

FAQs - EYFS Practice and Provision - 22 May 2020

The guidance referred to below can be found at:

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

<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/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2/early-years-foundation-stage-coronavirus-disapplications>

Q. How do I organise my children into the small groups talked about in the guidance?

Ideally children would be grouped with their key person. Settings often operate a key person buddy system to support the child when the key person is not available so we would encourage settings to also make use of this system. If this is not possible then the setting may want to consider who else is best placed to be the key person for that child or group of children. The setting may want to consider grouping children by friendships, siblings, those leaving for school for example.

Ensure parents are consulted and fully aware of your decision.

Q. How many children can I have in one group?

The guidance refers to children being in a small group and recommends using the EYFS ratios to arrange these groups. The setting will need to consider what is appropriate for that particular group of children as well as the guidelines around hygiene and distancing from other groups.

Q. The guidance says schools should half the number of children in their class to 15. Do I need to half the number of children that can come to my setting – I normally have 40 children per session, can I only take 20 now?

There is no specified number of children you can open for. The guidance gives you the flexibility to make decisions based on the space and layout of your setting and how you can create groups of children, each with a consistent adult, who can remain socially distanced from each other during the day.

Q. How do I prioritise which children to welcome back first?

You may have sufficient space and staff to welcome back all children. However, the guidance gives settings the flexibility to focus first on continuing to provide places for

priority groups - vulnerable children and key worker families - followed by 3 and 4 year olds. These groups are to be followed by younger groups of children as is appropriate.

Q. I have a very clingy child whose parent used to come into nursery every morning and settle her for 10-15 mins. Can the parent still do this? I don't think the child will settle otherwise.

The setting needs to communicate clearly to all parents about the arrangements for drop off/pick up to ensure social distancing can be maintained. The guidance says parents need to know that they cannot gather at entrances/gates or enter the building unless they have a prearranged appointment which can be carried out safely. In the case above it is suggested you speak to the parent about their concerns and how the child has found the lockdown period. It may be possible to arrange a phone call/zoom meeting with the key person, parent and child to talk about the new arrangements and how it can be managed. You might consider allowing the child and parent in early so the parent can take the child to their 'space' for the day whilst remaining socially distanced from other staff and leaving before other children/parents arrive. This would need to be risk assessed. You may decide with the parent that it is in the best interests of the child for them to remain at home at this time supported by welfare checks and with support for home learning.

Q. If parents choose not to send their children when we reopen on June 1st, do we still need to continue with welfare checks and support home learning for those children?

Yes, you still have a duty of care for these children and should continue to support them as you did during the lockdown period in line with the Children and Young People Response Plan for EY settings

Q. Young children will not be able to socially distance from each other or from staff and it's not right that they shouldn't be comforted if they need it, how do we manage this?

The guidance talks about socially distancing between small groups of children (with a consistent adult) and other small groups. There is no expectation that children within the small group will socially distance from each other or from the practitioner. Having a consistent adult for each group is key as this person will provide the care, support and attention each child needs.

Q. Can I use my normal resources?

The setting needs to risk assess all resources being used as would normally be the case. All resources need to be thoroughly cleaned or replaced at the end of each session. If the setting is organising itself on a rotation basis - whereby each group of children has time with one group of resources and then moves onto another set of resources – the resources, table top etc would need to be cleaned after each group

has used them and before another group accesses them. If the setting is operating a learning hub system – whereby children remain in their small group in their own space with a range of resources within this space – then these resources need to be cleaned at least at the end of each session and more frequently if needed, in line with your infection control policy and procedures.

The guidance says childcare settings should:

- 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)*

Q. If we decide to re-open, can we open from June 8th instead, we won't be ready by June 1st?

Yes, each setting needs to make its own decision based on its risk assessment and own unique set of circumstances. You have the flexibility to do this and the safety of everyone involved is of course the top priority.

Q. Can we open for 2 hour sessions (slightly more to incorporate staggered starts and finish) instead of the 3?

Yes, each setting needs to make its own decision based on its risk assessment and own unique set of circumstances. You have the flexibility to do this and the safety of everyone involved is of course the top priority. You may also want to consider additional time needed for cleaning at the end of the session. We would suggest that you speak to your parents to see if changes to the usual session times will meet their needs.

Q. I am unable to access my normal food delivery for nursery snack and lunchtime, can you help?

You may need to source alternative providers and delivery options. As you may well have a significantly lower number of children attending at least initially it may be possible for staff to collect food themselves, or for you to share deliveries with another local setting? You may need to change menus and what you normally offer to children – this needs to be communicated clearly to parents. You could decide that children bring their own snacks and lunch from home – storage of lunchboxes etc would need to be included in your risk assessment.

Q. Is there a checklist for providers to use to make sure that they have considered everything they need to before they open?

A 'Preparation for Setting Re-Opening Framework' and a 'Checklist to support re-opening' was sent to settings on 14.5.20. These will support you in considering the different issues involved in re-opening. All communications are available on the Essex EY&CC website <https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/covid19-coronavirus/>

Q. Do I have to offer places to my two year olds, my team are worried they will not understand staying in separate groups?

Your risk assessment will help you to look at particular challenges and ways you can minimise associated risks. The guidance says places should first be given to the priority groups, then to 3-4 year olds followed by younger groups of children.

Q. How do I cover all seven areas of learning if children are in small groups with a reduced number of resources?

Temporary changes came into place on April 24th. The DfE guidance says that 'During the Covid-19 outbreak early years providers should use reasonable endeavours to meet the existing learning and development requirements, instead of this being something they 'must do'. It is recognised that 'there may be occasions where it will not be possible to provide activities and experiences across all seven areas of learning for all children all of the time.'

The prime areas of learning, especially PSED at this time, should be a priority for all children. Consider how versatile the resources you are using are in supporting you to deliver all areas of learning.

Q. Do I need to be doing observations and assessments?

Temporary changes came into place on April 24th. The requirement to carry out Two year old Progress Checks has been relaxed due to Covid-19 and it is not a requirement at this point in time.

The guidance says that settings need to use reasonable endeavours to deliver the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. Observations can take place in lots of different ways and do not need to be always written down. Observing children through play is still the most effective way to assess a child's learning and development making use of teaching moments as they arise. The setting will need to make its own decisions about what is recorded, where and how often depending on their individual circumstances and the risk assessment in place about use of normally shared resources such as Ipads, cameras etc.

Q. Whilst my setting is closed, is it acceptable for practitioners to contact families to check on their welfare and to support with activities etc by using their personal telephones eg. Whats App, Facebook etc.

The ICO advises that: Data protection legislation doesn't prevent your staff from using [their own devices](#) and social media platforms to contact the families for work purposes.

You should avoid these methods where possible unless there are no other options available, as they carry the most security risks. However if you need to use these methods and have documented your risk assessment, this is likely to be acceptable providing you have put appropriate security measures in place to minimise the risks.

You should also make sure that you have clear policies in place so that your employees know about their responsibilities, especially around security and retention of personal data.