**Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020 – Guidance**

**Briefing for Early Years Providers**

Sources:

* [Press notice](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/details-on-phased-wider-opening-of-schools-colleges-and-nurseries)
* [Actions for educational and childcare settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020)
* [Implementing protective measures in education childcare settings](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings)
* [Information for parents and carers](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers)

Below is a summary of the DfE guidance issued 11 May 2020 to support **Early Years Providers** to prepare for opening 1 June 2020. This document is presented as a summary, which includes direct quotes and some summaries, it is recommended that you should also read the DfE published guidance in full.

**Implementing protective measures in education and Childcare settings**

**Effective infection protection and control**

A range of approaches and actions should be employed to do this. These can be seen as a hierarchy of controls that, when implemented, creates an inherently safer system, where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. These include:

* minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend childcare settings, schools or colleges
* cleaning hands more often than usual - wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered
* ensuring good respiratory hygiene - promote the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach
* cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach
* minimising contact and mixing by altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered break times)

**Personal protective equipment (PPE) including face coverings and face masks**

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.

The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, even if they are not always able to maintain a distance of 2 metres from others. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases including:

* children, young people and students whose care routinely already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs should continue to receive their care in the same way
* if a child, young person or other learner becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home. A face mask should be worn by the supervising adult if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. If contact with the child or young person is necessary, then gloves, an apron and a face mask should be worn by the supervising adult. If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes, for example from coughing, spitting, or vomiting, then eye protection should also be worn

**Class or group sizes**

We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking this into account. Schools should therefore work through the hierarchy of measures set out above:

* avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
* frequent hand cleaning and good respiratory hygiene practices
* regular cleaning of settings
* minimising contact and mixing

It is still important to reduce contact between people as much as possible, and we can achieve that and reduce transmission risk by ensuring children, young people and staff where possible, only mix in a small, consistent group and that small group stays away from other people and groups.

Public Health England (PHE) is clear that if early years settings, schools and colleges do this, and crucially if they are also applying regular hand cleaning, hygiene and cleaning measures and handling potential cases of the virus as per the advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered.

Where settings can keep children and young people in those small groups 2 metres away from each other, they should do so. While in general groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory contact, such as passing in a corridor, is low risk

**Planning and organising**

Consider the following steps:

* refresh your risk assessment and other health and safety advice for children, young people and staff in light of recent government advice, identifying protective measures (such as the things listed below). Also ensure that all health and safety compliance checks have been undertaken before opening
* organise small class groups
* childcare settings or early years groups in school should:
  + consider how to keep small groups of children together throughout the day and to avoid larger groups of children mixing
  + consider how play equipment is used ensuring it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously
* remove unnecessary items from classrooms and other learning environments where there is space to store it elsewhere
* remove soft furnishings, soft toys and toys that are hard to clean (such as those with intricate parts)
* consider how children and young people arrive at the education or childcare setting, and reduce any unnecessary travel on coaches, buses or public transport where possible (guidance will shortly be published on safe travel)

**Communicating your plans**

* ensure everyone is aware of not entering the premises if they are displaying symptoms of Covid-19
* only one parent should attend with their child
* inform parents of drop off and collection procedures, including how to minimise adult contact
* make clear parents cannot gather at entrances
* engaging parents support with home learning
* ensure parents are aware of recommendations on transport
* Talk to your staff about the measures in place in your provision

**When open**

Where possible:

* Ensure groups are kept together throughout the day or subsequent days
* Groups have the same staffing
* Groups are in same rooms/classroom

**Cleaning and Hygiene**

* follow the [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings)
* ensure that sufficient handwashing facilities are available
* clean surfaces that children and young people are touching
* ensure that all adults and children:
  + frequently wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and dry thoroughly. Review the [guidance on hand cleaning](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public)
  + clean their hands on arrival at the setting, before and after eating, and after sneezing or coughing
  + are encouraged not to touch their mouth, eyes and nose
  + use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins for tissue waste (‘catch it, bin it, kill it’)
* ensure that help is available for children and young people who have trouble cleaning their hands independently
* consider how to encourage young children to learn and practise these habits through games, songs and repetition
* ensure that bins for tissues are emptied throughout the day
* where possible, all spaces should be well ventilated using natural ventilation (opening windows) or ventilation units
* prop doors open, where safe to do so (bearing in mind fire safety and safeguarding), to limit use of door handles and aid ventilation
* get in touch with public sector buying organisation partners (for example ESPO, YPO, NEPO) about proportionate supplies of soap, anti-bacterial gel and cleaning products if needed
* there is no need for anything other than normal personal hygiene and washing of clothes following a day in an educational or childcare setting

