

Safe Learning in Scotland: Building on our Success in Early Learning and Childcare

This document is intended to support your ongoing work to continue to keep settings safe places to work and learn. It provides a brief overview of current expectations and summarises changes that the COVID 19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues has recommended. Where appropriate, please share these changes with parents through your ongoing engagement with them. It may also be helpful to share how Scotland's protection levels may impact on settings.

Continuing Expectations

In settings, approaches such as following and reinforcing physical distancing advice and scrupulous hand-washing and respiratory hygiene help to contain the spread of COVID 19. It is very important that these and other measures continue to be followed rigorously. Practitioners should continue to be vigilant in all areas of the setting and ensure risk assessments are live documents that are reviewed as appropriate.

Update on Face Coverings in Early Learning and Childcare Settings

- **Face coverings** should be worn by adults wherever they cannot maintain a 2 m distance from other adults (e.g. in corridor and communal areas). Coverings should also be worn by staff and visitors when not working directly with children, for example when in office and admin areas, canteens (except when dining), staff rooms and other confined communal areas, (including staff toilets) when 2 metre distancing cannot be maintained, except where a person is exempt from wearing a covering.
- **Face coverings** should be strongly encouraged for parents and other visitors to the setting (whether entering the building or otherwise), including parents at drop-off and pick-up.
- **Face coverings** are not required not when interacting with children.

Update on singing in Early Learning and Childcare Settings

- **Singing** should not happen indoors as an organised, large group activity. However, the Sub-Group recognises that children sing naturally in the course of activities and play, and should not be discouraged from doing so, and that singing can also be used to comfort young children when necessary.

Update on number of children in group setting

- It is now considered reasonable for children to be managed in **groups up to the size encountered in primary school**, for example no more than 25 to 33 children in any one group. The adult to child ratios in the national care standards must continue to apply. Large indoor groupings should be avoided.

Update on ventilation and temperature control

Potential approaches to help achieve an appropriate balance of **ventilation and internal temperature** in the colder months may include:

- partially opening doors and windows to provide ventilation while reducing draughts.
- opening high level windows in preference to low level windows to reduce draughts.
- refreshing the air in spaces by opening windows, vents and external doors at times which avoid user discomfort (e.g. between sessions or when children are outdoors).

Levels of protection – Level 3

Protection Level 3 – Enhanced protective measures

- Parents or guardians should discuss with their GP or clinician whether children with the highest clinical risk should still attend.
- Employers should ensure that individualised risk assessments for setting staff members with the highest clinical risk are in place and updated appropriately, and staff should speak to their employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place.
- Decisions on appropriate protections should be informed by individual risk assessments, and may include protective measures in the workplace, mitigations such as working remotely (e.g. at home or in different settings), or carrying out different tasks within their usual workplace. If protections cannot be put in place, they can discuss whether they need a fit note with their GP or clinician.
- Settings should review use of peripatetic staff, to ensure that staff who by nature of their role support multiple settings only attend settings in person where it is demonstrably in support of the health and wellbeing of young children.
- Staff with a single employer should only work across more than one childcare setting or service when it is absolutely necessary. Risk assessments should be carried out where staff are employed by more than one childcare provider.

Levels of protection – Level 4

Protection Level 4 - enhanced and targeted protective measures

- The current advice is that children on the shielding list should not attend in person. However, there will be further consideration of how individualised risk assessments can be used to maximise school attendance, and remove barriers to access to regulated childcare services, for children who continue to shield during Level 4 restrictions. It is expected that these should be informed by the secondary care (hospital) clinical team caring for the child.
- Employers should ensure that individualised risk assessments for school staff members with the highest clinical risk are in place and updated appropriately, and staff should speak to their employer to ensure all appropriate protections are in place.
- At Level 4, to provide additional assurance, the Chief Medical Officer will issue a letter which is similar to a fit note that will last for as long as the local area is under Level 4 restrictions. This letter can be used in the few cases where, following updating of risk assessments and discussions with employers, it is not possible to make a workplace safe for staff. Being in receipt of one of these letters does not automatically mean that staff should not attend work if appropriate protections are in place. Staff should use the period covered by the letter to discuss any concerns further with their employer or an occupational health adviser, and if, following individualised risk assessments, action results in adequate protection in the workplace then they may continue to attend work.
- Decisions on appropriate protections should be informed by individual risk assessments, and may include protective measures in the workplace, mitigations such as working remotely (e.g. at home or in different settings), or carrying out different tasks within their usual workplace.
- Settings should be prepared to engage with enhanced testing responses to COVID-19 outbreaks, where recommended by the Incident Management Team. This may include more testing of people who do not have symptoms to support outbreak management, and address areas where we are concerned about transmission. This includes undertaking more testing of close contacts of confirmed cases when recommended by our local health protection teams and more intensive use of other asymptomatic testing.
- Settings in areas in level 4 may be asked to implement additional public health measures that may affect capacity. These may include for example, consistent small cohorts, minimising contact between cohorts, restriction of blended placements. Moving to level 4 does not automatically require the use of these additional measures. However, there may be circumstances in which, based on clear evidence and public health considerations, these measures will be required. All such decisions will be made in line with the independent advice of local Directors of Public Health.