

## A summary of the government guidance relating to Early Years

This statement from the DfE is useful starting point to set the current expectation for early years.

'Nurseries and other early year providers, including childminders, to begin welcoming back all children' ([Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers](#))

If childminders are not providing care for vulnerable children or children of critical workers, from 13 May 2020 they can provide care for children from 'one household'. ([Ofsted: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rolling update](#))

### **Approach: First phase of wider opening of educational and childcare settings (from 1 June 2020 depending on the most up-to-date assessment of the risk posed by the virus)**

- a child/young person or a member of staff who lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend their childcare setting
- if a child/young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, as set out in the [guidance on shielding](#), it is advised they only attend a childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, if they are able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for very young children and children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, **we do not expect those individuals to attend**. They should be supported to learn at home
- staff and children should **not** attend if they have symptoms or are self-isolating due to symptoms in their household
- protective measures will be put in place for staff and pupils, as far as is possible, to ensure that the risk of transmission is reduced.

### **Implementation: Managing risk and rate of transmission**

Scientific advice indicates that a phased return that limits the number of children in education settings and how much they mix with each other will help to control the rate of transmission. This is set out in our guidance.

There are a number of immediate issues which childcare settings will need to consider. The following list of issues are the ones we have identified as the top priorities. We recognise that each setting and community is different, and that leaders will need to make their own judgements on the most important issues for them. Further guidance on these, and other important areas, will be developed with the sector in the coming days and weeks.

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## **Key issues**

### **Every setting should carry out a risk assessment before opening.**

The assessment should **directly** address risks associated with **coronavirus (COVID-19)**, so that sensible measures can be put in place to control those risks for children and staff.

All employers have a **duty to consult employees** on health and safety, and they are best placed to understand the risks in individual settings.

The **staff to child ratios** within Early Years Foundation Stage **continue to apply**, and we recommend using these to group children.

### **We will be publishing more detailed guidance on the operation of early years settings shortly.**

## **Room sizes and staff availability**

One of the protective measures we can take to reduce transmission is to have smaller group sizes. We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain two metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years, we are taking this into account.

Demand for childcare is likely to be lower than usual at first, and existing space requirements and staff to child ratios for these age groups should allow for small group working. Where the physical layout of a setting does not allow small groups of children to be kept at a safe distance apart, we expect practitioners to exercise judgement in ensuring the highest standards of safety are maintained. In some cases, it may be necessary for providers to introduce a temporary cap on numbers to ensure that safety is prioritised.

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

It is still important to reduce contact between children and staff as far as possible, and settings can take steps to achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, and staff where possible, mix in a small group and keep that small group away from other people and groups. For pre-school children in early years settings, the staff to child ratios within Early Years Foundation Stage continue to apply, and we recommend using these to group children.

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PLEASE NOTE: For changes to the Early Years Foundation stage framework (EYFS) please refer to the EYFS coronavirus disapplication's.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2/early-years-foundation-stage-coronavirus-disapplications>

### 4.1 Learning and development requirements

5.1 Assessment – progress check at age 2

5.2 Assessment -EYFSP

6.1 Staff qualification and ratios

6.2 paediatric first aid certificate

6.3 safeguarding and welfare

7 staff qualifications and ratios during covid-19

7.1 all group settings

7.2 all settings

7.3 all providers (other than childminder's) caring for children under two

7.4 all providers (other than childminder's) caring for children aged two

7.5 Providers caring for children aged three and over where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another suitable level 6 qualification is working directly with the children.

7.6 Providers caring for children aged three and over when a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another suitable level 6 qualification is not working directly with the children.

7.7 Independent schools (including in nursery classes in free schools and academies) caring for children aged three and over where a person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another suitable level 6 qualification, an instructor, or another suitably qualified overseas trained teacher, is working directly with the children.

7.8 Independent schools (including in nursery classes in academies) caring for children aged three and over where there is no person with Qualified Teacher Status, Early Years Professional Status, Early Years Teacher Status or another suitable level 6 qualification, no instructor, and no suitably qualified overseas trained teacher, working directly with the children.

