

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.](#)

We are receiving questions from services on a daily basis. 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 was produced on 02 April 2020 and is available [HERE](#).

Please note there is also PPE guidance on our website.

NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) has set a helpline to deal with social care supplies during COVID-19.

At the moment, this helpline is to be used only in cases where there is an urgent supply shortage and all other avenues to acquire PPE through normal routes have been exhausted.

The following contact details will direct providers to the NHS NSS triage centre for social care:

Phone: 0300 303 3020

When contacting the helpline, providers will be required to:

- answer a series of short screening questions
- confirm they have fully explored business as usual procurement routes
- confirm they have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 and therefore have a need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- provide their Care Inspectorate registration number.

The helpline will be open 8am – 8pm, 7 days a week.

The CNO/ CMO Directorate letter <https://hub.nes.digital/media/1615/cno-cmo-letter-ppe-guidance-covid-19-2-april-2020.pdf> provides contact details to help deal with local supply and guidance issues.

The Scottish Government also has a new dedicated email address for staff, MSPs or members of the public to **raise specific supply issues**. This is covid-19-healthPPE@gov.scot. It will be monitored continuously and allow us to act to resolve any specific supply issues more quickly.

[The Scottish Government has published a notice for all childminding services.](#) It can be viewed [here](#).

[My childminding service has been asked to complete a daily survey by Scottish Government, but the service is closing due to Covid19?](#)

The Scottish Government continues to monitor the uptake and provision of places in early learning and childcare settings. This includes private and third-sector all-day childcare services including nurseries, out of school care and childminders (not local authority settings). Information about local authority settings will be gathered on a separate survey.

It is vital that these services complete this short online survey daily by 15:00 each day. You can access the survey [here](#).

It is acknowledged that many settings have now closed. If your setting is closed, please submit the survey once. If your setting becomes operational, please complete this on a daily basis before 15:00.

Information will be collated by Scottish Government and alongside the local authority data, this will be used to monitor the level of provision during the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

[In children's services should we be avoiding certain activities such as sand, playdough or water trays to prevent the spread of infection?](#)

We would suggest that services consider removing sand pits, playdough and water trays etc. as these cannot be easily cleaned. Always encourage and promote good hygiene with the children and staff. Do not contact the Health Protection Team if a child has a confirmed coronavirus COVID-19 test, they will contact you. Further guidance about infection control is available on [Health Protection Scotland's website](#).

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

We understand the anxiety around coughs and colds at the moment. Good infection control procedures are essential to limiting the spread of infection. Children who are unwell should not be in nursery, in line with usual procedures. Information from Health Protection Scotland states that the virus presents as a fever, and cough. Where children have these symptoms, the advice should be to stay at home. You can access information from [NHS Inform](#) about when to stay at home and how long for.

We have children attending our service who have underlying health conditions, how do we ensure they are protected?

Following good practice in relation to infection prevention and hand hygiene are key to ensuring all children's wellbeing. We understand the concern that providers have about the children attending their services, particularly young babies and those with underlying health conditions. Health Protection Scotland recommend that these children do not attend services. If you have any queries about specific children, we encourage you to discuss this with their parents in the first instance and direct them to the [NHS inform](#) advice.

What should I do about our CSQs (care standard questionnaires) and/or staffing questionnaires?

We do not expect services to process these currently.

What are the Care Inspectorate expectations around staffing ratios, 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.

At this extremely challenging time, we will support all services in their need to apply flexibility and judgement around staffing to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people using the service. We recognise services will need to be creative and make use of a wider range of resources. This could potentially include staff from other public services and volunteers. We recognise that this will mean services may not be able to undertake all normal recruitment checks as quickly and easily as they did before.

However, during this period it is important that providers put in place structures to support and oversee staff in their role, including any volunteers and unregistered staff. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) is responsible for registering the social care workforce. People can now work in registrable roles for a period of 12 months without being registered, which enables services to adopt a flexible approach.

Employers should continue to carry out recruitment checks for new staff and volunteers, but immediate flexibility should be applied under the current emergency. Therefore, the Care Inspectorate and the SSSC can confirm that employers should continue to request PVG checks and references, but that **employers no longer need to wait for these to be returned satisfactorily before deploying individuals to regulated roles directly supporting and caring for people.** Disclosure Scotland will be prioritising PVG checks, but the UK Coronavirus Bill means that organisations recruiting staff ahead of a PVG check can do so without the risk of committing an offence. Barred individuals who seek to exploit this will be reported to Police Scotland.

Providers of registered services should insist that any new staff or volunteers, whether redeployed or new to a caring role, complete an application form. This must include a self-declaration regarding any relevant health, regulatory or criminal history, as well as previous experience and qualifications. Providers should then carry out a risk assessment to determine the most appropriate deployment of individuals and ensure that knowledge, skills and experience are spread most effectively in order to meet the needs of people in the service. While continuity of care is important for people, reallocating roles and deploying workers to front-line and auxiliary positions is expected to be a dynamic process that will impact on the care and support people receive.

