



## **Covid-19: Information for parents and carers about childcare settings during the National Lockdown in England 2021**



On 4 January 2021, the Prime Minister announced a new national lockdown. During the lockdown, schools, and colleges should only allow vulnerable children and young people and the children of critical workers to attend.

Early years providers were asked to stay open for all and allow children to attend their normal timetabled hours. This includes early years registered nurseries and childminders, maintained nursery schools, nursery classes in schools and other pre-reception provision on school sites.

The Government have published and regularly update the Guidance for parents and carers, which we refer to below and this may help you to address any concerns or queries you may have.

You can read the full guidance here: [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges in the autumn](#)

We understand that there may be some anxiety about sending your child to an early years setting during this third national lockdown. Therefore, we have prepared this factsheet using Government guidance and some local comments to help you.



### **Why have early years providers have been asked to remain open during the national lockdown in England, while schools have been instructed to close?**

The reason schools have been restricted is not that they are unsafe but because additional measures are needed to contain the spread of the virus. The wider restrictions in place as part of the national lockdown to contain the spread of the virus in the community enable the Government to continue prioritising keeping nurseries and childminders open, supporting parents and delivering the crucial care and education needed for our youngest children.

### **What does the Government say about the latest scientific advice?**



Early years settings remain low risk environments for children and staff. 0-5 year olds continue to have the lowest confirmed rates of coronavirus of all age groups., evidence shows that pre-school children are less susceptible to infection and are not playing a driving role in transmission. There is no evidence the new strain of the virus causes more serious illness in either children or adults and there continues to be strong evidence that children are much less susceptible to severe clinical disease than older people.

Early years settings have been open to all children since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 and there is no evidence that the early years sector has contributed to a rise in virus cases within the community. Early evidence from SAGE showed that early years provision had a smaller relative impact on transmission rate than primary schools, which in turn had a smaller relative impact than secondary schools.

## **If my child is eligible, is it compulsory for them to attend early years provision?**

Attendance in nurseries, childminders and other early years providers remains optional but we do strongly encourage you to take up a place for your child. Attending childcare can help provide a routine as young children develop their social skills. You can check if your child is eligible for any of the funded childcare entitlements, worth on average £2,500 a year to parents of 2 year olds, and up to £5,000 a year to parents of 3 and 4 year olds, on the [Childcare Choices](#) website.

## **How will risks to children, practitioners and families be managed?**

Public Health England advice remains that the risk of transmission and infection is low if early years settings follow the system of controls, which reduce risks and create safer environments.

There is guidance and support both from the Government and locally to childcare settings on implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings. To manage the risks, things may be a little different. Approaches the Government are asking providers to take include:

- carrying out a risk assessment
- making sure that children do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of coronavirus
- manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in line with current public health guidance
- promoting regular hand washing and promoting the catch it, bin it, kill it approach
- cleaning more frequently
- minimise mixing within settings e.g. where they use different rooms for different age groups, keeping those groups apart as much as possible.

Your child's nursery, childminder or school will be able to give you more information about the changes they have made.

## **How will attending an early years setting help my child's development?**

Nurseries, pre-schools and childminders are wonderful places for children to learn and have fun with friends, which supports their development and their overall wellbeing. Attending childcare can be an exciting and joyful experience for children and can also help provide a routine as they develop their social skills. Early years education is an important stage for children where they can flourish and get the best start in life.



The Government have said: The earliest years are the most crucial point of child development and attending early education lays the foundation for lifelong learning and supports children's social and emotional development. We continue to prioritise keeping early years settings open in full because of the clear benefits to children's education and wellbeing and to support working parents. Caring for the youngest age group is not something that can be done remotely.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**



### **Where can I find further information to support my child during the Coronavirus Pandemic?**

If you would like further information to support your early years child/ren during the Coronavirus pandemic and ideas for things to do at home, please see our handy hints and tips which can be found via this webpage: <https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/care/early-years-and-childcare/covid-19-information-parents-carers-childcare-settings>

You can also find practical local information on the Notts Help Yourself parent/carer zone: [https://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/kb5/nottinghamshire/directory/parent\\_zone.page](https://www.nottshelpyourself.org.uk/kb5/nottinghamshire/directory/parent_zone.page)

**Please get in touch if you have any further questions, you can email us at [eycovid19@nottscg.gov.uk](mailto:eycovid19@nottscg.gov.uk)**