



**UPDATED Guide for Early  
Years Leaders**

*02.07.2020*

# Update

With the release of new guidance over the last couple of days, this document has been amended to ensure the advice is as up to date as possible. This guide considers the following documents:

[Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak; Updated 2 July 2020](#)

[Press release; Schools and colleges to reopen in full in September; July 2020](#)

[Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms Government consultation response; July 2020](#)



We hope that you find the guide useful and always welcome your feedback. If you would like any further advice our guidance, please do email us on [hello@thekeyleadership.co.uk](mailto:hello@thekeyleadership.co.uk) or visit our website [www.thekeyleadership.co.uk](http://www.thekeyleadership.co.uk)

## Introduction

As lockdown begins to ease and the R rate drops, more guidance is released about how we can safely return to a more normal way of managing our early years settings. In this guide, we aim to cover the most important aspects of the latest guidance, bringing some clarity as well as some practical implementation tips. As we are focused on the early years sector, this document will only contain information relevant to early years settings.

The information within this document is our interpretation of the guidance and does not replace or override the advice within the government guidance. We use our sector knowledge and experience of leading settings and supporting managers to bring practical ideas, enabling you to plan to open your settings safely.



## So where are we as of today (24/07/2020)?

From 1st June 2020, early years providers, began to welcome more children back into their settings, alongside the children of Key Workers and vulnerable children. The introduction of 'bubbles' meant that the amount of interaction with other children and adults was limited and outbreaks could be confined. For some settings, this allocation of bubbles was a simple process, whereas for others it was a more difficult task.



The support from Local Authorities has been disparate, with some areas reporting a wealth of advice and support and others feeling very much left in the dark. What has become apparent, however, is the sheer tenacity and determination of the sector to pull together and do the right thing for the children and families we serve. It is important to recognise that it is not compulsory to open your setting. You do not have to open if you are not yet ready to do so for whatever reason.

Now, as we begin to ease social restrictions and head towards a more familiar kind of normal, the sector needs to once again make changes to its operations. So let's take a look at what those changes might be....

## The over arching points in the guidance are as follows:

- Minimising contact with those who have Covid-19 symptoms
- Practising good hygiene including effective handwashing and good respiratory hygiene
- Frequent cleaning of surfaces
- Where necessary wearing appropriate PPE
- Responding to any infection within the community
- Carrying out thorough risk assessments
- Protecting those who are more at risk
- Wraparound providers on school premises or in early years settings can operate if they follow the safe working guidance
- The EYFS reforms will still go ahead in voluntary capacity in primary schools from September
- Baseline assessments have been postponed to September 2021.



Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak: Updated 2/07/2020, identifies the next steps that settings may make, in order to open their doors for all families.

One of the most significant changes included in this guidance is regarding 'bubbles'. From the wider opening of settings, providers have been organising children into 'bubbles' or family groups, in order to limit and control the spread of infection. However, from 20th July, 'early years settings will no longer be required to keep children in small, consistent groups within settings.'

Whilst many leaders will be doing a little happy dance at this news, this doesn't mean that everything is back to normal. The guidance recommends that settings minimise mixing wherever possible. Easier said than done, depending on your setting type. Perhaps for full day care settings, this means ensuring that children remain in their rooms without mixing at meal times or during outdoor play. Rotas may be adapted to ensure that mixing of staff is minimised. Smaller settings, such as pack-aways, might continue to 'zone' their environments to ensure children stay in groups where possible. Managing this minimal mixing will be different for every setting, do what you feel is right for your setting, staff children and families.

## **System of controls: protective measures**

The government have provided a System of Controls (below) for protective measures, to support early years settings. Once you have effective risk assessment processes in place, leaders can use the system of controls to ensure they are doing all they can to minimise risk.

### Prevention:

- 1 Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend settings
- 2 Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual
- 3 Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- 4 Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach
- 5 Minimise contact between groups where possible
- 6 Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all settings, all the time.

Number 5 must be properly considered and settings must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 6 applies in all specific circumstances.

### Response to any infection:

- 7 Engage with NHS Track and Trace
- 8 Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the setting community
- 9 Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

Section 3 of the guidance sets out the public health advice early years settings must follow to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. It also includes the process that settings should follow if anyone develops COVID-19 (coronavirus) symptoms while attending.