7.9 Maintained Nursery Schools and nursery classes in maintained schools caring for children aged three and over

### **All other requirements remain.**

**Public Health England** are clear that if early years settings do this, and crucially if they also apply comprehensive infection control measures, such as taking steps to ensure symptomatic individuals do not attend settings, regular hand cleaning, respiratory hygiene and cleaning measures and handling potential cases of the virus as per our advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered.

Where settings can keep children in those small groups 2m away from each other, they should do so. While in general groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory, contact such as passing in a corridor is low risk.

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Each setting's circumstances will be slightly different. Any setting that cannot achieve these small groups at any point should discuss options with their local authority or trust. This might be because there are not enough classrooms / spaces available in the setting or because they do not have enough available practitioners to supervise the groups. If necessary, settings have the flexibility to focus first on continuing to provide places for priority groups and then, to support children's early learning, settings should prioritise groups of children as follows:

- early years settings– 3 and 4 year olds followed by younger age groups
- infant schools - nursery (where applicable) and reception
- primary schools – nursery (where applicable), reception and year 1

We will review this advice on room sizes as and when the science indicates it is safe to invite more children back to childcare settings.

### **Protective measures in education and childcare setting**

The DfE guidance on [Implementing Protective Measures in Education and Childcare Settings](#) contains detailed advice for settings on:

- cleaning, including supplies of cleaning and handwashing products
- testing and tracing
- PPE
- what settings should do in response to a case of COVID-19 being confirmed

### **Attendance**

No one with symptoms should attend a setting for any reason. Eligible children – including priority groups - are strongly encouraged to attend their education setting, unless they are self-isolating or they are clinically vulnerable (in which case they should follow medical advice). If someone in their household is extremely clinically vulnerable, they should only attend if stringent social distancing can be adhered to, and the child is able to understand and follow those instructions.

Families should notify their nursery as normal if their child is unable to attend so that staff can explore the reason with them and address barriers together.

The Department will continue to monitor attendance at early years settings, via local authorities. This is to ensure that we have up-to-date information on available early years and childcare provision during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, which children are accessing it and to monitor sufficiency in particular areas.

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## **Vulnerable children and young people**

There is a continuing expectation that vulnerable children and young people of all year groups will attend childcare provision, where it is safe and appropriate for them to do so. As per the current guidance, where these children and young people are currently not attending but attendance is appropriate, we expect providers and local authorities to consider how to encourage their attendance.

## **Curriculum**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that schools and childcare settings must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. Early years settings should use reasonable endeavours to deliver the learning and development requirements as far as possible in the current circumstances, as set out here. [Please refer to EYFS coronavirus disapplication's document as set out above.](#)

## **Assessment and accountability**

Ofsted will continue to pause routine inspection.

## **Staff workload and wellbeing**

Senior leaders should be conscious of the wellbeing of all staff, including senior leaders themselves, and the need to implement flexible working practices in a way that promotes good work-life balance and supports teachers and leaders.

## **Transport**

Parents and children and young people should be encouraged to walk or cycle where possible and avoid public transport at peak times. Government will shortly publish guidance on how to travel safely.

## **Food**

Awaiting further possible guidance.

## **Costs associated with opening for more children and young people**

For early years settings, the dedicated schools grant (DSG) should continue to be paid by local authorities for provision of free entitlements. Where parents are accessing hours beyond the free entitlements they are eligible for, early year providers should continue to charge parents in the normal way. The wider business support packages can continue to be used as appropriate, including the loan schemes and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), on condition that the principles in Department for Education's sector specific guidance continue to be met.

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We are continuing to work with the childcare sector to understand how the early years sector can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings**

#### **Effective infection protection and control**

There are important actions that children and young people, their parents and those who work with them can take during the coronavirus outbreak, to help prevent the spread of the virus.

In all education, childcare and social care settings, preventing the spread of coronavirus involves dealing with direct transmission (for instance, when in close contact with those sneezing and coughing) and indirect transmission (via touching contaminated surfaces).

