

Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare COVID-19 Update **No. 8 – November 2020**

As you'll be aware, we are replacing our monthly Programme Updates with regular COVID-19 newsletters for the duration of the pandemic response. We'll send these to you as often as we have news to share. Previous editions of this update can be found [here](#).

Take care

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Interim Director, Early Learning and Childcare

1. Key information, guidance and contact points

Throughout this update, we have provided links to the latest guidance and information. **As you will appreciate, the situation continues to change so please continue to check the Scottish Government's website regularly for the latest guidance and information – see <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/>**

If you have any questions or issues you would like to raise with the team, please use the contact details below and we will respond as soon as we can. Please email:

- ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot for enquiries about support for providers and parents;
- outofschoolcare@gov.scot for enquiries about school age childcare provision;
- ELCDeliverySupport@gov.scot if you work in a local authority team looking for advice or support about early learning and childcare, or contact your link person in the delivery team;
- ELCProgrammeOffice@gov.scot for any other queries.

To keep up to date with all the most relevant information and guidance, follow us on Twitter @ELCScotGov and @OSCScotGov or join the Knowledge Hub.

Local authorities can register on the Knowledge Hub at <https://www.khub.net> and request to join [Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Expansion Scotland: Local Authorities](#).

2. Scotland's Strategic Framework

Our priority is the safety of every individual in Scotland. The virus still exists and it is important that we continue to follow the guidance around physical distancing (where possible), increased hygiene measures and that you self-isolate if you or members of your household have any symptoms of coronavirus. More information can be found at [NHS Inform](#).

Scotland's Strategic Framework, available [here](#), sets out the strategic approach to suppress the virus to the lowest possible level and keep it there.

To best tackle the virus, and protect people, we have moved to a strategic approach to outbreak management based on five levels of protection.

While it is important to always retain some flexibility, this will provide a more transparent and easily understood framework for managing outbreaks and allow rapid but proportionate responses to be taken – locally or nationally – using a range of measures and options.

A levels approach also allows us to respond on a national basis if required, but also to avoid a 'one size fits all' approach if it is not. It will mean that one part of the country with low rates of infection does not have to live with the level of protective measures designed to suppress the virus in areas with much higher rates.

[Local protection levels](#) have been set for each local authority area across Scotland. Levels will be reviewed weekly in the light of the evolving situation to decide whether levels should be maintained, increased, or reduced. However, while levels will be reviewed weekly, areas are likely to move between levels less frequently than that. Once set, levels are likely to be in place for two to four weeks at least, to give time for the effect of changes to be observed in data about the virus, and to ensure that the incidence and prevalence of the virus are responding to measures put in place to suppress it.

The five protection levels consist of four levels above the Route Map Phase 3 baseline (or 'Level 0'). They are designed to achieve progressively stronger effects in suppressing the virus. It is possible to move up and down.

What does this announcement mean for the Childcare sector?

Each level has different impacts for regulated childcare outlined in the table below:

Strategic Framework		 Scottish Government Riaghaltas na h-Alba gov.scot			
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Informal Childcare	Permitted in line with household/numbers restrictions (See Socialising)	Permitted in line with household/numbers restrictions	Permitted in line with household/numbers restrictions	Permitted in line with household/numbers restrictions	Essential worker informal childcare only. In line with household/numbers restrictions, children only may enter other households
ELC/Formal Childcare	Open - with standard protective measures in place	Open - with standard protective measures in place	Open - with standard protective measures in place	Open - with enhanced protective measures in place	Open, subject to targeted intervention which may impact on capacity

As set out in the Strategic Framework and as stated by the Deputy First Minister, keeping childcare and schools open is a priority across all levels. As part of the review of the suite of guidance for the childcare sector we have worked with local authorities, the Care Inspectorate, representative bodies and other stakeholders to understand the guidance in practice. We have also sought further expert public health advice and scientific evidence from the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children’s issues. The guidance has also been updated to reflect the Strategic Framework.

The updated guidance took effect from Monday 2 November and the documents can be found here:

- [Guidance for early learning and childcare services](#)
- [Guidance for childminding services](#)
- [Guidance for school aged childcare services](#)

Please note we have now integrated the guidance for fully outdoor childcare providers into the early learning and childcare services guidance and the school aged childcare services. Fully outdoor childcare providers should follow guidance relevant to the age groups they are caring for.

The evidence from the expert public health and scientific group can be found here:

- [Evidence from the COVID-19 sub-group on Education and Children's issues](#)

What's changed?