**Reduce mixing within education or childcare setting by:**

* accessing rooms directly from outside where possible
* considering one-way circulation, or place a divider down the middle of the corridor to keep groups apart as they move through the setting where spaces are accessed by corridors
* staggering breaks to ensure that any corridors or circulation routes used have a limited number of pupils using them at any time
* staggering lunch breaks - children and young people should clean their hands beforehand and enter in the groups they are already in, groups should be kept apart as much as possible and tables should be cleaned between each group. If such measures are not possible, children should be brought their lunch in their classrooms
* ensuring that toilets do not become crowded by limiting the number of children or young people who use the toilet facilities at one time
* noting that some children and young people will need additional support to follow these measures (for example, routes round school marked in braille or with other meaningful symbols, and social stories to support them in understanding how to follow rules)

**Use outside space:**

* for exercise and breaks
* for outdoor education, where possible, as this can limit transmission and more easily allow for distance between children and staff
* although outdoor equipment should not be used unless the setting is able to ensure that it is appropriately cleaned between groups of children and young people using it, and that multiple groups do not use it simultaneously. Read [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings)

**For shared rooms:**

* use halls, dining areas and internal and external sports facilities for lunch and exercise at half capacity. If class groups take staggered breaks between lessons, these areas can be shared as long as different groups do not mix (and especially do not play sports or games together) and adequate cleaning between groups between groups is in place, following the [COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings)
* stagger the use of staff rooms and offices to limit occupancy

**Reduce the use of shared resources:**

* encouraging parents and children and young people to walk or cycle to their education setting where possible
* schools, parents and young people following the government guidance on how to travel safely, which will be published shortly, when planning their travel, particularly if public transport is required
* taking appropriate actions to reduce risk if hygiene rules and social distancing is not possible, for example when transporting children and young people with complex needs who need support to access the vehicle or fasten seatbelts

**Actions for educational and childcare settings** **to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020**

**Next steps**

We are also asking nurseries and other early years providers, including childminders, to begin welcoming back all children.

Staff and pupils in all settings will be eligible for testing if they become ill with coronavirus symptoms, as will members of their households. A negative test will enable children to get back to childcare or education, and their parents to get back to work. A positive test will ensure rapid action to protect their classmates and staff in their setting. Those who are clinically vulnerable, or are living with someone who is, should follow our [protective measures guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings).

In childcare settings, providers will be asked to welcome back all children below statutory school age from the week commencing 1 June 2020.

Demand for childcare is likely to be lower than usual at first, and existing space requirements and staff to child ratios for these age groups should allow for small group working.

Where the physical layout of a setting does not allow small groups of children to be kept at a safe distance apart, we expect practitioners to exercise judgement in ensuring the highest standards of safety are maintained.

In some cases, it may be necessary for providers to introduce a temporary cap on numbers to ensure that safety is prioritised.

From 1 June 2020, childminders can look after children of all ages, in line with usual limits on the number of children they can care for.

We will prioritise younger children in the first phases of wider opening, for several reasons. Firstly, because there is moderately high scientific confidence in evidence suggesting younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus (COVID-19); and secondly because evidence shows the particularly detrimental impact which time spent out of education can have upon them.

We will provide all educational and childcare settings with further guidance and support to help them to prepare for wider opening over the coming weeks and continue to work closely with the sector.

**Risk assessment**

Every setting should carry out a risk assessment before opening. The assessment should directly address risks associated with coronavirus (COVID-19), so that sensible measures can be put in place to control those risks for children and staff. All employers have a duty to consult employees on health and safety, and they are best placed to understand the risks in individual settings.

**Class sizes**

For pre-school children in early years settings, the staff to child ratios within Early Years Foundation Stage continue to apply, and we recommend using these to group children

Public Health England are clear that if early years, school and college settings do this, and crucially if they also apply comprehensive infection control measures, such as taking steps to ensure symptomatic individuals do not attend settings, regular hand cleaning, respiratory hygiene and cleaning measures and handling potential cases of the virus as per our advice, then the risk of transmission will be lowered.

Where settings can keep children and young people in those small groups 2m away from each other, they should do so. While in general groups should be kept apart, brief, transitory, contact such as passing in a corridor is low risk.

### Protective measures in education and childcare setting

The DfE guidance on [Implementing Protective Measures in Education and Childcare Settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings) contains detailed advice for settings on:

* cleaning, including supplies of cleaning and handwashing products
* testing and tracing
* PPE
* what settings should do in response to a case of COVID-19 being confirmed

### Curriculum

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) sets the standards that schools and childcare settings must meet for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. Early years settings should use reasonable endeavours to deliver the learning and development requirements as far as possible in the current circumstances, as [set out here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2/early-years-foundation-stage-coronavirus-disapplications).

We are continuing to work with the childcare sector to understand how the early years sector can best be supported to ensure that sufficient safe, appropriate and affordable childcare is available for those returning to work now, and for all families who need it in the longer term.

**Costs associated with opening for more children and young people**

For early years settings, the dedicated schools grant (DSG) should continue to be paid by local authorities for provision of free entitlements. Where parents are accessing hours beyond the free entitlements they are eligible for, early year providers should continue to charge parents in the normal way. The wider business support packages can continue to be used as appropriate, including the loan schemes and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), on condition that the principles in Department for Education’s [sector specific guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care/coronavirus-covid-19-financial-support-for-education-early-years-and-childrens-social-care) continue to be met.