more settings, either in educational establishments, other childcare providers, or the wider community, consideration should be given to their groupings and an appropriate risk assessment conducted. Where possible settings should seek to keep groups consistent with schools and classes in order to minimise contacts.

It remains important to minimise the number of contacts and risk of transmission, where possible. However, the balance of scientific advice supports the use of more settings where required to ensure high quality childcare is available to children and in support of parents' needs.

Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to limit the number of settings their child attends. When children attend more than one setting (i.e. school and school age childcare), consideration should be given to ensuring their child only attends the same school age childcare setting(s) consistently. Consideration should be given to how children are supported to ensure good hygiene practices (washing hands, not sharing resources, etc.) when moving between settings, and how their interactions with other groups of children are managed, based on an appropriate risk assessment.

School age childcare workers may undertake drop-off and pick-up from schools but physical distancing with other adults must be maintained.

Where a child attends more than one setting, consideration should be given to record keeping of the other setting(s), to assist with any Test & Protect process (see below section on Test & Protect). Any records should be GDPR compliant.

### [ELC Blended Placements](#)

In order to minimise the number of contacts and risk of transmission, attendance at multiple ELC settings should be reduced as far as possible. Parents and carers should be encouraged and supported to limit the number of settings their child attends, ideally ensuring their child only attends the same setting consistently.

However, the balance of scientific advice supports the use of more settings where required to ensure high quality childcare is available to children and in support of parents' need. For children who attend multiple settings, either ELC settings or childminders, consideration should be given to how they are supported to ensure good hygiene practices (washing hands, not sharing resources, etc.) when moving between settings, and how their contacts with other groups of children are managed, based on an appropriate risk assessment in each setting.

Where a child attends more than one setting, consideration should be given to record keeping of the other setting(s), to assist with any Test & Protect process (see below section on Test & Protect). Any records should be GDPR compliant.

[Will my overall childminding numbers be restricted?](#)

The conditions of registration including the number of children you can care for will remain as they currently are, unless the childminder applies for and is granted a variation.

[What happens if I have been granted an increase in numbers for the schools returning in August 2020 for example to care for 4 children not attending school?](#)

Where a variation has been granted to increase the number of children within a set timescale the childminder can provide this if the condition on your registration still has a valid date.

[Will there be a transition process for children returning to ELC?](#)

You should take account of the fact that unless children have attended one of the childcare hubs that they will likely not have attended ELC for an extended period of time and parents or children may be anxious. ELC settings are thinking about the best way to support children who are starting at a new setting or returning to a familiar setting that looks and feels a bit different. Your local authority or ELC setting can let you know how they will be supporting children.

[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.

**[Notifications and surveys](#)**

[I am re opening my service, what notification do I submit?](#)

The Scottish Government guidance states that prior to recommencing your service, you must complete a "Changes to Service Delivery due to Coronavirus (COVID-19)" notification [via e-forms](#). You should also complete the Scottish Government's early learning and childcare (ELC) monitoring return every Tuesday. You can access the survey [here](#).

For all other information about notifications please visit our [web page here](#).



## Operational Guidance

### Can children come to my setting have a packed lunch?

There is no information currently to prevent children bringing packed lunches. You should however limit the items brought into the childminding setting.

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

Generally, a risk assessment would have to cover the risk presented to the children and staff from COVID 19. Staff should be reducing risks by following the guidance around COVID-19. The Scottish Government has produced guidance to support workplaces with this.

### Can children take home artwork?

Yes, they can. Risk assessment should consider minimising the number of people that touch the artwork. Parents and children should maintain strict hand washing.

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

Risk assessment 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.

### Can services that are not registered with Care Inspectorate, for example playgroups or parent and toddler groups open?

The First Minister announced that the recommencing of “Indoor activities for children and young people (unregulated) – following guidance which will vary by activity” from Monday 31 August 2020.

### Do I need to submit the staff absence notification?

No, childminders are not required to submit this at this time.

## Staffing

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

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. However, for other service types, including care homes, we stopped issuing staffing schedules at the point of registering a service in 2018. Instead, we expect the staffing numbers, and skills and experience of staff to reflect the needs of people who use services.

In light of registered care services not reporting significant staffing and recruitment problems, the Care Inspectorate and the SSSC have decided to revert to the previous position regarding pre-employment checks. This means that providers are expected to have received satisfactory checks including PVG membership and references before an individual starts work. Removing the previous flexibility introduced at the start of the pandemic is aligned with Disclosure Scotland confirming that there are no longer delays in PVG checking.

[My assistant lives in another household, can they still come and work with me?](#)

Childminders can return to their normal operating model in line with the Care Inspectorate guidance on adult to child ratios for childminding services. Individual physical distancing applies to adults from different households in the setting, including between a childminder and their assistant, if they are not from the childminder's own household, parents or carers, and any other adults who may attend the setting.