



E: ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

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NOTE FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

To all registered school age childcare providers,

UPDATE ON SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE RE-OPENING FROM 15th MARCH

Thank you to all school age childcare providers who have continued to support children and families during the stay at home period.

Today the First Minister confirmed that, following a continued suppression of the coronavirus figures, regulated school age childcare settings can re-open to all primary school children from 15 March alongside the return of P4-7 children as part of the phase 2 return. The plans are conditional on continued progress on suppressing coronavirus (COVID-19).

We have published updated guidance on 19 February to support re-opening, and further information on this is included later in this provider notice.

ADVICE AND EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT REOPENING

The decision to reopen school age childcare services has been taken as part of a phased reopening of education and childcare. This takes account of the available evidence on transmission and infection in Scotland, as well as on the transmissibility and severity of the new variant of the Coronavirus in relation to children and young people. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues, has considered this evidence and has also considered its existing advice on the mitigations required to ensure a safe return to in-person learning for staff and pupils. The Sub-Group's advice emphasises that the current mitigations remain vital in preventing transmission of the virus. The Sub Group echoed recent advice from the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) that a step change in the rigour of application of mitigations is required, given the increased transmission risk associated with the new variant. The Sub-Group's latest advice on mitigations can be found [here](#). Updates from the Sub-Group recent meetings can be found [here](#).

GUIDANCE ON REDUCING RISK OF TRANSMISSION IN CHILDCARE SERVICES

You can find the updated guidance for school age childcare services here:

- [School Aged Childcare](#)

Key changes in the latest guidance are:

- The need to refresh risk assessments in light of re-opening.

- Staff induction and training on appropriate mitigations.
- Reminders and reinforcements around public health measures such as consistency in staff groupings, physical distancing, reducing bottlenecks and the use of face coverings.
- Advice that staff should use face coverings when they are within 2 metres of other adults or school age children. This is to ensure consistency with the schools guidance.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Information about the financial support that may be available to private and third sector providers is available on the Scottish Government's website and updated regularly at:

[Information for private and third sector childcare providers about business support](#)

Temporary Restriction Fund – Round 2

Round 1 closed on 1 March and Round 2 opens on 5 March.

Round 2 is open to eligible settings and claims can be made for the 1-26 February.

Settings that were open, for all, or part, of this period can claim for a TRF grant award.

On 2 March we issued a separate provider notice outlining how round 2 of the Temporary Restrictions Fund will operate to all eligible settings. Please read this for full details on the fund.

Additional Support Grant

We recognise that this is a very difficult time for all childcare providers. We also know that not all settings have been able to claim support through the Temporary Restrictions Fund, as they remained closed during the two months of restrictions.

All day care of children's services, out of school care providers, and childminders registered as caring for 12 or more children at a time will be able to apply for an Additional Support Grant from Friday 5 March.

This additional support will be available to all daycare of children services providers irrespective of whether they were able to open in February or not.

Settings should apply using the same route as the TRF and should refer to the separate provider notice for details

Temporary Restrictions Fund (TRF) – Round 3

In the light of the lifting of restrictions on the ELC sector from the 22 February we are considering how best to utilise the TRF funding that has been identified for March to

support those in greatest need, in particular responding to the impact of continued restrictions for school age childcare settings.

Further details on the approach to Round 3 of the Temporary Restrictions Fund will be made available as soon as possible following the next review of restrictions.

Further support for the sector

The childcare sector, including school age childcare and childminders, has a vital role to play in Scotland's economic recovery, and in achieving our ambition of improving children's outcomes.

We remain committed to working with the whole childcare sector to respond to the challenges brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of this engagement, we will be reviewing support needs across the sector through the work of the Sector Recovery Group and wider engagement.

This may include a further sector-wide survey to inform our understanding of the impact of different levels of restrictions over the last year, a look-ahead to how we stabilise and strengthen the sector to our vision for future school age childcare, securing positive outcomes for children and families across Scotland.

In March we will publish a progress report on our school age childcare policy development which reiterates our commitment to school age childcare. This will highlight our consultation response, recognise the impacts of Covid and the challenges for the sector, and will detail the actions we are taking to develop our policy further.

PARENTS/CARERS

The most up to date information can be found on [Parent Club](#).

It's important that parents know it's safe for their children to return to school age childcare services. Settings will need to communicate any new arrangements to parents in advance of children returning, particularly where there are new routines and procedures that children and families will need to understand and follow. Parents and carers can continue to reduce the risk of the transmission of COVID-19, and support the reopening of school age childcare and schools, by:

- Following any guidance from your setting, particularly about pick up/drop off;
- Wearing a face covering at pick up and drop off;
- Maintaining physical distancing of at least 2 metres from other adults at all times; and
- Hand washing/sanitising before and after pickup and drop off.

Settings should ask staff and parents and carers to be vigilant for the symptoms of COVID-19, and to understand what actions they should take if someone develops them, either onsite or offsite. It is essential that people do not attend a setting if symptomatic. Everyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 must self-isolate

straight away, stay at home and arrange a test via the appropriate method.

The most common symptoms are:

- new continuous cough;
- fever/high temperature; and
- loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia).

All staff and parents and carers should be advised that anyone with these symptoms, or who has had contact with a family/community member with symptoms, should not attend or should be asked to return home. They should also be told to follow Test and Protect procedures.

FURTHER SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

In order to support the reopening of childcare services we will be sharing best practice examples and we are organising online interactive webinars on the guidance.

Remember to keep an eye on Twitter where we will keep you updated on the latest changes; answer your questions; share ideas and best practice; and celebrate the fantastic efforts of the childcare sector to support Scotland's children and families.

Follow us [@ELCScotGov](https://twitter.com/ELCScotGov) for the latest updates, information and sharing of practice. We will continue to keep you updated with important information and updates through the Care Inspectorate and through the childcare sector representative bodies.

Thank you again for everything you do for Scotland's children and families, particularly in these challenging times.

Alison Cumming
Interim Director, Early Learning and Childcare