

Frequently Asked Questions

Putting risk assessment into practice during COVID-19 Webinar

This document contains the questions which were not answered across the four webinars. If you have any further queries, please email the relevant team as referenced on the PowerPoint.

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Is opening only permitted once all paperwork and assessments are completed?

Yes. How can you open before you know the building is safe to use? How can you identify all hazards and appropriate controls measures if the assessments are not in place? These procedures need to be understood and followed by all to ensure the safety of everyone.

Key person Globe

How can 1 key person look after their group of children AND greet parents/take children into the setting at the same time? Surely, it's better to have 2 staff working together.

You can have two or more staff working together, if you have the available staff to do so. Ideally these staff remain within the globe throughout the day and subsequent day and do not mix with other globes (adults or children). This is set out in the government guidance *Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June* (Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June). Most childminders will work alone and will need to consider how they can manage greeting families as part of their risk assessment.

Can we state that children do not crossover/change 'bubbles' in order to reduce the risk of transmission? As a setting we feel they should only be in one bubble, but parents have requested they swap between.

For children attending the same setting the guidance does say to minimise the contact between groups/bubbles. The children should attend just one setting wherever possible and to minimise as far as possible the number of education and childcare settings the child attends. It is also about staff safety. The 'Preparing for wider opening guidance says that sessional nurseries that have different cohorts of children at different times of the day, may wish to consider having smaller groups to limit the number of children they come into contact with. For example, one staff member may have two groups/bubbles (a bubble of 8 children on Monday and Tuesday and a bubble of 8 different children Thursday and Friday, as a result that one staff member only comes into contact with 16 children in any one week).

It was my intention to have two dedicated key people to each group of eight children. This will allow for children to be properly supervised and always in sight of an adult at all times. If a child is taken ill and needs to be removed from the group that second adult is crucial.

How you decide to operate your globes/bubbles and assign staff is your decision to make. The EYFS requirements state children must be within sight and/or hearing at all time, so depending on your layout you may need additional staff within each globe/bubble.

How should we manage physical contact between the children and between the staff and children? For example, if they get upset, hurt themselves, and ask for a cuddle?

A crucial part of early years care is supporting children's well-being especially at this time. Physical contact will be part of this and the Government has recognised the importance of supporting children's PSED in section 10 of the '*Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June*' document (Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June).

We have arranged the space to accommodate small group working 'bubbles'. However due to the size and set up of rooms it is necessary to change rooms throughout the day and at lunch. This would result with more than 16 children in one room (with tables spaced out). Is this acceptable for half an hour while staff take breaks?

The '*Preparing for wider opening...*' guidance asks you to plan your settings groups to reduce contact between children and staff which includes staff and staff too. It also states that '*providers are expected to ensure that there are no more than 16 in a group*'. The planning document also asks you to consider snack and mealtimes to ensure groups of children are kept together. Groups should be kept apart, but brief, transitory contact such as passing in a corridor is low risk. This is to keep everyone safe and reduce the risk of transmission. If you do not think you cannot achieve this to contact the local authority and discuss your options.

If I only have one room can I only have 16 children?

This will depend on the size of the room and how you can divide it effectively to enable groups/bubbles of children within it. Any shared spaces will have to be cleaned between groups as stated within government guidance. This is about limiting working bubbles so you do not want a different 16 children on different days with the same staff members as potentially they may come into contact 32, or 64 children across the week and as result this would increasing the risk of transmission.

If a group of keyworker/vulnerable children have been attending the setting all day, from 1st June do they need to be in a 'bubble' of their own or can they join other bubbles with children attending all day?

This is for you to risk/benefit assess what is best for the setting and families at this time. There is currently no guidance on this. Moving forward it is about the bubbles remaining the same.

Is there a certain staff to children ratio within the whole setting and in each key person globe to ensure where possible EYFS ratios are maintained?

Government guidance is to keep group sizes to 8 children, whilst adhering to EYFS ratios. Providers are expected to ensure that there are no more than 16 children in a group in early years settings.

How can one key person look after their group of children and greet parents/ take children into the setting at the same time? Is it better to have two staff working together?

You can have two or more staff working together, if you have the available staff to do so. Ideally these staff remain within the globe throughout the day and subsequent days and do not mix with other globes (adults or children). As set out in the government guidance '*Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June*').

Is there a timeframe between bubbles sharing a space (tables etc)?

You need to allow enough time to carry out the enhanced cleaning routine for the area as stated within your identified risk assessment and cleaning schedule. This will vary greatly depending on the size of area that needs to be cleaned and the number of staff carrying out this process.

If you only have 1 key person per bubble how can we change a child whilst keeping an eye on the bubble. If we have 8 children can we just have 1 bubble as we don't have many staff available.

