

## Guidance on Early Years Setting Bubbles

22nd June 2020

<b>Staffing of Bubbles</b>	<p>Parents should be reminded if they are sending children into setting that they must not send their child in if they or anyone within the household is displaying symptoms of COVID19. Follow latest advice from NHS regarding isolation and testing. <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/</a></p> <p><b>The DfE guidance states:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providers should use professional judgement when planning groups but may wish to use EYFS ratios to guide this.</li><li>• Keeping group sizes to a maximum of 8 children is preferable so groups are as small as possible, and providers are expected to ensure that there are no more than 16 children in a group in early years settings.</li><li>• Sessional nurseries that have different cohorts of children at different times of the day may wish to consider having smaller group sizes to limit the number of children staff are in contact with.</li><li>• Each setting's circumstances will be different. If your setting cannot achieve these small groups at any point, options should be discussed with the local authority.</li><li>• As far as possible, the same members of staff should be assigned to each group and these should stay the same during the day and on subsequent days.</li><li>• Keep your staffing arrangements as consistent as possible. In instances where you do need to use staff from other settings or agency staff, ensure that this is agreed on a weekly basis, not daily, to limit contacts.</li></ul> <p><b>Further guidance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Planning guide for early years and childcare settings</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak</a></li></ul>
<b>Merging Existing Bubbles</b>	It is acceptable to merge two smaller bubbles together, providing the total number of children in a bubble does not exceed 16 children, this bubble would then need to stay as one consistent bubble.

	<p>If you are considering merging bubbles, this should be a one-off. You should not regularly rearrange bubbles as it remains important that groups are consistent as much as possible.</p> <p><b>You must update your risk assessment to reflect any changes in need or on-site arrangements.</b></p>
<p><b>Splitting Bubbles</b></p>	<p>If you need to split a current bubble in response to changes in need, it is possible to do so. For example, if demand for critical worker provision has risen over the number of 16 children, a possible solution would be to split the existing bubble into two bubbles and allow other children to join each of these bubbles up to a maximum of 16 children in total in each bubble if you have the space and staffing to do so.</p> <p><b>You would need to update your risk assessment to reflect any changes in need and inform your decision making.</b></p> <p>You would need to be vigilant to any symptoms developing within the first few days following the new arrangements and take appropriate action in both groups should this occur. If this situation arises Public Health would be able to advise you.</p> <p><b>Responding to a case of COVID19 in this model:</b></p> <p>If you implement this approach it is important to note that should a practitioner or child who has had contact with more than one bubble contract the virus within 14 days of splitting the bubble, it is likely that both bubbles would need to self-isolate. It is advisable to contact Public Health for guidance should this scenario occur.</p>

**Adding new children into existing bubbles**

From 1<sup>st</sup> June settings were encouraged to welcome back all children. Due to the requirement to keep children in small groups, in some cases it may be necessary for settings to introduce a temporary cap on numbers or on the availability of hours offered to families. If this is necessary, settings should prioritise vulnerable children and children of critical workers, then 3 and 4 year olds, in particular those who will be transitioning to Reception in September, followed by younger age groups.

It is likely that the number of critical workers accessing provision will increase as other members of the household return to work where more workplaces open thus their childcare arrangements change. A reminder that the definition of critical worker has not changed from the original list published at lockdown.

The decision as to whether to add these children into an existing bubble or create a new one, is a setting decision but the guidance would support either model. The child/ren can be added into a bubble where there is space or a new bubble can be created where there is capacity, staffing and demand. It is reasonable to liaise with parents around a practical timescale for a place to be made available, if you need to make arrangements for a new bubble, for example.

**Bubbles should not exceed the maximum size of 16 consistent children although these children need not all attend every session depending on need. Your risk assessment must be reviewed and updated to reflect any changes.**

**Frequently asked questions.**

**Q: Can I have one member of staff who covers breaks across more than one bubble?**

*A: No. This is not advisable, the implications of this would be that if this member of staff contracted the virus all children and staff in the settings would be required to self-isolate for 14 days.*

**Q: I would like to move a member of staff from one bubble to allow another member of staff to be able to carry out 1:1 support for a child.**

*A: This could only be done as a permanent move if absolutely necessary. Should the member of staff who has moved bubbles contract the virus within 14 days of the move this would mean all children from both bubbles would need to self-isolate for 14 days.*

**Q: Can a child attend two settings?**

*A: This is not currently advisable due to the exposure to 2 bubbles and the implications of this. We would advise working with the parents/carers to decide which provision is able to best meet their needs currently.*

**Q: As a Childminder can I collect and care for a child who also attends a group setting or school?**

*A: This would be dependent upon several factors, for example:*

*Scenario 1: If the children in your care are currently in the same bubble in the group setting or school and subject to discussions with the setting or school and the families concerned. You would need to clearly reference these in your risk assessment.*

*Scenario 2: If you care for only children from the same family these bubbles would be mixing at home. Again, you would need to consider this in your risk assessment.*

**Q: I usually run a breakfast and after school club that serves the local schools. When will I be able to start this up again:**

*A: Currently breakfast and after school clubs are only able to run on school sites to care for children from the school who are able to be kept in their school bubbles. As detailed in [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus outbreak](#). We are expecting further guidance to be released in early July. Essex have also released the document [Before and After School Childcare Provision](#) which may provide further details to answer your query.*

**Q: Can I form new bubbles for the summer holidays?**

*A: We are expecting new guidance to be released in early July to clarify the situation regarding Out Of School care which we are hoping will cover this.*

	<p><b>Any changes must adhere to your insurance terms and conditions and be clearly referenced in your risk assessment which should be regularly reviewed and updated in line with up to date guidance. Any potential risks should be shared with your parents/carers.</b></p>
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