

Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare COVID-19 Update **No. 19 – October 2021**

Introduction from Alison Cumming, Director for Early Learning and Childcare

Hello and welcome to our October update.

As I write, anticipation is building for the COP26 Summit which is being hosted in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November. There are some great initiatives going on across the early learning and childcare sector to support children to learn about building a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. If you haven't done so already, please check out the [fantastic resources produced by Education Scotland](#), including environmental awareness activities and learning discoveries on Dug's Discovery Den. It's also a great opportunity for us to celebrate outdoor learning, and we're inviting you to share your outdoor learning experiences and good practice with us on Twitter using #COP26Outdoors.

There are also important updates below on the work we've been doing with SSSC to support qualified and experienced practitioners to return to the sector and on implementation of the SEEMiS Early Years system.

Best wishes

Alison

[Find previous editions of the ELC Covid-19 update here.](#)

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1. Covid-19 Guidance

1.1 Guidance update on parental visits

Alison recently [wrote to all settings](#) to tell them about a recent change to our COVID-19 safety guidance - on parents and carers visiting settings. This change takes account of advice at the end of September from the Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues. The Sub-Group advised that parents and carers could come into settings where this is considered beneficial for children's wellbeing, progress and behaviour. Settings may also invite parents/carers to attend appropriate outdoor events such as sports days or celebration events, providing all activity is consistent with relevant Scottish Government guidance on health, physical distancing, and hygiene. The letter clarifies how we've worked with the COVID Reference Group to develop the conditions that apply around indoor visits - including risk assessments and visits needing the permission of the manager or headteacher - and these conditions are clearly set out in the guidance.

Contact: Debbie Silver at debbie.silver@gov.scot

1.2 Close contact policy for children aged under five

In September's update we covered the current policy on self-isolation for children under five who remain asymptomatic. As long as they continue to show no symptoms, children aged under five who are close contacts of a positive case can continue to attend childcare settings without being required to return a negative PCR test (although they are encouraged to take a PCR test where possible).

Contact: Debbie Silver at debbie.silver@gov.scot

1.3 COVID-19 safety eLearning module

We have worked with Public Health Scotland, Early Years Scotland, Care Inspectorate and UNISON to develop a COVID-19 safety eLearning Module to support staff working in registered childcare settings. The module will help staff understand what they need to do to keep themselves and others safe while they are at work. The module should be quick and easy to complete. You can access the module here [Scottish Government COVID-19 eLearning module for registered childcare providers](#).

Contact: Debbie Silver at debbie.silver@gov.scot

1.4 COVID-19 data linkage study

You may have seen some news recently from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) about a COVID-19 data linkage study. This study will be undertaken by Public Health Scotland (PHS), using data from members of the childcare workforce who are registered with the SSSC. The study forms an important part of the educational surveillance work that PHS have been doing throughout the pandemic. By linking workforce and health data, it will allow PHS to establish whether childcare staff have been at any increased risk from COVID-19, when compared to other working age adults. The study will also allow us to make accurate estimates of vaccine coverage for the childcare workforce who are registered with the SSSC. Having this information will be extremely helpful for the Scottish Government and the Advisory Sub-Group for Education and Children's Issues in considering how we manage COVID-19 risks in childcare settings. PHS and the SSSC have put in place rigorous arrangements around the use of the data in line with Data Protection Legislation. Although you can opt out of part of the study, up to 28 October, we would strongly encourage all SSSC-registered childcare staff not to do this as it's important that the study is as complete as possible. You can see the SSSC's news release about the study [here](#).

Contact: Stephen Edgar at stephen.edgar@gov.scot

2. Workforce and Professional Learning

Bringing qualified and experienced practitioners back in to the sector

Along with our colleagues at the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) we have been considering ways to bring qualified and experienced practitioners in to the sector. With that in mind we have recently invited those whose registrations with SSSC have lapsed in the last five years, to re-join the sector.

The initial response has been positive. At the time of writing over 150 people, from across the country, have registered details of their experience and qualifications on MySSSC. Settings can now access information on potential candidates in their area and get in touch with them about available roles. This information can be found by logging into [MySSSC](#).

This is not a job matching service, but a means for individuals to express an interest in re-joining the sector and for employers to access a pool of experienced candidates, potentially cutting down on the time and cost commitments of recruitment. Employers will still be required to undertake the necessary pre-employment checks such as PVG applications and references.

This is a free service, available for all childcare settings and we are keen to make sure we understand whether it proves valuable to childcare employers. We would ask therefore, that settings keep SSSC informed should they recruit individuals via the service. If settings use this service and select the candidates they are interested in, SSSC colleagues will send reminders to provide an update on the outcome.

