

Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare COVID-19 Update **No. 6 – 2 September 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

Alison Cumming

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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 @OSCSotGov 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. Phase 3 – Easing of lockdown in Scotland

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](#).

On 20 August, the First Minister announced that Scotland would remain in Phase 3 of the routemap. Full details of the changes announced by the First Minister can be found [here](#).

What does this announcement mean for the Childcare sector?

All registered childcare services have been able to reopen from 15 July as part of Phase 3 of Scotland's recovery from the coronavirus crisis. Public health measures remain in place and published guidance should be adhered to.

The suite of guidance documents for the childcare sector can be found here –

- [Guidance](#) for early learning and childcare services
- [Guidance](#) for childminding services
- [Guidance](#) for out of school care services
- [Guidance](#) for fully outdoor childcare services

Frequently Asked Questions

We have added a frequently asked questions section for both the [re-opening of early learning and childcare settings](#) and the [re-opening of school aged childcare settings guidance](#) pages. We have included some of the most asked questions received in relation to the 30 July [refreshed guidance](#) for early learning and childcare (ELC) providers and the 30 July [refreshed guidance](#) on the reopening of school aged childcare in the local authority, private and third sectors to support a safe reopening of these settings which took effect from 10 August.

We hope that this will support providers in utilising the guidance, and assist parents who may have queries relating to how settings will operate as they reopen. We will continue to engage with the early learning and childcare sector and school aged childcare sector and will update these documents as new questions arise.

3. **Common cold and COVID-19 symptoms**

Scotland's national clinical director Professor Jason Leitch wrote advice to all parents/carers about common cold and COVID-19 symptoms [here](#) and the letter can be found below.

I understand these last few months have often been challenging, particularly for parents and carers. Now that schools and nurseries have returned I am writing to provide some advice where a child or young person in your care presents with symptoms of the common cold or similar bugs during this pandemic.

Following the return of schools after a prolonged break, it is common for colds and similar viral infections to circulate. In many cases, children will be well enough to attend school and continue their learning with little or no interruption to their education. In other cases, for instance where they have quite a heavy cold, they may need to take a day or two off to recover.

This is not the case for children and young people with potential COVID-19 symptoms, they are required to self-isolate and seek a test through www.NHSinform.scot/test-and-protect or by calling 0800 028 2816.

In order to ensure your children do not miss out on their education, it is important to be clear about how COVID-19 symptoms differ from those of other infections that we normally see circulating at this time of year.

COVID-19 symptoms

It is important that all of us – including those who make up the community around a school - are vigilant for the symptoms of COVID-19 and understand what actions we should take if someone develops them, either at school or at home.

The main symptoms to be aware of are:

- new continuous cough
- fever/high temperature
- loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste

If a young person or a child in your care develops any of the above symptoms, they should self-isolate and you should book them a test as soon as possible at www.NHSinform.scot/test-and-protect or by calling 0800 028 2816.

We recommend testing only for those with a continuous cough, fever, or loss of or change in the sense of taste or smell. The UK senior clinicians continue to keep the symptoms for case definition under review and will continue to use evidence to adjust these if it becomes necessary.

It is essential that people who have COVID-19 symptoms, or who share a household with someone who has symptoms, do not attend school, nursery or other childcare settings, and must self-isolate along with all members of their household. If the test is negative, self-isolation can end for everyone. If the test is positive, Test and Protect will give you further advice.

Cold-like symptoms

If, however, your child does not have symptoms of COVID-19 but has other cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, they do not need to be tested and they and you do not need to self-isolate. Your child can go to school if fit to do so.

The Scottish Government appreciates the huge effort being made by parents, carers and school staff to ensure the risk of COVID-19 is minimised and to support children's education.

For further advice please visit the Parent Club website at: www.parentclub.scot or www.nhsinform.scot.

4. Access to testing for childcare staff

We wrote to all childcare providers on Monday 24 August with an update on Testing. This letter can be found [here](#).

On Wednesday 12 August in a statement to the Scottish Parliament the Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, announced that teachers, nursery and school staff can now be tested for COVID-19 on demand if they are concerned they have been at risk from infection, even if they show no symptoms. The step has been taken to provide additional reassurance to teachers, nursery and other staff as children and young people return to the classroom and to early learning.

We wrote to all local authorities and childcare providers to highlight the change and set out the options for ELC or childcare, including school age childcare, staff to access testing for COVID-19. 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.

1 Symptomatic staff and close contacts

It is important that the whole community around the school or setting is vigilant for the symptoms of COVID-19 and understands what actions they should take if someone develops them, either onsite or offsite. The key symptoms to be aware of are:

new continuous cough

fever/high temperature

loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste

If a staff member develops symptoms suggesting COVID-19 infection, they **should self-isolate and book a test as soon as possible**. This can either be done

through the employer referral portal as per local arrangements Councils have in place, which enables access to a priority slot at a test site if the sites are busy or

by self-referral - online at [NHSinform.scot/test-and-protect](https://nhs.uk/inform-scot/test-and-protect) or by calling 0800 028 2816.

Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar have different ways of accessing a test in their local areas, employers and staff should liaise with their local Health Boards to find out how to access a test.

