

Information and guidance regarding the Coronavirus

This guidance is for information and support only and is current at the time of issue.

Daily alerts are circulated by email and provide specific information for early years, children's social care, schools and further education providers. To receive this update directly register for the gov.uk alerts and select early years.

Updates on COVID-19:

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Guidance for educational settings:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

Ofsted inspections and fees

As of 17 March 2020, The Secretary of State has allowed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to temporarily suspend all routine inspections of schools, further education, early years and social care providers. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-suspends-all-routine-inspections>

The government has also confirmed there will be no rise in the fees paid by early years and childcare providers to register with Ofsted in 2020-21.

Closures

The Government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked childcare providers to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. Check with your insurance company to ensure you are covered if you remain open.

It is important to underline that all childcare settings including early years settings, childminders, providers of childcare for school-age children, schools, colleges and other educational establishments, remain safe places for children. The fewer children the children in childcare settings the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

Childcare providers are being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children. Children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Vulnerable children are only those children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including Child in Need plans, on child protection plans, Looked After children, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans. It does not apply to two year old children who are funded solely based on social/economic criteria.

Please follow these key principles:

1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.
2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical/key worker, then provision will be available for them.
3. Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.
4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision>

Critical Key workers

The government published list of key workers is as follows:

- Health and social care
- Education and childcare
- Key public services
- Local and national government
- Food and other necessary goods
- Public safety and national security
- Transport
- Utilities, communication and financial services

If workers think they fall within the categories above, they should confirm with their employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements their role is **critical to the continuation of public services during the coronavirus outbreak**. Further detail can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Business rates

To support providers, the Government has announced they will be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year from 1 April 2020. This applies to all private, voluntary and independent nurseries and childminders.

<https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/nurseries-to-be-exempt-from-business-rates-as-government-brings-in-powers-to-close-or-keep-them-open>

Government advice and support for businesses

A raft of measures was announced by the Chancellor on 20 March 2020 relating to financial support for businesses. There was a particular focus on payment of wages should staff be unable to work, and arrangements for the payment of tax. The latest can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>