A message from the Minister for Children and Young People on this topic, issued as a provider notice on 21 October and can be read here: [Minister for Children and Young People \(careinspectorate.com\)](http://careinspectorate.com)

Contact: Scott Sutherland at scott.sutherland@gov.scot

3. Workforce Strategy

We have committed to developing a new, five-year Workforce Strategy to explore the range of workforce challenges and priorities for the childcare sector in the context of the implementation of the 1140 hours ELC commitment, COVID-19 recovery, and our Programme for Government forward commitments on childcare. The Strategy will be developed collaboratively with the sector, and we'll set out further information on the development process soon.

Contact: Kathryn Chisholm at kathryn.chisholm@gov.scot

4. School Age Childcare – Covid Recovery Strategy

Earlier this month, the Scottish Government published the Covid Recovery Strategy.

The Strategy sets out our vision for recovery and the actions we will take to address systemic inequalities made worse by Covid, make progress towards a wellbeing economy, and accelerate inclusive person-centred public services.

The Strategy restates our commitment to design a wraparound system of school age childcare, providing care before and after school, all year around, where the least well-off families will pay nothing.

The Strategy provides detail about how we will do this by starting with community level systems. It commits us to beginning the early phasing-in of community level systems of school age childcare (in 2022-23), targeted to support the six priority family groups as outlined in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. This early phasing will build on learning from our Access to Childcare Fund projects and input from our Public Panel to help us test and understand how we can build a system of school age childcare to support a community. They will also consider and develop the role that organised children's activities can play in a school age childcare system alongside the regulated childcare sector to support families, provide choice and improve access to these activities for children from low-income households.

Contact: Kate Smith at kate.smith@gov.scot

5. Education Scotland

5.1 COP 26

The UN climate change conference is taking place in Glasgow in November. Practitioners and learners can engage with a range of resources that helps to explore the themes of COP 26. These are available through [Countdown to COP26 | Learning resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

Contact: Mairi Thomson at Mairi.Thomson@educationscotland.gov.scot

5.2 The National e-Learning Offer

The National e-Learning Offer includes support for young children's learning in settings or at home. [Dug's Discovery Den](#) offers activities and learning discoveries as we move through the seasons of the year. Dug's current focus is on being environmentally aware as we countdown to November's COP26 in Glasgow. Settings can share their COP26 learning through following Dug on Twitter @BeingMeWithDug and using the hashtag #WeAreWithYouDug. Participating settings can download a Dug COP26 electronic badge to use on websites or email signatures to show their support. This can be obtained by clicking on the link on Dug's Den. Young Gaelic learners can also join e-Sgoil's [Leugh is Cluich](#) for stories and games.

Contact: Lynn Taylor at Lynn.Taylor@educationscotland.gov.scot

5.3 SLF Online 2021 – recordings now available

It was fantastic to see so many of you take part in our first online Scottish Learning Festival. We successfully delivered over 100 sessions which saw around 10,000 engagements from delegates over the three days. The recordings from most of the sessions at this year's event are now available and include a selection of ELC sessions. You can watch the sessions through the [SLF virtual event portal](#) until 30 November 2021.

If you didn't manage to register for the festival, please complete this [simple form](#) to receive joining instructions, which you will need to access the event portal.

Contact: Hazel Gore at Communications@educationscotland.gov.scot

5.4 Digital 1:1 coaching to support health and wellbeing

Education Scotland have partnered with KnowYouMore to offer Early Learning and Childcare Centre Managers one-to-one digital coaching sessions. This is part of the workforce support package funded by the Scottish Government to practitioners in navigating the challenges caused by Covid 19. Sign up here: [Digital 1:1 coaching offer \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

Contact: Lorna Kerr at Communications@educationscotland.gov.scot

6. Outdoor Play and Learning

6.1 COP26 and outdoor play and learning

The UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) Summit in Glasgow is a great opportunity for the ELC sector to get involved in and learn about building a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. As the Summit approaches, we are encouraging ELC settings to take play and learning outdoors, and to use #COP26Outdoors to share their practice and initiatives across the sector. The [Out to Play guidance](#) provides practical guidance and advice on how to access outdoor spaces to create safe, nurturing and inspiring outdoor learning experiences. [Countdown to COP26](#) page provides resources and advice to support climate justice education.

Contact: Lynne Carter at lynne.carter@gov.scot

6.2 Learning Places Conference

We are supporting two sessions about Outdoor Learning & ELC at the 2021 Learning Places Scotland conference. Both will showcase excellent work and creativity by Scotland's ELC sector during a particularly challenging period. One is a full session on recognising the value of outdoor spaces as a learning environment; the other is a presentation, within a session on digital approaches, about the Virtual Nature School. Presenters will use video footage to show the children and practitioners in action. Attendance at the conference is free of charge to public sector workers. The conference is in Glasgow on 23rd and 24th November 2021. Find out more here [Home - Learning Places Scotland 2021](#)

Contact: Lynne Carter at lynne.carter@gov.scot

7. Funding Follows the Child Implementation

Given the impacts of COVID-19, implementation of Funding Follows the Child is currently subject to [Interim Guidance](#). This provides flexibilities for a small number of aspects of the National Standard. The latest version of this guidance was published in March 2021 and set out expectations of implementation from August 2021.