The '*Preparing for wider opening...*' guidance states that '*...a maximum of 8 children, while adhering to EYFS ratios, is preferable so groups are as small as possible. Providers are expected to ensure that there are no more than 16 children in a group in early years settings*'. If you have two separate bubbles the practitioner from the second bubble would be able to see and hear the children within the first bubble and visa versa and as a result would meet the requirements of the EYFS statutory framework.

Is there a certain ratio to staff and children within the whole setting and in key person globe?

Whole setting is to ensure where possible EYFS ratios are maintained, the guidance for early years and childcare settings recommends that groups of 8 children is preferable, however they also state no more than 16 children within a group.

Testing

Testing for a symptomatic under 5 at a setting will happen and their household, but does this include younger siblings at home?

The Document '*Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June*' (Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June) states that children of this age can be tested if they display symptoms of coronavirus. The parents/carers of the child need to call 111 requesting a test.

How can we access tests for key workers and children?

There is guidance on obtaining testing for key workers in the Government guidance: '*Implementing protective measures for education and childcare*' (Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings).

You mentioned the disapplications and that we aren't expected to do 2 year checks currently. Are we still expected to complete the school transition documents as normal?

Transition documents are not statutory like the 2-year-old progress check. But good practice would be to have a professional discussion or give receiving schools an overview of children's characteristics of effective learning. This is particularly important for your children who have a SEND.

Entry and Exit

Prioritising children – is it okay to prioritise September school starters over younger funded 3yr olds?

Yes. If 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.

Can we ask parents/carers to take their child's temperature before arriving to school?

There is no Government guidance to say you must or must not do this. However, the Government document '*Preparing for wider opening for the early years and childcare settings from 1 June*' states that '*Public Health England's guidance is that routine testing of an individual's temperature is not a reliable method for identifying coronavirus*'.

What happens if we have to take a young baby from a parent?

You will need to reflect on what control measures you can put in place to receive the care of the baby.

Does the same parent have to drop and collect or just one parent?

One parent, this is to limit the number of adults waiting to collect and as result aids social distancing outside of the premises.

How do we manage children who attend more than one setting?

In the '*Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June*' (Preparing for the wider opening of early years and childcare settings from 1 June), it states, '*to minimise contact between groups of children and staff, children should attend just one setting wherever possible and parents and carers should be encouraged to minimise as far as possible the number of education and childcare settings their children attends*'. With this in mind you should work with each family and provider to agree how this can best be achieved.

PPE

Would you advise staff wear PPE to meet and greet children into the setting? As this is not our normal procedure?

The Government advice for education is that '*The majority of staff in childcare settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain distance of 2 metres from others. PPE is only needed for children whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE, or if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from any child displaying coronavirus symptoms*'.

Are we able to wear masks if we choose to? If the Government has advised us to wear masks when leaving the house it makes no sense to then not wear them at work to reduce the risk of spread.

The '*Implementing protective measures document*' (Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings) states that '*wearing a face covering or face mask in schools or other education settings is not recommended. Face coverings may be beneficial for short periods indoors where there is a risk of close social contact with people you do not usually meet and where social distancing and other measures cannot be maintained, for example on public transport or in some shops. This does not apply to schools or other education settings. Schools and other education or 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*'.

Staff

Can I ask about staff toilets and expectations on users to clean after themselves?

Currently there is no specific guidance on the use of staff toilets, but they will be a high touch point and as such it is up to you to determine how hygiene practices are implemented, to ensure the toilets are disinfected regularly.

Is it safe to open with only 2 staff?

You can open with two staff if you are meeting the ratio requirements as stated in the EYFS, but you will need to assess the risk and explore control measures.

If staff usually work split shifts could we look at them being there all day?

This is for you to decide the best way of working the government planning document states '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, keeping your staffing arrangements as consistent as possible.

If you must rotate staff owing to their own childcare arrangements can this be done?

The government guidance states '*as far as possible, the same members of staff should be assigned to each group and these should stay the same and on subsequent days. In instances where this is not possible that it is agreed on a weekly basis not daily, limiting contact*'.

Could staff come to work in their own clothes and then change?

The guidelines recommend the washing of clothes after each day in the setting. However, it is for you and your staff team to assess if this is something you want to implement as part of your risk assessment.

Could staff bring their own tablets/iPads in and only use those throughout the day to avoid sharing devices?

You need to consider the safeguarding implications and your own policies and procedures around staff using their own electronic devices within the setting. Consider, how you can monitor access of devices away from the setting, how can you be sure that other adults/young people cannot access the device? In addition, consider hygiene and the virus being transported between home and the setting on the device. The guidance is that this should not happen.

We understand in the disapplication document that we aren't expected to do the 2-year-old checks at the moment. Are we still expected to complete the school transition documents as normal?

Transition documents are not statutory unlike the 2-year-old progress check, so are not a legal requirement. However, to support transition we would recommend information is shared with the receiving schools.