It is essential that staff who have such symptoms, or who share a household with someone who has symptoms, **do not** attend nursery or other childcare settings, and must self-isolate along with all members of their household, as per guidance on NHS Inform and from Test and Protect. Staff who are identified as a close contact of a confirmed COVID case will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

2 Other circumstances

Unless staff are symptomatic or are advised to get a test by a healthcare professional, then testing is **not** a requirement. However, if members of staff are on occasion concerned that they have been at risk from infection, then they may request a test whether or not they have symptoms. The limitations of testing when a person does not have symptoms are set out below.

Such staff should make the request via their employer who can book a test for them using the employer portal listed below. This route is the only way an individual can access a test if they do not have symptoms. Settings should make arrangements to ensure such staff are furnished with the information below so that they can make an informed choice as to whether to proceed, and understand what the test result means.

5. 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/>.

6. Transitional Support Fund for Childcare Providers

The Transitional Support Fund will help childcare 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 will provide one-off grants to eligible settings. Grant amounts vary according to the number of Care Inspectorate registered places in your setting

To be eligible for the Fund you need to be registered with the Care Inspectorate as:

- a 'day care of children' service; and
- a 'Private' or 'Voluntary or Not For Profit' service.

This includes private, voluntary and not for profit settings delivering out of school care; childcare settings in independent schools; and outdoor childcare settings. You will also need to confirm that your setting has already reopened or confirm that your setting will have reopened by Monday 7 September.

Grants are intended to help settings to meet the extra costs incurred in order to operate in line with the public health guidance for the sector. For example, the grants could help with extra costs for:

- Increased cleaning;
- Investment in additional equipment and developing outdoor space, to enable more outdoor learning; and
- Adaptations to support the physical distancing of adults in settings (e.g. changes to entrance and exit areas, additional signage, etc.)

The Fund will be administered by local authorities. There will be a standard application form and consistent national application process. This will make the application process as straightforward as possible and, in particular, will minimise the burden on providers who will be applying for multiple settings across different local authorities.

The Fund has will open for applications on 3 September. The last date for submitting a grant application will be Friday 9 October.

Further information on the Transitional Support Fund, which will include a link to the application process from 3 September, is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-support-to-childcare-sector/pages/transitional-support-fund-for-childcare-providers/>.

The Scottish Government are also currently working with the SCMA to agree further funding support to childminders. More information about that support will be published as soon as details are finalised.

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

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](#)

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which is a UK Government Scheme, will operate until October. From August there will be changes to the level of reimbursement through HMRC for furloughing costs for the Scheme, with employers contributing starting to contribute to these costs. The level of this employer contribution will increase over the period from August to October. Further information is available at our [information page for private and third sector childcare providers about business support](#).

Self-employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)

The UK Government announced on 29 May that the scheme is being extended. Those who are eligible will be able to claim for a second and final grant from 17 August 2020. If you're eligible, the second and final grant will be a taxable grant worth 70% of your average monthly trading profits, paid out in a single instalment covering a further 3 months' worth of profits, and capped at £6,570 in total. You do not need to have claimed the first grant to receive the second grant.

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.

7. COVID-19 Education Recovery Group / Critical Childcare and ELC Subgroup

The [C-19 Education Recovery Group \(CERG\)](#) was established in April in a direct response to the COVID-19 crisis to support education recovery. The group is co-chaired by the Deputy First Minister and Cllr Stephen McCabe (COSLA) Members include senior officials from Scottish Government and Education Scotland, professional associations and local authority representatives. 20 meetings have taken place in total (the last was on 14 August).

The Critical Childcare and ELC sub group which is chaired by Simon Mair (SG) and Laura Mason (ADES) led the production of the reopening of ELC guidance which was published on 15 June and revised on 30 July, reporting to CERG.

As the sector has now reopened, and critical childcare has ended, the CCELC was stood down as of 13 August, with sector specific sub groups being created to discuss on-going issues.

8. COVID-19 Risk Assessment Guidance for Employers

New guidance has been produced by the Scottish Government's Chief Medical Officer Directorate, aimed at employers across all industries, to support staff and line managers to understand and carry out effective risk assessments in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The guidance can be accessed here - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/>

9. 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 have continued engagement with councils. The latest round of engagement since full reopening in August has found that councils continue to offer expanded hours where possible, with almost a third already delivering 1140 hours. On 29 July the Improvement Service issued a data collection template to all local authorities with authorities to provide returns by 24 August. This data collection aims to gain information on the status of ELC delivery and capacity in each local authority in August 2020, including service models and current workforce.

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

10. Analysis and Evidence

The COVID-19 Childcare Monitoring survey has been adapted this week to reflect the change in data requirements. 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). The survey is now going to take place on **Tuesday** each week. A link to the survey will be circulated by the Care Inspectorate each week as part of their daily update email and is also available [here](#).

There are no questions on staff attendance and absence in the monitoring survey as this data is being collected by the Care Inspectorate as part of their Covid-19 notifications process. Please ensure that this return is also completed by all childcare providers (excluding childminders) each Tuesday.

