

# Staffing your provision during the COVID-19 restrictions and beyond

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All of us have been affected in different ways by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent response. Staff will have been impacted through family and home life, financial circumstances, health and the restrictions placed on daily life. Returning to more normal circumstances could be a trigger for staff to feel a relief from the pressure, but it might also trigger them to deal with emotions that they are struggling with or weren't aware of before.

It is important to think about how all staff, including yourself, can be supported as you return to a more normal situation. We all need to have our emotional needs met if we are going to be able to support others.

We suggest you review and risk assess which staff you have available to work, and when, based on their individual circumstances. This will include any potential health vulnerability they have and whether or not they are currently on furlough. Think about the impact of your staffing levels on the numbers of children you can take, and when.

If staff are unable to come in to work, it may be possible for them to carry out some work from home. If you have part-time staff, you will need to consider how you can manage your groups to limit the number of adults working with more than one group of children.

Things to consider:

- What do I know about the individual circumstances of my members of staff and what do I need to find out?
- Are any staff in the [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) category? (formerly 'shielded group')
- Are any staff member in the [clinically vulnerable](#) category?
- What do I know about how each staff member deals with challenges and what support they respond to best?
- How can I provide support for all staff members, including the managers who may be taking on additional work and support for staff and families?

- How can I create an environment where staff feel able to say that they are struggling and ask for support?
- Can I make time when there are no children attending for staff to share their experiences and feelings and to support building up your team again?
- How will I review our working practices, including understanding the views of staff and families, and plan for additional children attending in the future?

There may be many reasons why a staff member may not feel comfortable returning to work. If there is no **medical** reason why they cannot return to work, employers and staff should discuss and agree working arrangements, taking clear, practical steps to help protect workers and create safe places to work. You should work with your team to identify the practical ways of managing those risks to try and alleviate their concerns.

The government urges employers to take socially responsible decisions and listen to the concerns of their staff. Employers and employees should come to a pragmatic agreement about their working arrangements. If following this, there still is an unresolved issue, you may need to seek legal advice on employment law.

**You can find advice and guidance about supporting staff back to work from [ACAS](#). Or you may be able to access support from national early years groups to which you have membership.**