Guidance on Covid changes post July 19th 2021

This table is produced as a guide on some of the main differences between the Actions for Early Years Providers guidance published by the Department for Education. You can access the full guidance documents on the following link and you should always ensure you check you are working from the latest version of the Government’s published guidance.

Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>

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| **Category** | **Pre- July 2019** | **Post 2019** |
| **Outbreak**  **Management**  **Plan** | No mention | You should have outbreak management plans outlining how you would operate if there were an outbreak in your setting or local area. Given the detrimental impact that restrictions on education can have on children, any measures in settings should only ever be considered as a last resort, kept to the minimum number of settings or groups possible, and for the shortest amount of time possible. |
| **Workforce** | Setting leaders are best placed to determine the workforce that is required in their settings, taking into account the advice set out in this section of the guidance for those staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable.  All staff should follow the system of controls to minimise the risks of spread of COVID-19. This will reduce the risks to all staff significantly.  Some roles, such as some administrative roles, may be conducive to home working, and you should consider what is feasible and appropriate.  You should explain to staff the measures you are putting in place to reduce risks and discuss any concerns staff may have. | You are best placed to determine the workforce that is required in your setting.  We welcome your support in encouraging vaccine take up and enabling staff who are eligible for a vaccination to attend booked vaccine appointments where possible. |
| **Clinically**  **extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff and children** | Staff in early years settings who are clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to work from home where possible but can attend their place of work if they cannot work from home.  All children who are clinically extremely vulnerable should attend their setting unless they are one of the very small number of children under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend. | Staff in settings who are CEV should currently attend their place of work if they cannot work from home. DHSC has published updated guidance  [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable- from-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/19-july-guidance-on-protecting-people-who-are-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-from-covid-19)  All children who are CEV should attend their setting unless they are one of the very small number of children on the paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend. |
| **Mixing** | Early years settings can operate at normal group sizes. You should still consider how you can minimise mixing within settings, for example using different rooms for different age groups, keeping those groups apart as much as possible. Minimising contact between groups can reduce the number of children and staff required to self-isolate in the event of children or staff testing positive for COVID-19. | At Step 4 we will no longer recommend that it is necessary to keep groups apart as much as possible.  You should make sure your outbreak management plans cover the possibility that in some local areas it may become necessary to reintroduce keeping groups apart for a temporary period.  Any decision to recommend the reintroduction of keeping groups apart would not be taken lightly and would need to take account of the detrimental impact they can have on the delivery of education and childcare. |
| **Visitors** | There will be occasions when visits to the setting are necessary, but you are encouraged to avoid visitors entering your premises, wherever possible. Settings should ensure visitors follow the [system of controls,](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures/actions-for-early-years-and-childcare-providers-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic#system-of-controls) maintain social distancing, and wear face coverings where needed.  A record should be kept of all visitors which follows the guidance on [maintaining records of staff, customers and visitors t](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/maintaining-records-of-staff-customers-and-visitors-to-support-nhs-test-and-trace)o support NHS Test and Trace. | No restrictions or controls on visitors or visitor numbers. |
| **Contact tracing** | You must take swift action when you become aware that someone who has attended the setting has tested positive for COVID-19 having developed symptoms and taken a test. You should ask parents, carers and staff to inform you immediately of the results of a test and follow this guidance.  The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with you to guide you through the actions you need to take. Based on their advice, you must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate immediately and for at least the next 10 full days counting from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive. It is a legal requirement for an individual to self-isolate if they have been told to do so by NHS Test and Trace. | Settings will only need to do contact tracing up to Step 4. From Step 4, close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace and education settings will no longer be expected to undertake contact tracing.  As with positive cases in any other setting, NHS Test and Trace will work with the positive case to identify close contacts. Contacts from a setting will only be traced by NHS Test and Trace where the positive case specifically identifies the individual as being a close contact. This is likely to be a small number of individuals who would be most at risk of contracting COVID-19 due to the nature of the close contact. You may be contacted in exceptional cases to help with identifying close contacts, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases. |