Significant disruption to staffing is expected during the pandemic and services are best placed to make decisions regarding optimum recruitment and deployment in a rapidly changing situation. The Care Inspectorate and the SSSC will support providers and staff to operate flexibly and realistically under these circumstances.

Further information is available on [SSSC website](#).

Our chief executive issued a [statement on 17 March 2020 on how the Care Inspectorate is responding through our contingency planning to the coronavirus COVID-19 situation](#).

Staffing shortages and NEW NOTIFICATION (also applicable to childminders and assistants):

On 3 April, we introduced a new notification on staffing levels designed to enable us to give you the help and support you may urgently need in order to cope with the impact of COVID-19 on your service.

Put simply, your notifications will enable us to identify, co-ordinate and put in place the support you need when staffing levels are critically compromised due to COVID-19.

The notification also includes a free text box so you can tell us about other issues, such as a crucial need for PPE.

It is **essential** that you use the notification to let us know the situation in your care service.

The notification lets you tell us which stage you are at:

- Green, with enough staff/skills mix
- Amber, stretched and only just managing
- Red, where you no longer have the staffing levels/skills mix to meet people's needs.

We will also share this information appropriately, together with other information we are gathering, with others who can help such as local authorities, health and social care partnerships, Scottish Government, and the NHS/SSSC Hub to deliver support across partnership areas and nationally.

This can be done via [eForms](#).

[Providing care is my main source of income, where can I get advice if I am struggling financially as a result of coronavirus COVID-19?](#)

Guidance is available on the UK Government's [website](#).

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](#).

What is the difference between Social distancing and shielding?

Long term care facilities be subject to 'social distancing' and 'shielding' to reduce the risk of infecting residents and their carers.

Social Distancing: This measure reduces social interaction between people in order to reduce the transmission of the virus. It is intended for those situations where people are living in their own homes with or without additional support from friends, family or carers.

Shielding: This is for people (inc. children) who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 when an extremely vulnerable person is living in their own home, with or without additional support and those in long term care settings. The aim of shielding is to minimise interaction between individuals and others to protect them from coming into contact with the virus, thereby aiming to reduce mortality in this group. Information on which people are in this category and what to do are on the NHS Inform website

My service provides care to staff from frontline medical or emergency services, will we get special dispensation to stay open should the government decide to close schools and childcare?

As of (25 March 2020) registered childminders are strongly advised to cease all provision apart from critical childcare provision for key worker families and vulnerable children until further notice. Where possible, critical provision should be delivered as part of a coordinated local authority-led emergency response.

If providing childcare for key worker families and/or vulnerable children, childminders are strongly advised to limit the number of households for whom they provide childcare to a maximum of two, other than their own. This measure is intended to reduce the risk of transmission between households.

I have been advised to limit the number of families for whom I provide childcare to a maximum of two, other than my own. I have an assistant – can I provide care for another two families?

You should still only provide care for a maximum of two families, other than your own, at any one time. Where childminders are working with more than two families over the course of the week, it would be sensible for them to consider additional cleaning measures to reduce risk of transmission via surfaces and equipment. The Scottish Government has published [guidance social distancing in education and](#)

[childcare settings](#) (updated 31 March 2020) for organisations and their staff working in local authority, independent and grant-aided schools, other education and childcare settings that are providing care to vulnerable children and children of key workers.

As a childminder, do I need to change my hand washing practice during the outbreak?

We are supporting Health Protection Scotland to get the message out about good hand hygiene as the most important aspect of preventing the spread of infection. Resources to use with children are available within the guidance for educational settings.

It is important to supervise children appropriately to ensure they are adopting good practice. Most children really enjoy singing songs as a guide for how long to keep scrubbing for 20 seconds.

There is also a range of resources available for children from the NHS:

<http://www.nipcm.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resources/hand-hygiene-wash-your-hands-of-them/childrens-pack/>

<http://www.nipcm.hps.scot.nhs.uk/media/1474/handy-andy-posters.pdf>

<http://www.washyourhandsofthem.com/the-campaign/childrens-pack.aspx>

We recommend that you follow the guidance and use paper towels during this time. Where this is not possible, we ask that you provide individual towels for children and increase the frequency of laundering towels to minimise the risk of spreading infection.

You can also refer to the [Infection Prevention and Control in Childcare Settings](#) (Day Care and Childminding Settings) guidance for good practice around hygiene.

What if a child attending my service is confirmed as having the virus, can I tell the other parents?

You should not breach confidentiality of your families without express consent. Where there is a confirmed case the local health protection team will want to contact any close contacts of the children. This may include staff or the childminder and any assistants. Dependent upon individual situations, family members may also be included. You will be guided by your local health protection team who are well prepared to support this type of situation.