Key updates to the childcare guidance include:

- The guidance **aligns with the strategic framework** and the approach that should be taken by the sector at each level.
- **Face coverings** should now be worn by all adults when physical distancing is not possible, (but not when interacting with children in ELC). This includes for parents at pick up and drop off times.
- Specific guidance on **singing** in ELC settings; children sing in the course of activities and play, and should not be discouraged from doing so.
- Advice on the **number of children in a group** setting has been brought in line with primary class size numbers increasing to a maximum of 33 children. This does not change staffing requirements or ratios.
- The approaches to **shielding, support for specific groups, test and protect and outbreak management** have been updated to align with most up to date public health advice and approaches across education.
- Guidance on **ventilation** and temperature control.
- **Peripatetic staffing and movement of staff** between settings should be reviewed and risk assessed and used only where absolutely necessary.

It is important that providers continue to follow the public health measures as set out in the guidance which place child and staff safety and wellbeing at their heart. These are:

- enhanced hygiene and cleaning practice
- limiting children's contacts
- maximising the use of outdoor spaces
- physical distancing between adults in the setting including parents at dropoff and pick-up times
- face coverings worn by adults when not interacting with children and physical distancing cannot be maintained
- active engagement with Test and Protect

Frequently Asked Questions

The frequently asked questions section will be updated in line with the updated guidance and published shortly.

We hope that this will support providers in utilising the guidance, and assist parents who may have queries relating to how settings will operate.

3. Access to testing for childcare staff

We wrote to all local authorities and childcare providers on Monday 24 August to highlight the change to Testing and set out the options for ELC or childcare, including school age childcare, staff to access testing for COVID-19. This letter can be found [here](#).

It addresses the circumstances where testing is essential as well as situations where staff who are concerned that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 may consider accessing testing. At the present time access to this testing route is not available for childminders.

4. Quarantine

The Scottish Government's Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nursing Officer and National Clinical Director wrote to all childcare providers on 19 August with a note outlining that those self-isolating after recently returning from countries not exempt from quarantine should not go out to work, childcare, school or visit public areas. This note can be found [here](#).

They asked that all Childcare providers familiarise themselves with the information and guidance around self-isolating on the return from non-exempt countries. The note also asked that providers ensure safeguarding measures are in place and that they communicate and engage these requirements immediately to all families to ensure adherence to the legal requirements.

The relevant guidance can be found here <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-health-checks-at-borders/pages/overview/> and the list of exempt countries is available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-health-checks-at-borders/pages/exemptions/>.

5. Information for parents and carers

[Parent Club](#) continues to be updated regularly to give parents and carers updated information relating to Covid-19 restrictions or changes. If you work with parents and carers, you might find the FAQs helpful, and/or may wish to share them directly with parents. We

Key links for sharing social media:

- <https://www.facebook.com/ParentClubScotland> - Parent Club Scotland Facebook page
- <https://www.instagram.com/parentclubscotland> - Parent Club Instagram page

As of 26 October, the **families.scot** website is no longer live and will redirect to Parent Club. We have been working with local authorities that used this website, to ensure they have alternative channels for communicating with families.

Please **contact Katherine Tierney's ELC: Access and Parental Communications team through the ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot** mailbox with further suggestions for the Parent Club FAQ or other parental communication.

6. Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Innovation Awards 2020

The ELC Innovation Awards celebrate and highlight innovative initiatives which improve children's learning. On 2 November the Minister for Children and Young People, Maree Todd [announced the eight winners of this innovative award](#). The Awards celebrate those settings that have gone above and beyond to deliver the best possible learning for children using creative, resourceful ideas to improve their development.

Congratulations to the 2020 ELC Innovation Award winners:

Parkhead Community Nursery, Hilltop Nursery School, Cathkin Community Nursery, Beancross Primary School Nursery, Hillview Nursery, Stobhill ELC, Mayfield Nursery School and Sheephouse Nursery.

If you have any questions on this, please contact Mel Parkinson at melissa.parkinson@gov.scot

7. Transitional Support Fund for Day Care of Children Services

The Transitional Support Fund closed to applications on 9 October and local authorities are continuing to process grant application forms.

The Transitional Support Fund was launched to help day care of children providers in the private, voluntary and not-for profit sectors, including out-of-school care providers, meet the extra costs incurred to comply with [public health guidance](#) in response to COVID-19. The Fund has provided one-off grants to eligible settings.

Contact info: Euan Carmichael's Service Models Team at ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

8. Extension of the Childminding Workforce Support Fund

The Childminding Workforce Support Fund was initially launched on 16 July 2020 to provide support to childminders who are facing hardship and, in particular, who have not been able to access financial support through other routes.