A range of approaches and actions should be employed to do this. These can be seen as a hierarchy of controls that, when implemented, creates an inherently safer system, where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. These include:

- minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend childcare settings
- cleaning hands more often than usual - wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach
- minimising contact and mixing by altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered break times)

#### **Personal protective equipment (PPE) including face coverings and face masks**

Wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended. **Childcare settings should therefore not require staff, children and learners to wear face coverings.** Changing habits, cleaning and hygiene are effective measures in controlling the spread of the virus. Face coverings (or any form of medical mask where instructed to be used for specific clinical reasons) should not be worn in any circumstance by those who may not be able to handle them as directed (for example,

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young children, or those with special educational needs or disabilities) as it may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission.

The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases including:

- children, young people and students whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way
- if a child, young person or other learner becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. A fluid-resistant surgical face mask should be worn by the supervising adult if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. If contact with the child or young person is necessary, then disposable gloves, a disposable apron and a fluid-resistant surgical face mask should be worn by the supervising adult. If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, for example from coughing, spitting, or vomiting, then eye protection should also be worn
- Childcare settings and providers should use their local supply chains to obtain PPE. Where this is not possible, and there is unmet urgent need for PPE in order to operate safely, they may approach their nearest local resilience forum.

### **Shielded and clinically vulnerable children and young people**

For the vast majority of children and young people, coronavirus is a mild illness. Children and young people (0 to 18 years of age) who have been classed as clinically extremely vulnerable due to pre-existing medical conditions have been advised to shield. These children should not attend any early years setting.

### **Shielded and clinically vulnerable adults**

Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals are advised not to work outside the home. We are strongly advising people, including education staff, who are clinically extremely vulnerable (those with serious underlying health conditions which put them at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus and have been advised by their clinician or through a letter) to rigorously follow shielding measures in order to keep themselves safe. Staff in this position are advised not to attend work.

Read [COVID-19: guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable](#) for more advice.

Clinically vulnerable individuals who are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions as set out in the [Staying at home and away from others \(social distancing\) guidance](#)) have been advised to take extra care in observing social distancing and should work from home where possible. Childcare settings should endeavor to support this, for example by asking staff to support other roles which can be done from

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home. If clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) individuals cannot work from home, they should be offered the safest available on-site roles, staying 2 metres away from others wherever possible, although the individual may choose to take on a role that does not allow for this distance if they prefer to do so. If they have to spend time within 2 metres of other people, settings must carefully assess and discuss with them whether this involves an acceptable level of risk.

### **Living with a shielded or clinically vulnerable person**

If a child, young person or a member of staff lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting.

If a child, young person or staff member lives in a household with someone who is extremely clinically vulnerable, as set out in the [COVID-19: guidance on shielding and protecting people defined on medical grounds as extremely vulnerable guidance](#), it is advised they only attend a childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and, in the case of children, they are able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for very young children and older children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing. If stringent social distancing cannot be adhered to, we do not expect those individuals to attend. They should be supported to learn or work at home.

How to implement protective measures in an education setting before wider opening on 1 June

### **Planning and organising**

Consider the following steps:

- refresh your risk assessment and other health and safety advice for children, young people and staff in light of recent government advice, identifying protective measures (such as the things listed below). Also ensure that all health and safety compliance checks have been undertaken before opening

#### **refresh the timetable:**

- decide which activities will be delivered
- consider which activities could take place outdoors
- use the timetable and selection of room or other learning environment to reduce movement around the building
- stagger break times (including lunch), so that all children are not moving around the setting at the same time
- stagger drop-off and collection times
- plan parents' drop-off and pick-up protocols that minimise adult to adult contact

**In addition, childcare settings or early years groups in school should:**



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- consider how to keep small groups of children together throughout the day and to avoid larger groups of children mixing
- consider how play equipment is used ensuring it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously
- remove unnecessary items from learning environments where there is space to store it elsewhere
- remove soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean (such as those with intricate parts)
- consider how children and young people arrive at the education or childcare setting, and reduce any unnecessary travel on coaches, buses or public transport where possible. Read the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)