The SSEL Phase 2 report was published on 27 August on the Scottish Government website [here](#). The focus of Phase 2 was on children in their final term of ELC provision before starting P1. As with Phase 1, this report describes baseline data for children receiving 600 hours of funded ELC only, and does not provide any findings on the expansion to 1140 hours.

The SEEMiS Early Years project is continuing to progress and the Knowledge Hub site continues to be a suitable place to hear about updates and discuss concerns. A suitable roll out date in 2021 is still being considered and should be finalised soon.

11. Information for parents and carers

[Parent Club](#) launched a new campaign on 31 July to support parents and carers with the return to school and ELC. This included new TV, radio and digital ads and new content hub on the website (www.parentclub.scot/startback) which includes information about the new guidelines, a wide range of Q&As as well as advice and support for managing mental health, and information about funded ELC and changes to the 1140 commitment. The campaign has been further supported by a PR programme which includes the creation of videos from experts addressing key topics including: health & safety, well-being and providing advice and tips for addressing learning challenges and settling back in as well as influencer engagement.

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
- <https://twitter.com/parentclubscot/status/1288852207560011776> - Parent Club tweet about the new campaign

A partnerships toolkit has been co-created with a range of key partners including local authorities and representative bodies, to ensure other organisations keen to support parents and carers right now have the right messaging and helpful assets (social, newsletter copy, text message copy etc.) to provide clear and consistent reassurance. If you have not received this and would like to, please get in touch.

The National Parent Forum of Scotland have also produced a [guide for parents and carers](#) about the return to school and ELC.

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.

12. 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.

The ELC Directorate had to pause their work on this commitment due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, but work on this has now resumed, led by the ELC Access and Parental Communication Team.

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

13. Workforce Support

Induction Resource Review

The National Induction resource for ELC is currently undergoing review to reflect changes to the sector as a result of the pandemic. This will include any new resources or information which may be of particular support and interest to those starting their career in ELC. A revised version of the resource will be advertised accordingly.

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. 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-elic-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 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 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.

One of those 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://teameicwellbeinghub.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

Guidance issued for those assessing ELC students

Guidance has been issued for those who are assessing students currently undertaking ELC related qualifications. That guidance, covering SVQs and HNCs, has been posted on the SSSC website and links to both documents are provided below:

<https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/hnc-covid-19-guidance>

<https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/guidance-svq-assessment>

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

14. Equity and Excellence & Family Learning Support

Scottish Government are funding the Family Learning Scotland Programme to support delivery of Action 12 of the Early Learning and Childcare Quality Action Plan (2017).

Peep are contracted to train and support 432 early years practitioners across Scotland to implement the Peep Learning Together Programme Training and the Peep Progression Pathway to support families with whom they work.

In response to current circumstances, Peep have created an online training offer and are in the process of contacting all local authorities to arrange delivery of the training.

To find out more about this programme, or to discuss the Equity and Excellence Leads Project, please contact Marie McQuade at Marie.McQuade@gov.scot.

SEPTEMBER 2020

September - TBC	Childcare Sector Recovery Group	The ELC and Childcare Sector Recovery Working Group is looking closely at the financial sustainability and other aspects of the sector throughout the pandemic response. This is fundamental to the ability of the sector to reopen. The Scottish Government has asked the sector representative bodies, to work with their members to understand the impacts of the safe reopening guidance in terms of capacity and income generation; and the impacts of local funded ELC delivery plans as they are developed. The Group is providing input to the overall COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (which advises the Scottish Government and local government) on any further measures that may be required to support sustainability.	
25 September	Virtual Nature School end date	To increase access to outdoor play for all during the pandemic, Scottish Government funded the Virtual Nature School from Living Classrooms. The programme is training and supporting ELC practitioners in the delivery of nature-focused play sessions for children while they were unable to attend settings as normal.	https://www.virtualnatureschool.org

OCTOBER 2020

9 October	Transitional Support Fund closing date	The Transitional Support Fund will help childcare 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 will provide one-off grants to eligible settings. Grant amounts vary according to the number of Care Inspectorate registered places in your setting. The Fund opens 3 September for applications and the last date for submitting a grant application will be Friday 9 October.	https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-support-to-childcare-sector/pages/transitional-support-fund-for-childcare-providers/
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APRIL 2021

24 April	SCMA Annual Conference	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.	https://www.childminding.org/news/scma-annual-conference-2020-important-update
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MAY 2021

15 May	EYS Annual Conference	Unfortunately due to COVID-19 the EYS annual Conference scheduled for this year has been postponed until May 2021.	https://earlyyearsscotland.org/about-us/eyes-annual-conference
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Annex B – Publications

Date Published	Document Link
20/03/2020	Guidance on critical childcare and learning provision for key workers
24/03/2020	Implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings
24/03/2020	School and ELC closures - guidance for key workers
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
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
15/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): physical distancing in education and childcare settings
21/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision
26/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): schools, early learning and childcare settings - scientific evidence
01/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): fully outdoor childcare providers guidance
01/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): childminder services guidance
15/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services
24/06/2020	Further route map detail announced
03/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: guidance on reopening school aged childcare services
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
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
23/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): local advice and measures
24/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): public health measures at borders (international travel)