The manager and deputy are shielding until 17th June. We do not have enough staff as we are a small preschool to open at this time. Do we put this in our risk assessment?

You need to ensure you are able to meet the EYFS statutory frameworks. You need someone who can lead and take responsibility for the setting.

Storage is a concern how can we store key worker resources to reduce the risk of transmission?

At this time you should be the only hall user and as a result items could be left out if an agreement was made with your hall hirer.

Environment

Soft furnishings - we have carpet throughout our room so should we stay shut?

The Government has advised educational settings to remove soft furnishings where it is practical to do so. It has not asked educational settings who have carpet to remain closed. As with any surface it should be cleaned more frequently to maintain high hygiene measures.

Removal of soft furnishings does this include puppet, dressing up and carpet/rugs?

The guidance in '*Preparing for the wider opening of early year and childcare settings from 1st June*' states '**where practicable, remove soft furnishing**'. The removal of a rug would be more practicable than a whole carpet. Consideration also needs to be given if resources such as puppets and dressing up can be cleaned effectively.

My nursery is child led free flow indoors and outdoors with children aged 2-4 in one big room with free flow to the garden and a woodland area. Our children do not have key person time, circle time, structured activities, this key person globe would be very difficult to implement into our setting without changing our ethos and the way we run our sessions.

The Government has stated that if any setting cannot operate in small groupings (maximum of 16 children) to discuss this with the local authority. You can do this by emailing eycimprovementservices@theeducationpeople.org or childminding@theeducationpeople.org if you are a childminder, leaving your contact details and someone will contact you.

One setting and only 4 children would you use the sandpit?

The advice is, if sand pits cannot be thoroughly cleaned between uses, they should not be used at this time.

Health

Will there be additional funding for all the extra resources needed, such as cleaning materials, sanitiser, lidded bins, additional grab bags.

Currently there is no additional funding.

Can we take children on local walks in rural or urban areas?

If you go on outings you need to ensure you meet the requirements as set out in the EYFS statutory framework for outings. Pay attention to the first aid disapplication, if this applies. You also need to check with your insurance company if you plan to do this regularly as this may be a significant change to your usual operating for example using a hall.

Where do we stand as practitioners comforting crying babies/children and can we comfort them?

Children's personal, social and emotional development is paramount at any point of their lives but during these uncertain times even more so. The guidance recognises you cannot keep two meters distance from children. In order to meet the requirements of the EYFS statutory framework you will need to comfort and support children/babies at this time, as you would normally.

Physical contact between the children and between the staff and children? For example, if they get upset, hurt themselves, and ask for a cuddle?

A crucial part of early years care is supporting children's well-being especially at this time. Physical contact will be part of this.

Are we still allowed to give parents their children's learning journal in paper format when they leave us for school? Do we still need to do transition forms?

You need to assess the risk in doing this and if there are control measures you can put into place to reduce the risk of transmission, like using an electronic format (emails, texts, etc). Transition forms are not a statutory requirement, but good practice would be to have a professional discussion or give receiving schools an overview of children's characteristics of effective learning. This is particularly important for your children who have SEND.

Would you encourage sanitising children's hands after handwashing to reduce the risk of contamination?

The government say ensure children are supervised when handwashing especially if using hand rub/sanitiser. Children should be taught how to effectively wash their hands or use rubs/sanitiser effectively.

As we are in one room will all staff and children need to self-isolate after a child/adult showing symptoms? If a child or staff member get sent home due to displaying symptoms should we inform the other parents?

You need to agree a protocol to responding to a suspected case of Coronavirus. Following the guidelines [What to do if you or someone in your household develops symptoms](#).

We want to use air conditioning units/fans as our building can become very hot and window ventilation is not sufficient. Can we use these electrical items?

The government document '*Implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings*' May 2020 states '*Where possible, all spaces should be well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening window) or ventilation units.*' Further information on ventilation units can be found in '*Managing school premises during the coronavirus outbreak*', which states that natural ventilation from open windows and vents is best and should be used as far as possible. If ventilation systems have to be used these need to be set to full fresh air where this is an option.

Is there a specific minimum percentage of alcohol that is deemed 'safe' to use?

The advice is a minimum of 60% alcohol. Here is a [link](#) for further information.

Do I have to report to RIDDOR if I have a confirmed case of Coronavirus?

HSE have set [guidance](#) on when it is reportable.

Are staff expected to apply sun cream? We plan to ask parents to apply an all-day sun cream before arrival. Is that ok?

You need to assess any additional risks involved with applying sun cream during this time and what measures you would like to put in place to minimise risk of transmission.

The cleaning guidance mentions using bleach. Is it safe to use in a childcare setting?

In the planning guide it directs you to the [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#).

I run a pre-school in a multi-use hall, how can I be sure the hall has been adequately cleaned before I arrive?

You need to discuss and agree the level of cleaning you require with the hall hirer.