### **Communicating your plans**

Consider the following steps:

- tell children, young people, parents, carers or any visitors, such as suppliers, not to enter the education or childcare setting if they are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus (following the [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](#))
- tell parents that if their child needs to be accompanied to the childcare setting, only one parent should attend
- tell parents and young people their allocated drop off and collection times and the process for doing so, including protocols for minimising adult to adult contact (for example, which entrance to use)
- make clear to parents that they cannot gather at entrance gates or doors, or enter the site (unless they have a pre-arranged appointment, which should be conducted safely)
- ensure parents and young people are aware of recommendations on transport to and from childcare setting (including avoiding peak times). Read the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)
- talk to staff about the plans (for example, safety measures, timetable changes and staggered arrival and departure times), including discussing whether training would be helpful
- communicate early with contractors and suppliers that will need to prepare to support your plans for opening for example, cleaning, catering, food supplies, hygiene suppliers
- discuss with cleaning contractors or staff the additional cleaning requirements and agree additional hours to allow for this

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### **When open**

Keep cohorts together where possible and:

- ensure that children and young people are in the same small groups at all times each day, and different groups are not mixed during the day, or on subsequent days
- ensure that the same teacher(s) and other staff are assigned to each group and, as far as possible, these stay the same during the day and on subsequent days.
- ensure that wherever possible children and young people use the same classroom or area of a setting throughout the day, with a thorough cleaning of the rooms at the end of the day.

### **For cleaning and hygiene:**

- follow the [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance](#)
- ensure that sufficient handwashing facilities are available. Where a sink is not nearby, provide hand sanitiser in classrooms and other learning environments
- clean surfaces that children and young people are touching, such as toys, books, desks, chairs, doors, sinks, toilets, light switches, bannisters, more regularly than normal
- ensure that all adults and children:
  - frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly. Review the [guidance on hand cleaning](#)
  - clean their hands on arrival at the setting, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing
  - are encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose
  - use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste ('catch it, bin it, kill it')
- ensure that help is available for children and young people who have trouble cleaning their hands independently
- consider how to encourage young children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition
- ensure that bins for tissues are emptied throughout the day
- where possible, all spaces should be well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening windows) or ventilation units
- prop doors open, where safe to do so (bearing in mind fire safety and safeguarding), to limit use of door handles and aid ventilation
- get in touch with public sector buying organisation partners (for example ESPO, YPO, NEPO) about proportionate supplies of soap, anti-bacterial gel and cleaning products if needed
- there is no need for anything other than normal personal hygiene and washing of clothes following a day in an educational or childcare setting

### **Reduce mixing within childcare setting by:**

- accessing rooms directly from outside where possible
- considering one-way circulation, or place a divider down the middle of the corridor to keep groups apart as they move through the setting where spaces are accessed by corridors
- staggering breaks to ensure that any corridors or circulation routes used have a limited number of pupils using them at any time

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- staggering lunch breaks - children and young people should clean their hands beforehand and enter in the groups they are already in, groups should be kept apart as much as possible and tables should be cleaned between each group. If such measures are not possible, children should be brought their lunch in their classrooms
- ensuring that toilets do not become crowded by limiting the number of children or young people who use the toilet facilities at one time
- noting that some children and young people will need additional support to follow these measures (for example, with other meaningful symbols, and social stories to support them in understanding how to follow rules)

### **Use outside space:**

- for exercise and breaks
- for outdoor learning, where possible, as this can limit transmission and more easily allow for distance between children and staff
- although outdoor equipment should not be used unless the setting is able to ensure that it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children and young people using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously. Read [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#)

### **For shared rooms:**

- use halls, dining areas and internal and external facilities for lunch and exercise at half capacity. If groups take staggered breaks between sessions, these areas can be shared as long as different groups do not mix (and especially do not play together) and adequate cleaning between groups between groups is in place, following the [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance](#)
- stagger the use of staff rest rooms to limit occupancy