The Fund, which was initially jointly funded by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA), made £60,000 of support available. There was significant demand for the fund and a first round of grants were paid following closure to new applicants on 17 July 2020.

The Scottish Government has provided additional funding of £390,000 to the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to extend the Childminding Workforce Support Fund. This includes covering the costs of administering the fund up to £60,000. The funding will offer grants of £350 to eligible childminders who have been unable to access support through other routes.

The second phase of the Childminding Workforce Support Fund [closed for new applications](#) on 19 October, and the assessment process is currently underway.

Contact info: Euan Carmichael's Service Models Team at ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

9. Other Financial and Business Support for childcare providers

A range of financial and business support measures have been made available by the UK and Scottish Governments since March. Information about the different schemes that may be available to private and third sector providers and childminders is available on the Scottish Government's website and updated regularly at:

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

It was announced on the 5 November that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which is a UK Government Scheme, will now operate until 31 March 2021. Further information on this extension be found [here](#).

Please continue to share your questions with Euan Carmichael's Service Models Team through the ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot mailbox. We are working through them as quickly as we can.

10. ELC Statutory Duty and the Expansion

On 8 July the Scottish Government and COSLA wrote to all Local Authorities with an update on the ELC statutory duty and the ELC Expansion. You can find a copy of that letter [here](#).

Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard

Quality is at the heart of the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement. Interim Guidance on [the delivery of Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard from August 2020](#) was published on 30 July.

Contact info: Euan Carmichael's Service Models Team at ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

Delivery Assurance Engagement

Our delivery assurance team are continuing engagement with councils. Following reopening in August Councils continue to offer expanded hours where possible, with more than a third already delivering 1140 hours to all eligible families, and other councils moving to 1140 over the coming months. Currently the team are working closely with councils to build on the data collected in August on ELC delivery and capacity in each local authority in August 2020, to better understand the impact of COVID on programmes, and to inform the Joint Delivery Board's assessment of the appropriate date to reinstate the 1140 hours statutory duty. This assessment will be completed by December 2020 and the Scottish Government will bring forward legislation in this parliamentary session to reinstate the 1140 duty.

Contact info: Hannah Keates' Delivery Assurance Team at ELCDeliverySupport@gov.scot

11. Primary 1 deferral and ELC eligibility – legislative change in this parliamentary session

In October 2019, the Scottish Government committed to legislate in this parliamentary session, to ensure that all children who defer their primary 1 start are able to access funded ELC.

For now, there is no change in the law. All children who are still 4 years old at the start of the school year can be deferred and start primary one the following year. Children with a birthday in January or February who defer school entry are automatically entitled to another year of funded ELC.

For children with a birthday between the school commencement date in August and December, parents continue to have an automatic right to school deferral, but local authorities decide whether another year of funded ELC will be made available. Local authorities may wish to communicate locally about their policy to help parents and carers understand their options in the interim.

Partnership working is vital to the ELC expansion. Before we lay the necessary Scottish Statutory Instrument (SSI) in Parliament, we will work closely with COSLA and ADES to agree arrangements for implementation, including resource implications. These discussions are underway, and we are thankful to our colleagues for their support on this work, especially to such short timescales.

If you have any questions on this work please contact Fran Iwanyckyj at:

Francesca.Iwanyckyj@gov.scot

12. Analysis and Evidence

The **COVID-19 Childcare Monitoring survey** continues and your participation in this is much appreciated. The survey should be completed by all childcare providers, although some local authorities have opted to provide data on behalf of their local authority run services (namely: Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Midlothian, Perth & Kinross, Stirling, West Lothian). A link to the survey is circulated by the Care Inspectorate each Tuesday as part of their daily update email and is also available [here](#).

Please also ensure that you complete the Care Inspectorate Covid-19 notification regarding staff absences each Tuesday. This return should be completed by all childcare providers (excluding childminders).

Some of the information from the survey and information received from the Care Inspectorate on which settings are open has started to be published and is available [here](#) as part of a dashboard on schools and childcare provision. We have now added information on child attendance and absence to the dashboard.

We are continuing to use this information to update Ministers and the Education Recovery Group weekly on the current situation in childcare services, so please understand the value of this information. The usefulness of this information will increase if we manage to improve the response rate to the survey, **so please do provide the information required, or encourage your members or colleagues to complete these returns.**

The **SEEMiS Early Years project** is continuing to progress, working towards the system delivery date of end of March 2021 and a roll out date of July 2021. Information continues to be added to the restricted local authority SEEMiS Early Years Knowledge Hub site, and more information on go live and training plans will be provided once dates have been finalised. Once a date for roll out has been finalised, local authorities will be encouraged to advise all potential users on developments. We are also developing a toolkit for local authorities to help them consider local preparations required ahead of system roll out.

