

Information to support Early Years and Childcare settings in reopening

I am sure you are already thinking about planning to consider reopening. Alongside the *Early Years Reopening Framework* and the *Summary of the Government Guidance Relating to Early Years document* we have issued, please also find below some practical areas and suggestions that you may find helpful in your thinking about how to either fully re-open or increase the numbers of children attending your setting.

Please note, this document is intended to be used as a guide only and should not be treated as a full and final checklist. Childcare settings may also want to seek further information and / or legal advice from one of the national sector support organisations or appropriate professional bodies.

Timeframe

Consider your timeframe for re-opening and bringing staff back from furlough in line with regulations, together with which staff are available to work.

You may need to review staff contracts and usual working patterns.

You should also consider: -

- staff rotas
- how staff mental health, well-being and resilience, including bereavement can be supported
- contingency plans to cover a potentially higher sickness rate (including the need to cover staff absence) and to cover testing in line with employment law
- how to treat this re-orientation into the setting as a time of transition

Communication to Parents and Children

You may wish to consider how best to contact parents and children.

Some possibilities include:

- practitioners contacting their Key children before they return
- video calls with the children to talk about returning and what they would like to do when they are back in the setting
- conversation with parents about their child's wellbeing and any significant things that could have happened during the isolation period
 - How did the child adapt?
 - How is their emotional wellbeing?
 - Are there any concerns that the setting needs to be aware of?

As part of any communication, ensure parents are aware that their children must only attend if all members of their household are symptom free and the isolation rules have been followed if any member of the household has displayed symptoms of Covid-19.

Wherever possible, parents should travel to the setting alone with their child and not carshare. If parents do need to use public transport, then the current guidance on social distancing on public transport must be followed.

Reassure parents of the robust hygiene practices and physical distancing measures you are putting in place.

Encourage parents to reinforce the safety steps that will be in place in the setting by talking about them at home with their child.

Communicate social distancing expectations for drop offs and pickups in advance so parents know what to expect and can talk to their children about this beforehand.

Talk to parents about how you are going to share information with them about their children during this time. This could be over the phone or online.

Find out from parents what hours / days they might want their child to attend, with a focus on encouraging vulnerable children to attend, where appropriate.

Finance

Support is available from the ECC Business Management Consultancy Team to help with reviewing current business models and any potential changes needed to support re-opening.

Premises and Building Safety

If you are in a building you rent or have a hire agreement in place to use, you should liaise with your landlord to ensure the building can be used and if so, is ready and safe to be used.

If you are in your own premises you need to ensure you have carried out the appropriate health and safety checks e.g. water testing (legionnaires) more information can be found at www.hse.gov.uk

The following table is a guide of areas that should be considered. It is important to carry out the following checks or ensure that these have been completed by your landlord (responsibilities will be detailed in your lease or hire agreement).

Landlord
Check all fire exits and means of escape are clear
Test emergency lighting
Check that fire extinguishers are intact, and the inspection date has not expired
Test the fire detection system
Flush out all water outlets in line with HSE Guidance
Water tank inspection and testing is completed in line with HSE Guidance
Gas safety inspection
Undertake remedial works and address health and safety issues
Where applicable, inspect air-conditioning units and complete annual safety checks

Tenant
As the tenant, you will also need to re-visit the following:
Fire Risk Assessment
Refresh Fire Drills and evacuation procedures considering social distancing (to re-familiarise children, staff, parents and other tenants)
Ensure social distancing for parents/carers during drop off and collection, avoiding 'pinch points'

Check all fire exits and means of escape are clear

Ensure fixed wire testing is up to date

Monitor water temperature from taps

Flush out all water outlets in line with HSE Guidance

Ensure all health and safety issues have been addressed

Safety check all equipment that has been stored

Ensure that all spaces and equipment to be used by children and staff has been thoroughly deep cleaned following COSHH guidance

Develop and implement a robust cleaning regime to minimise risk of COVID-19 – <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

You should advise any relevant insurance and /or service companies that you are planning to re-open and if appropriate dates when services needed to re-commence from, such as electric, gas, etc.

If applicable:

- contact cleaning staff and arrange for premises to have a thorough clean
- consider food and milk suppliers and make arrangements for alternative sourcing if necessary
- ensure supplies are in place for frequent handwashing, nappy changing and availability of PPE as per guidance,
- for any deliveries that are needed, ensure there is an appropriate policy in place that covers how these will take place in line with guidance
- if transport is provided, contact insurance company to advise if you have taken advantage of any motor insurance holiday or vehicle MOT extension

Ensure risk assessments are in place in line with current government guidance to directly address risks associated with Covid-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020>

Ensure you have a policy and procedure in place for an approach to record and / or notify any confirmed Covid-19 cases.