| **Self-isolation** | Children, staff and other adults must not come into the setting if:  • they have one or more COVID-19 symptoms  •a member of their household (including someone in their support bubble or childcare bubble if they have one) has COVID-19 symptoms or have tested positive  • they are legally required to quarantine, having recently visited countries outside the Common Travel Area  •they have had a positive test  •they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19  They must not attend with immediate effect and for at least 10 full days from the day after:  •the start of their symptoms  •the test date, if they did not have any symptoms but had a positive rapid lateral flow device test or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test (if a rapid lateral flow test is taken first, and a PCR test is then taken within 2 days of the positive lateral flow test, and is negative, it overrides the rapid lateral flow test and they can return to the setting).  You must follow this process and ensure everyone onsite, or visiting, is aware of it. | From 16 August 2021, children under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to self-isolate if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case.  Instead, children will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test. We would encourage all individuals to take a PCR test if advised to do so.  18 year olds will be treated in the same way as children until 4 months after their 18th birthday to allow them the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. At which point, they will be subject to the same rules as adults and so if they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self- isolate if identified as a close contact.  Settings will continue to have a role in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak. If there is an outbreak in a setting or if central government offers the area an enhanced response package, a director of public health might advise a setting to temporarily reintroduce some control measures. |
| **Face coverings** | In early years settings, we recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and adults (including visitors) in situations where social distancing between adults is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas). Children in early years settings should not wear face coverings.  Face coverings (whether transparent or cloth) should fit securely around the face to cover the nose and mouth and be made with a breathable material capable of filtering airborne particles.  You should have a process for when face coverings are worn within your setting and how they should be removed. You should communicate this process clearly to  staff and visitors and allow for adjustments to be made for those with special educational needs and disabilities  (SEND) who may be distressed if required to remove a face covering against their wishes. | From Step 4, face coverings will no longer be recommended for staff and visitors in corridors or communal areas. You can find more information on the use of face coverings including when to wear one, exemptions and how to make your own.  From Step 4, the Government is removing the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where you may come into contact with people you don't normally meet. This includes public transport.  If you have an outbreak in your setting, a director of public health might advise you that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas by staff and visitors (unless exempt). You should make sure your outbreak management plans cover this possibility. |
| **Control measures** | You must always:  1. minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the setting  2. Ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances  3. Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual  4. Ensure good respiratory hygiene for everyone by  promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach.  5. Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents.  6. Consider how to minimise contact across the setting and maintain social distancing wherever possible.  7. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated. In specific circumstances:  8. Ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary.  9. promote and engage in asymptomatic testing.  10. Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.  11. Manage and report confirmed cases of COVID-19 amongst the setting community.  12. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice | You should:  1. Ensure good hygiene for everyone  2. Maintain appropriate cleaning regimes, using standard products such as detergents  3. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated  4. Follow public health advice on testing, self-isolation and managing confirmed cases of COVID-19. |
| **Asymptomatic testing** | Early years staff in school-based nurseries, maintained nursery schools and private, voluntary and independent nursery settings are part of the asymptomatic testing programme offering rapid lateral flow home test kits for twice weekly testing. For more information see [rapid](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asymptomatic-testing-early-years-staff-in-different-settings/rapid-asymptomatic-coronavirus-covid-19-testing-in-early-years-settings) [years settings.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asymptomatic-testing-early-years-staff-in-different-settings/rapid-asymptomatic-coronavirus-covid-19-testing-in-early-years-settings)  All childminders can access asymptomatic twice-weekly testing by either:   * attending a test site to get tested where they will be able to see how to take the test or pick up tests to do at home. * [collecting tests to do at home](https://find-covid-19-rapid-test-sites.maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/) * [order a test kit](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests) | Testing remains important in reducing the risk of transmission of infection within settings. That is why, whilst some measures are relaxed, others will remain, and if necessary, in response to the latest epidemiological data, we all need to be prepared to step measures up or down in future depending on local circumstances.  Over the summer, staff should continue to test regularly if they are attending settings that remain open. Regular testing will then pause in settings over the summer if they are closed. However, testing will still be widely available over the summer and kits can be collected either from your local pharmacy or ordered online.  Early years staff should undertake twice weekly home tests whenever they are on site until the end of September, when this will also be reviewed.  Early years children are not included in the rapid testing programme. PHE has advised there are limited public health benefits attached to testing early years children with rapid lateral flow tests. Young children may find the rapid lateral flow testing process unpleasant and are unable to self- swab. |
| **Confirmatory PCR**  **Tests** | Staff with a [positive rapid lateral flow test result m](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/get-tested-for-coronavirus/)ust self-isolate in line with the stay-at- home guidance. They will also need to arrange a PCR test within 2 days to confirm the result. If the PCR test is negative, it overrides a rapid lateral flow test and the staff member can return to the early years setting. Those with a negative rapid lateral flow test result can also continue to attend the early years setting and use protective measures, so long as they don’t have symptoms of COVID-19. | Staff and children with a positive rapid lateral flow test result should self- isolate in line with the guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection. They will also need to get a free PCR test to check if they have COVID-19. Whilst awaiting the PCR result, the individual should continue to self-isolate.  If the PCR test is taken within 2 days of the positive rapid lateral flow test, and is negative, it overrides the rapid lateral flow test and they can return to the setting, as long as the individual doesn’t have COVID-19 symptoms. |