The Interim Guidance includes a commitment to ask the Joint Delivery Board (JDB) to undertake a review of the timetable for moving to full implementation of Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard following the national roll-out of 1,140 hours. This timetable will take account of the need for sufficient notice required for both local authorities and ELC providers. We are currently collecting information from the sector regarding current implementation of Funding Follows the Child to help the JDB to undertake their review.

To capture this information we have asked local authorities to complete a survey on implementation of Funding Follows the Child in line with the Interim Guidance. Alongside this, it is important that we also capture views from funded ELC providers and we are grateful to colleagues in the provider representative bodies who have undertaken to share views on behalf of their members.

This information will help to inform advice that will be presented to the Joint Delivery Board at the end of the year.

Contact: ELC Partnership Forum at ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot.

8. SEEMiS Early Years

Development of the new system has been delayed. A great deal of re-planning has taken place over the last few months to ensure all system requirements are fully captured. The outcome of this re-planning exercise is that the system will now go live in 2022. Exact dates will be agreed in due course.

The project User Group will soon reinstate the online LA Readiness events which will help the local authorities to plan and prepare managing the use of the existing platform in light of the project delays as well as showcasing project progress to track development against the system requirements.

Contact: Raymond Buckley at Raymond.Buckley@gov.scot

9. Annex A – Forward Look Calendar

November 2021	Event	Information	Link
31 October - 12 November	COP26	COP26 is committed to working with all countries and joining forces to inspire climate action ahead of COP26. Look out for COP26 communications for the sector on our social media.	HOME - UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021 (ukcop26.org) ScotGov Childcare (@ELCScotGov) / Twitter
3 November	Creative conversation - Family engagement and learning through song-writing	As Scotland emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, new approaches are needed to address the mental health impacts on our youngest learners and their families. Creative participation in music can provide an absorbing, social and uplifting experience for children and families, and have a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.	Creative conversation - Family engagement and learning through song-writing Events News and events Education Scotland
10 November	Developing a Creative Arts Nursery	Creative participation in music can provide an absorbing, social and uplifting experience for children and families which can benefit their mental health and wellbeing. As Scotland emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, new approaches are needed to address mental health impacts on our youngest learners and their families.	Developing a Creative Arts Nursery Events News and events Education Scotland

16 November	Starcatchers Event	This session will explore some of the impact the Starcatchers work has had on early years practice, and how bringing artists, early years educators and young children together can transform approaches to relationships, wellbeing and learning.	Starcatchers Events News and events Education Scotland
18 November	Early Years Scotland Annual General Meeting	The Annual General Meeting is for Early Years Scotland members.	Virtual Early Years Scotland Annual General Meeting Tickets TryBooking United Kingdom
23-24 November	Learning Places Scotland Conference, SECC	We are supporting two sessions about Outdoor Learning & ELC at the 2021 Learning Places Scotland conference. One is a full session on recognising the value of outdoor spaces as a learning environment; the other is a presentation, within a session on digital approaches about the Virtual Nature School.	Home - Learning Places Scotland 2021

12. Annex B – Publications

Date Published	Document Link
11/10/2021	Updated Coronavirus (COVID-19): school aged childcare services guidance
11/10/2021	Updated Coronavirus (COVID-19): childminder services guidance
11/10/2021	Updated Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare guidance
28/09/2021	Perceptions of the impact of childminding services on child, parent and family outcomes: research findings - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
16/09/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): managing cases in schools and childcare settings - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
31/08/2021	Financial sustainability health check of the childcare sector in Scotland - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
31/08/2021	Early learning and childcare providers - local authority funding and support: overview - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
11/08/2021	Warn+and+Inform++-+information+sheet.pdf (www.gov.scot)Warn and Inform information sheet.pdf (www.gov.scot)
03/08/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services - checklist of mitigations for Level 0 and below - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
13/07/2021	Early learning and childcare: statutory guidance - July 2021
23/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare – National Induction Resource: Latest Version June 2021
22/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare: 2 year old eligibility - Income Threshold Change – June 2021- EQIA
22/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare: 2 year old eligibility – Income Threshold Change – June 2021- BRIA
16/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report, May 2021
07/06/2021	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme: guidance for local authorities and day care settings
24/03/2021	Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: interim guidance - update March 2021
24/03/2021	Equity and excellence leads: Care Inspectorate findings
17/03/2021	Out to Play - creating outdoor play experiences for children: practical guidance - new chapters
17/03/2021	Nature-based early learning and childcare - influence on children's health, wellbeing and development: literature review
15/03/2021	Early Years providers helped to take first steps with with cyber security - National Cyber Security Centre
17/03/2021	Nature-based early learning and childcare - influence on children's health, wellbeing and development: literature review
15/03/2021	Early Years providers helped to take first steps with cyber security - National Cyber Security Centre
21/01/2021	Our commitment to childminding: report