Work on this year's **ELC census** data continues, with queries soon to be sent back to local authorities. Your involvement in this important data collection is much appreciated.

We have recently published analysis titled '[Deferred Entry to Primary School Statistics](#)'. This report uses data from the Pupil Census in order to inform the understanding of trends and variations in deferral rates between 2014 and 2018, and the characteristics of pupils identified as having deferred entry to primary school.

13. Workforce Support

Induction Resource Review

The National Induction resource for ELC has been refreshed to reflect the most recent updates in policy and best practice, including changes relating to COVID-19. With thanks to our partners for their contributions, the refreshed content offers support to newly employed ELC staff during the initial months of their induction period, providing a range of supporting information and advice including links to leading partner's information, a tool to support reflective practice, and resources for continued learning and progression opportunities.

The Induction resource is promoted via our Twitter pages with a dedicated video message from Maree Todd, Minister for Children and Young People, and quotes from members of the ELC workforce who have benefitted from the resource:

<https://twitter.com/ELCScotGov/status/1313395601443352581>

It is now accessible in both PDF and HTML versions from our website: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/early-learning-childcare-national-induction-resource/>

If you have any questions on this work please contact Sarah Guy at: Sarah.Guy@gov.scot

Free continued professional learning (CPL)

Our free online CPL module '*Understanding the social factors which may impact on children's outcomes in the early years*' continues to be available for professionals interested in how a range of social factors, relationships and environments can impact children's early brain development, health, wellbeing, and behaviour. It also considers the importance of relationships and attachment-led practice, and how practitioners can build on the unique assets and strengths of each family to further support the child. This may be of particular interest due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Further work is also underway to develop modules focusing on the curriculum and transitions.

Full details about our suite of CPL modules and access to the courses is available from our website:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/training-modules-for-all-elc-practitioners/>

If you have any questions on this work please contact Sarah Guy at: Sarah.Guy@gov.scot

Wellbeing Support for Childcare Staff

To support the wellbeing of the childcare workforce during these challenging times, the ELC Directorate has worked with Early Years Scotland to develop a new **#TeamELC Wellbeing Hub** which launched on 7 July. The Hub hosts a wealth of information and practical advice on managing wellbeing and features a function which allows practitioners and childminders to be connected with others in the sector. Alongside the website, a series of free online wellbeing events took place throughout July. Feedback from the events has been hugely positive with many finding the practical tips on how to manage personal wellbeing, really useful. So much so that a further series of

wellbeing events has now been scheduled. You can book a place on one of those via this link: <https://teamelcwellbeinghub.org/events>

One of the previous sessions was recorded and has been uploaded to the website, so staff can access the session at a time that suits them. We would encourage everyone to take some time to visit the site and look after themselves and each other at this difficult time. <https://teamelcwellbeinghub.org/>

We would also welcome good practice examples from local partners showcasing measures that have been put in place to support the wellbeing and professional learning of staff during these challenging times.

If you have any questions on this work please contact Scott Sutherland at:
Scott.Sutherland@gov.scot

14 Outdoor Learning: Virtual Nature School Programme

The Virtual Nature School was funded £159,000 by Scottish Government to support children and families with outdoor play during the COVID-19 pandemic. The work trained ELC practitioners from across the sector in nature pedagogy, providing them with guidance and resources to facilitate child led outdoor play sessions.

The Virtual Nature School came to the end of its 16 week programme on 25 September having trained over 1,000 practitioners from across the ELC sector and supported over 15,000 children. The full programme of session videos are available for general use on the [Virtual Nature School YouTube channel](#).

If you have any questions on this, please contact Sophie Finlayson at
sophie.finallyson@gov.scot

15. Access to Childcare Fund: Successful projects announced

Fifteen childcare providers from across Scotland have been announced as the successful applicants to the [Access to Childcare Fund](#).

The fund, launched in July, is one feature of the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan which focuses on tackling and reducing levels of child poverty in Scotland. It recognises that the cost and availability of school age childcare round about the school day and during the holidays is often prohibitive for low income families and can limit opportunities for parents to work, train and learn. The Fund aims to make childcare more accessible and affordable, particularly for children and families most affected by low incomes – unlocking improvements for both parents and their children.

The organisations will be supported by a total of £3 million by March 2022, and have committed to testing a range of approaches to increasing the availability and accessibility of their services and working together to share their learning across the range of children's services.

We would encourage engagement with the Access to Childcare Fund services. We have had initial discussions with the Improvement Service to highlight the Fund as something Local Authorities will want to cite in their local Child Poverty Action Reports, and wider tackling poverty plans. Close

working between Local authorities, the services, and local parental employability initiatives would benefit the fund and the families it supports.