### **Reduce the use of shared resources:**

- by limiting the amount of shared resources that are taken home and limit exchange of take-home resources between children and staff
- by seeking to prevent the sharing of toys and other equipment where possible. Shared materials and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected more frequently
- although practical activities can go ahead if equipment can be cleaned thoroughly and the learning environment is occupied by the same children in one day, or properly cleaned between groups of children

### **Adjust transport arrangements where necessary including:**

- encouraging parents and children walk or cycle to their education setting where possible
- making sure settings, parents and children follow the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#) when planning their travel
- ensuring that transport arrangements cater for any changes to start and finish times

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## **Additional questions**

### **Will contact tracing be in place in educational and childcare settings?**

The government is developing a new national test and trace programme. This will bring together an app, expanded web and phone-based contact tracing, and swab testing for those with potential coronavirus symptoms. This programme will play an important role in helping to minimise the spread of coronavirus in the future. It will also include more traditional methods of contact tracing if a child, young person or parent tests positive. This could include, for example, direct discussion with parents and schools or colleges on recent contacts. The government is recruiting 18,000 contact tracers to support contact tracing and will recruit more if needed. They will play an important part in tracing the contacts of those with coronavirus, including children.

### **What happens if someone becomes unwell at an educational or childcare setting?**

If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in an education or childcare setting, they must be sent home and advised to follow the [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection guidance](#).

If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age of the child and with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

PPE should be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs).

In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves (and in which case, a test is available) or the child subsequently tests positive (see 'What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in a setting?' below). They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. Cleaning the affected area with normal household disinfectant after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

See the [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance](#).

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### **What happens if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus in a setting?**

When a child or staff member develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus, they should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 7 days. Their fellow household members should self-isolate for 14 days. All staff and children who are attending an education or childcare setting will have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario.

Where the child or staff member tests negative, they can return to their setting and the fellow household members can end their self-isolation.

Where the child or staff member tests positive, the rest of their group within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.

As part of the national test and trace programme, if other cases are detected within the cohort or in the wider setting, Public Health England's local health protection teams will conduct a rapid investigation and will advise schools and other settings on the most appropriate action to take. In some cases a larger number of other children, young people may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole class, site or year group.

Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, closure of the whole setting will not generally be necessary.

### **Should educational settings ask parents to report pupils' temperatures at the start of each day?**

Parents, carers and settings do not need to take children's temperatures every morning. Routine testing of an individual's temperature is not a reliable method for identifying coronavirus. Educational and childcare settings should reiterate to parents the need to follow the standard national advice on the kind of symptoms to look out for that might be due to coronavirus, and where to get further advice. If anyone in the household develops a fever or a new continuous cough they are advised to follow the [COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection guidance](#) (which states that the ill person should remain in isolation for 7 days and the rest of the household in isolation for 14 days).

### **Will children be eligible for testing?**

When settings open to the wider cohort of children, all those children eligible to attend, and members of their households, will have access to testing if they display symptoms of coronavirus. This will enable them to get back into childcare or education, and their parents or carers to get back to work, if the test proves to be negative. To access testing parents will be able to use the 111 online coronavirus service if their child is 5 or over. Parents will be able to call 111 if their child is aged under 5 .

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### **Will Practitioners and other staff be able to get tested if they have symptoms?**

Access to testing is already available to all essential workers. This includes anyone involved in education, childcare or social work – including both public and voluntary sector workers, as well as foster carers. See the [full list of essential workers](#). Education settings as employers can book tests through an online digital portal. There is also an option for employees to book tests directly on the portal.

### **How should settings, special schools and colleges consider and manage risks in supporting children and young people with complex needs?**

We have published [guidance for special schools, specialist colleges, local authorities and any other settings](#) managing children and young people with education, health and care plans, including those with complex needs. This covers recommendations for educational settings, working with local areas and families, on how to assess risks in supporting children and young people.