



Thursday 28 May 2020

A NOTE FOR ALL CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Phase 1 – Easing of Lockdown in Scotland

Today the First Minister announced that Scotland will begin to cautiously ease out of lockdown and move in to Phase 1 of the [routemap](#).

Our priority is the safety of every individual in Scotland. The easing of lockdown is an indication that Scotland is now in a position to slowly and cautiously begin to move forward and out of the Covid-19 crisis. The virus still exists and it is important that we continue to follow the guidance around physical distancing (where possible), increased hygiene measures and that we self-isolate if you or members of your household have any symptoms of coronavirus. More information can be found at [NHS Inform](#).

Physical Distancing Guidance for Schools

Alongside today's announcement that we are entering Phase 1 of our gradual easing out of lockdown, the Scottish Government has published physical distancing guidance for the reopening of schools. This guidance can be found [here](#). This guidance applies specifically to the reopening of schools and does not apply to early learning and childcare or school-age childcare settings.

This physical distancing guidance for schools does not apply to out of school care providers even if they operate from a school premise, the guidance is specifically for schools and not for 'school aged children'. We will issue guidance for OSC settings as part of the ELC guidance which is currently under development.

For ELC and OSC staff we **do not** expect staff to return to their settings next week in line with teachers and school staff.

What does all this mean for the childcare sector?

We want to explain what is and isn't changing for childcare as we move into Phase 1. If you are providing childcare to key worker children and vulnerable families then continue to do so. If you are closed then please continue to remain closed.

Childminding services and fully outdoor childcare provision

From Wednesday 3 June 2020 all childminders and fully outdoor childcare provision can reopen if they wish to do so. Restrictions will continue to be in place to reduce the risk of transmission, and there will be no change to the current Care Inspectorate arrangements for registration of services and the number of children a service can

care for as detailed on the certificate of registration. Guidance to support the reopening of both types of service will be published on Monday 1 June 2020.

Wednesday 3 June is the earliest reopening date for these services. There is no expectation that all services will reopen immediately or during Phase 1. It is important that each provider takes the time they need to prepare to reopen if they wish to do so, based on their own business and personal circumstances.

In relation to outdoor provision, please be aware that only fully outdoor services are being opened up alongside some other outdoor businesses. Only services who are registered as fully outdoor and meet the definition set out below are able to reopen during Phase 1. We know that many of you have excellent outdoor space and may be able to fully utilise it with some adaptations or provide satellite provision but in line with other aspects of Phase 1 of the routemap, at this stage only fully outdoor childcare provision will be able to reopen from 3 June.

The Care Inspectorate's definition of fully outdoor childcare provision is – *This model of setting has developed over recent years and can sometimes be referred to as a forest nursery or kindergarten. In these settings children are outdoors all of the time except in extreme weather conditions. Children and staff will have access to a sheltered area - this could be a permanent or temporary structure. There may also be a meeting point, premises or a base camp used for the drop off and collection of children. These settings will have a comprehensive contingency plan which has been articulated and agreed with parents in the rare occasion where severe weather conditions prevent children from being outside.*

As noted above, this should not be confused with settings which currently provide outdoor experiences as part of their provision of early learning and childcare or school age childcare. According to current Care Inspectorate registrations there are **22 registered fully outdoor nurseries and 1 fully outdoor out of school care setting** operating in Scotland.

All other early learning and childcare (ELC) and school aged childcare provision
For all other early learning and childcare and school aged childcare provision there is no change to the current [guidance](#). If you are providing childcare to key workers' children and for vulnerable families you can continue to do so and should continue to follow [Health Protection Scotland guidance](#). If you are closed you remain closed.

The Care Inspectorate will notify you of the earliest possible date for the wider reopening of childcare services. This will depend on when Scotland is able to move into Phase 3 of our routemap.

We are currently working collaboratively with the Care Inspectorate, COSLA, local authorities, childcare sector stakeholders and the unions to create guidance for the safe reopening of early learning and childcare and out of school care settings. We will issue guidance for the safe reopening and operating of early learning and

childcare and school aged childcare provision by the middle of June in preparation for reopening when the Scottish Government confirms that it is safe for Scotland to move into Phase 3. As we set out in our [Strategic Framework](#), we do not consider physical distancing to be appropriate or desirable in early learning and childcare settings. The safe reopening of settings will involve

- enhanced hygiene and cleaning practices,
- caring for children in small groups,
- minimising contact between those groups,
- maximising use of outdoor spaces, and
- physical distancing between adults in the setting, including parents at drop-off and pick-up times.

It is really important to us that we learn from settings who are currently providing childcare during Covid-19. We are working with these providers to also help us inform the guidance which will issue in mid-June.

Financial and business support

Please continue to check our dedicated gov.scot pages for the latest information on the financial and business support measures in place to support the childcare sector during closures and recovery:

- [Childcare providers: closure information](#)
- [Childminders: financial support](#)
- [Private and third sector providers: financial support](#)

What can we tell parents?

Understandably parents/carers have a lot of questions and want to know what today's announcement means for them and their family and also want to be absolutely sure that it is safe for their child to go back to ELC. Parent Club is a fantastic resource with lots of information and advice for parents and carers. They have recently created a new page which has FAQs for parents about the reopening of ELC and schools - <https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/reopening-schools-faqs>

Thank you for bearing with us during this time and thank you for everything you do for children, families and Scotland.