The guidance provides a PHE-endorsed 'system of controls', building on the protective measures that have been in use throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We have produced a managers poster which you can download and use as a quick guide to the System of Controls for your setting.

These controls must be used alongside robust risk assessments, to minimise the risk of infection spreading within your early years setting. It is great to see the autonomy and control given to setting leaders in terms of measuring risk. The guidance states; 'Setting leaders will be best placed to understand the needs of their settings and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering high quality care and education with the measures needed to manage risk.' You know your children, staff and communities well and are best placed to make the right decisions for your setting.

We advise early years leaders to conduct a thorough review of their health and safety risk assessments. It is important that setting risk assessments are not only robust but are fit for purpose. We see many settings using RA's as a tick box exercise, leaving them vulnerable. Monitoring and regularly reviewing the RA's is also essential. RA's should be flexible and fluid documents, ever changing and adapting to changes in the environment, stakeholders and users.

**Have confidence in yourself. Talk to your team. Reach out for support from The Key Leadership. You've got this and we've got you!**



## System of controls: protective measures

The guidance takes each control measure in turn and describes how each can be implemented. For most parts, this guidance is what settings have already been doing and confirms the good practice we have seen across the sector.

The detail provided on control measure 8 is particularly useful and confirms how a setting should deal with a confirmed case of Covid-19. It is essential that settings use their rotas and registers effectively to clearly show who has been in contact with each child, for how long and the type of contact. For example, a practitioner who has been working closely with a preschool child, sat next to them at a table, will be more at risk than a practitioner who perhaps covered a lunch break while those children were asleep. Knowing who has done what throughout the day will assist you in making the correct decisions with the health protection team should a child test positive for Covid-19.



## Staff

As a leader you know that the quality of your service is down to the quality of your staff team. Keeping them safe and providing a carefully planned and structured working environment is essential. As leaders, we also know that a confident and content workforce leads to confident happy children, so putting measures in place to reduce practitioner stress and anxiety is essential. The guidance states that leaders ‘...should try as far as practically possible to accommodate additional measures.’ We know that there aren't many early years roles that can be done at home or in the office, so this can be tricky. However, understanding the worries and anxieties of your team is the first step to ensuring they are back in the setting feeling confident and at their best. The [Key Staff Wellbeing resource bundle](#) is perfect for supporting all early years leaders with this.

A phased return for children will mean a phased in work force and, as a leader, it's important to bring back your healthiest, least vulnerable staff first, enabling those who have underlying health needs or vulnerable people at home to stay home for as long as possible. Carrying out an assessment of staff will help to prioritise staff needs. Take a look at [our leaders tools](#) to help you settle your staff back into work smoothly.



## Using the outdoors

We have been asked a number of times about access to public outdoor areas for settings and we have clarification in this guidance. Whilst we know that outdoor play is essential for children's health and development, we have been encouraging outdoor play even more so during this pandemic. However, this has been difficult for settings who don't have access to a significant private outdoor area. The latest guidance states settings '...may take small groups of children to outdoor public spaces, for example parks, provided that a risk assessment demonstrates that they can stay 2 metres away from other people at all times. This should be restricted to small groups and should be done in line with wider government guidelines on the number of people who can meet in outdoor public places.'



## Ofsted

We are all aware that the Secretary of State for Education announced the suspension of routine Ofsted inspections on 17 March 2020. The safeguarding responsibilities of settings have not changed, and Ofsted's inspection and regulatory work triggered by safeguarding concerns will continue. However, the guidance now informs us that routine inspections will restart from January 2021 - by which time the EYFS is expected to be reinstated fully. This means that the disapplications to support early years during the pandemic will no longer be able to be used and the full EYFS should be back in place.

Settings who have been judged 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' may have some regulatory visits during the autumn term. However, they will not receive a judgment, just a short summary of findings.



## You!

Early years leaders give so much of themselves every day, it's essential you have the support in place to look after yourself. The Key Leadership offers virtual support and guidance, allowing a knowledgeable and caring face to be at the end of a screen or phone when you need it. Make sure you are taking regular breaks, eating well, staying hydrated and resting.



Now is the time to ramp up the marketing, identify your perfect customer and increase your occupancy to grow your business. Take look at our members bundle on marketing\_your setting.

Continue to market your setting and look ahead to when you are back in full swing. Join the Key Leadership community for support and encouragement from other leaders; we are all in this together.