Ensure robust infection control policy and procedure is in place in line with current guidelines and appropriate cleaning materials are in place. Further information on COSHH: www.hse.gov.uk <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings>

EYFS

Review staff training logs to ensure these are up-to-date and there is appropriate cover to ensure safety of children upon return. Consider:

- Qualifications
- Paediatric First aid
- Designated safeguarding level 3
- Level 2 safeguarding training is up to date
- Named SENCO

Please see further information in the *Summary of the Government Guidance Relating to Early Years document* around EYFS disapplications.

Consider how snacks and lunches are going to be offered and potential management of lunch boxes from home. Please note we are waiting on possible further guidance on food management.

Review and, if necessary, update all policies and procedures in line with current guidance and requirements. Highlight transition, settling in and behaviour to help support children's PSED.

Ensure safeguarding policy is reviewed to reflect current guidance-guidance available on EYCP website <https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/covid19-coronavirus/>

Setting Up

You may need to plan to configure your setting, areas and resources differently, and may want to consider:

- whether there is any equipment which would be hard to clean frequently that you may wish to avoid using
- if it is practical to set up small packs of individual age and development resources for children or small key person groups
- how you can plan an environment which higher than usual focus on children's well-being during this period

Daily Routines

When thinking about daily routines, it would helpful to:

- plan around routines and procedures which are familiar and comforting to the children and are easy to implement, giving due consideration to those that will need adapting and how these can be communicated to families in advance
- consider if any available outside area could be utilised to provide longer outside activities
- consider how meeting children's personal needs/toileting will be managed.
- consider how staff deployment will be managed during breaks, if applicable.

Guidance for supporting children with SEND returning to Early Years-Covid19

Plans on how to support children with SEND to return should be considered now so they can be implemented to support a child's return.

Steps to be taken:

- Discussion with parents/carers. Arrange a virtual or socially distanced meeting to find out how the child and family have been during the period of lockdown and any progress or changes that have taken place. Any concerns that the parents or child may have about returning to the setting and the changes that will be in place should be addressed.

- Complete a risk assessment that takes into account any changes that you will be making to group sizes and layout of premises to comply with Covid-19 safety measures. Thought must be given to the physical space needed to meet the child's needs.
- Ensure that the additional support and any enhanced staffing levels can be put in place for the child's return. Attention must be given to providing the environment and resources that support the child's One Planning.
- Treat the reintegration into the setting as a transition phase and plan for the child to attend settling in sessions initially.

Considerations:

- The lockdown period has resulted in a break in the process of identifying possible SEND.
- For children with transient delays, the opportunity to implement strategies to close the developmental gaps identified has been stalled.
- After children have settled in, you will need to reassess their learning and development as this may have changed. One Planning may need to be adjusted to reflect this. Be mindful that children may have made progress in other areas.
- For returning children who are due to start reception in September, plans for a supported transition should be discussed with the school and other professionals involved. Additional support or plans may need to be implemented due to time lost and any changes in need.
- For all children the period of lockdown may have had an adverse effect on their development and emotional wellbeing. Additional nurturing may be needed as school is another heavy transition after those recently experienced.
- Readiness for school may be affected after a long time at home. Children may find it more difficult to cope with being back in the setting and away from their families. They may also be more tired than usual.
- Make links with any key professionals that can support you such as the Early Years Education Partners and any professionals working with the child and family, including SEND Inclusion Partners and staff from the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service.

Further areas for consideration

- How you are going to capture further information and the impact of Covid-19 on families e.g. financial, increased FEEE2 eligibility, use of any new services (Homestart / social care involvement, EYPP / vulnerable groups).
- Consider if there have been changes in:
 - parental responsibility
 - emergency contact details,
 - the people collecting children
- Plans to continue with ECC Covid-19 response plan for keeping in touch with those children not attending and that as required welfare checks are in place.

Ensure contact details are available for:

- the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service and Family Hub are available to support <https://essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk/>
- ECC Early Years and Send team colleagues
- Other relevant support agencies.
- Inform Ofsted enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk quoting "change in operating hours" in the subject field and ensure you quote your URN.
- Advise ECC of decision on reopening by emailing free.entitlementenquiries@essex.gov.uk

If there is anything we have missed you would find helpful, please let us know by emailing free.entitlementenquiries@essex.gov.uk

We will keep this document under review, and will provide any updates as required.