The successful organisations are:

Service	Location
Action for Children	Elgin, Moray
Clyde Gateway	South Lanarkshire
Flexible Childcare Services Scotland	Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire
Flexible Childcare Services Scotland	Fintry, Dundee
Fuse Youth Café	Shettleston, Glasgow
Hame fae Hame	Scalloway, Shetland
Hope Amplified	North Glasgow
The Indigo Childcare Group	Castlemilk, Glasgow
Inverclyde Council	Inverclyde
Muirhouse Millennium Centre	Edinburgh
St Mirin's Out of School Club	King's Park, Glasgow
SHIP Perth	Perth
Stepping Stones for Families	Possilpark, Glasgow
supERkids	East Renfrewshire
The Wee Childcare Company	Angus

The Access to Childcare Fund is funded by the Scottish Government and managed by Children in Scotland.

If you have any questions about the Access to Childcare Fund, please contact Christian Barry at christian.barry@gov.scot.

16. Organised activities for children

On 24 September 2020 the Scottish Government released [guidance](#) for the safe running of organised activities for children and young people. The guidance covers training, working environment, risk assessments, infection prevention and control, communication, next steps and questions and answers. It was further updated on 5 October to allow for parent/baby classes to continue with higher numbers of adults in attendance where all the children were under 12 months.

It is now possible for businesses and organisations to open premises and resume services where it is appropriate to do so.

This guidance will be updated in line with ongoing public health advice. It sets out both our current advice and guidance for indoor and outdoor activities and services provided for children and young people, which is not covered by any other sector guidance.

If you have any questions about the organised activities for children, please contact COVID-19MaternityandChildHealth@gov.scot

NOVEMBER 2020			
9 - 13 November	Children in Scotland Annual Conference	<p>The Children in Scotland annual conference will be online for a full week of learning and making connections.</p> <p>They'll have webinars, videos, discussions and more on themes such as: early years, education, health and wellbeing, rights, participation, tackling inequalities, and supporting your staff. Full Programme details will be available soon and recordings of all sessions will be made available for a limited time to ticket holders.</p>	https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/children-in-scotland-virtual-annual-conference-week-9-13-november-tickets-124257245767
APRIL 2021			
24 April	SCMA Annual Conference	<p>Unfortunately due to COVID-19 the SCMA Conference scheduled for this year has been postponed until April 2021. The theme for the conference will be "Making a Difference," with a particular focus on wellbeing and full details can be found in the link attached.</p>	https://www.childminding.org/news/scma-annual-conference-2020-important-update
MAY 2021			
15 May	EYS Annual Conference	<p>Unfortunately due to COVID-19 the EYS annual Conference scheduled for this year has been postponed until May 2021.</p>	https://earlyyearsscotland.org/about-us/eys-annual-conference

Annex B – Publications

Date Published	Document Link
30/10/2020	Coronavirus (COVID19) Early Learning and Childcare Services
30/10/2020	Coronavirus (COVID 19) Childminder Services Guidance
30/10/2020	Coronavirus (COVID 19) School Age Childcare Services Guidance
24/10/2020	Halloween and Bonfire Night - Advice on safe and enjoyable celebrations
23/10/2020	Scotland's strategic framework
24/09/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): organised activities for children
11/09/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020 - version 3
24/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): public health measures at borders (international travel)
23/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): local advice and measures
21/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services - frequently asked questions
21/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on re-opening school age childcare services - frequently asked questions
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): childminding services guidance
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reopening school age childcare services
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): fully outdoor childcare providers guidance
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues – advisory note on physical distancing in early learning and childcare settings (ELC)
30/07/2020	Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: interim guidance
03/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: guidance on reopening school aged childcare services
24/06/2020	Further route map detail announced
15/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services
01/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): fully outdoor childcare providers guidance
01/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): childminder services guidance
26/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): schools, early learning and childcare settings - scientific evidence
21/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision
15/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): physical distancing in education and childcare settings
31/03/2020	Joint statement issued by Ms Todd and Cllr McCabe on the 1140 hours revocation
31/03/2020	Social distancing in education and childcare settings guidance
30/03/2020	Childcare providers: closure information
30/03/2020	Information for private and third sector childcare providers about business support
30/03/2020	Information for Childminders about business and financial support
30/03/2020	Childcare closures and emergency provision
24/03/2020	Implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings

24/03/2020	School and ELC closures - guidance for key workers
20/03/2020	Guidance on critical childcare and learning provision for key workers