| **Admitting children back to the setting** | In the vast majority of cases, settings and parents and carers will be in agreement that a child with [symptoms s](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/)hould not attend the setting, given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent or carer insists on a child attending the setting, you can take the decision to refuse the child if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect children and staff from possible infection with COVID-19. Any such decision would need to be carefully considered in the light of all the circumstances and current public health advice. | In most cases, parents and carers will agree that a child with symptoms should not attend the setting, given the potential risk to others. If a parent or carer insists on a child attending your setting, you can take the decision to refuse the child if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other children and staff from possible infection with COVID-19. Your decision would need to be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and current public health advice. |
| **EYFS**  **Disapplications** | The [Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2)  [framework s](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2)ets 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 can use specific temporary EYFS disapplications if COVID-19 national or local restrictions in England prevent them delivering the EYFS as normal.  Details of the temporary changes, which cover aspects of learning and development, assessment and safety requirements (including paediatric first aid) can be found in the guidance on [EYFS: coronavirus disapplications.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2) Settings and local authorities should fully familiarise themselves with this guidance. | The early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework sets the standards that schools and childcare settings must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. You can use specific temporary EYFS disapplications if COVID-19 national or local restrictions in England prevent you from delivering the EYFS as normal. Details can be found in the guidance on EYFS: [coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2) [disapplications.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2)  The disapplications end on 31 August 2021. |
| **Reporting COVID-**  **19 cases to Ofsted** | We have asked Ofsted to work with us and with local authorities to find out which early years providers, including childminders, are open or temporarily closed. This means that Ofsted requires further information about whether some providers are open or closed. If your operating circumstances change (that is, you open or close): let Ofsted know by sending an email to [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk with](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk) ‘change in operating hours’ in the subject field. | You must notify Ofsted, or the childminder agency with which you are registered, of any confirmed cases in the setting, whether a child or a staff member. You should also tell Ofsted if you have to close the setting as a result. This is a legal requirement. Report as soon as you are able to, and in any case within 14 days. See the [guidance on reporting incidents](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tell-ofsted-if-you-have-a-covid-19-incident-at-your-childcare-business) to assure all the information required is included. |
| **Charging parents**  **and carers if their child is unable to take up their place** | Providers should continue to be fair and balanced in dealings with parents or carers and must continue to avoid unfair charging practices. Providers should refer to:   * the  [open letter to the early years’ sector p](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904194/Open_letter_to_Nursery_and_Early_Years__settings.pdf)ublished by the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) on the 28 July 2020 * the CMA’s detailed [advice to the nursery and early](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nursery-and-early-years-sector-covid-19-restrictions-and-consumer-law)   [years sector about COVID-19 restrictions and](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nursery-and-early-years-sector-covid-19-restrictions-and-consumer-law) [consumer law advice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nursery-and-early-years-sector-covid-19-restrictions-and-consumer-law)   * the CMA’s broader advice on [cancellations and](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds) [refunds for consumer contracts affected by](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds) [COVID-19 health restrictions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds)   Providers should be cautious about charging parents who wish to withdraw their child from an early years setting during the period of national restrictions. There are legitimate reasons why it may be appropriate for a whole household to remain at home, and where law or guidance | Providers should continue to be fair and balanced in dealings with  parents or carers and must continue to avoid unfair charging practices. Providers should refer to:   * the  [open letter to the early years’ sector p](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904194/Open_letter_to_Nursery_and_Early_Years__settings.pdf)ublished by the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) on the 28 July 2020 * the CMA’s detailed [advice to the nursery and early](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nursery-and-early-years-sector-covid-19-restrictions-and-consumer-law)   [years sector about COVID-19 restrictions and](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nursery-and-early-years-sector-covid-19-restrictions-and-consumer-law) [consumer law advice](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nursery-and-early-years-sector-covid-19-restrictions-and-consumer-law)   * the CMA’s broader advice on [cancellations and](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds) [refunds for consumer contracts affected by](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds) [COVID-19 health restrictions](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cma-to-investigate-concerns-about-cancellation-policies-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic-consumer-contracts-cancellation-and-refunds)   Each case needs to take account of individual contracts considered from the perspective of both parties and the application of the law and guidance to both providers as businesses and parents as consumers. The general principle is that providers should not charge parents or carers for services that cannot be provided. If there is a barrier to accessing childcare, based on government guidance or the law, the provider should not charge the parents or carers for this period. |