

Dear early years and childcare providers

Please see below latest updates for yourselves and your families:

Kent County Council: COVID Related Closures and Free Early Entitlement Funding

We have received a number of enquiries recently from providers wanting to close early ahead of Christmas, with the potential implication of children missing out on several days of their entitlement. Whilst we (ie Kent County Council [KCC] and The Education People) continue to be extremely grateful for and proud of the way providers in Kent are dealing with the COVID-19 situation, and recognising the daily challenges this presents, we have to work within the statutory guidance which places a duty on KCC to secure sufficient childcare to allow parents to work. It goes without saying that this has never been more crucial for critical workers than during these unprecedented times. What we would all clearly want to avoid is examples where the majority of parents vote to close early but there are a handful who don't but are forced into accepting the situation because providers then say it is not financially viable to stay open for just those few parents. The Prime Minister has been very clear in his addresses to the nation that he expects early years and childcare providers to be open and provide a much needed service to parents, and [Government guidance](#) reiterates this. Where there have also been suggestions that any missed sessions might be offered during 2021, none of us can predict what challenges we might be facing in the Spring and Summer so it might not be possible to give the sessions then. Therefore, in this context, we feel that we must stay in line with published DfE guidance, that any setting choosing to close other than on the advice of Public Health England would have to repay funding for the period of closure, unless agreed differently as a consequence of our recent guidance on COVID-19 related closures and funding.

Government Updates for the Sector

[Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) Updated 27 November

Updated guidance in the following sections: home education; educational visits and trips; providers of music, dance and drama or sports provision; who can attend your out of school setting; and equality. Added guidance about social distancing.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) contingency framework for education and childcare settings](#)

First published 27 November

How settings can prepare for restrictions to help contain community transmission of COVID-19. An educational setting should not move to implement restrictive measures of the kind set out in the contingency framework without the explicit agreement of DfE.

[What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) Updated 27 November

Updated to include performances. 'In [tier 3 areas](#) should not host performances with an audience'.

[Claim a grant through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme](#) Updated 27 November

Change made: The online service for the third grant is now available.

[Ofsted: phased return to inspections](#) First published 3 December

Ofsted will carry out assurance inspections from the start of the spring term and routine graded inspections will resume in the summer term of 2021.

[Ofsted warns of risk to children 'out of sight' during pandemic](#) First published 1 December

Page summary: The Chief Inspector of Education and Children's Social Care has warned that the invisibility of vulnerable children as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic should be a matter of national concern.

[Check if you can claim for your employees' wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) Updated 1 December

Change made: Guidance updated to reflect that 30 November claims deadline has now passed. Section on holiday pay updated with further clarity on when employees can be furloughed.

[Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme: step by step guide for employers](#) Updated 1 December

Change made: Step-by-step guide updated to reflect recent changes to the scheme, and a new key dates guide has also been published.

Government Updates for Families

[Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

This guidance informs practice for out of school providers. It was recently updated to give more information about social distancing (including pick up), who can attend (also see the equality section) and information for providers who offer music, drama, dance and sports provision after school.

[Making a childcare bubble with another household](#)

This document sets out how you can use informal childcare (friends and family) with people you do not live with. The guidance now includes how to switch your childcare bubble so you can keep everyone safe and reduce the risk of transmission.

[Guidance for parents and carers of children attending out-of-school settings during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

This guidance informs families about the changes that out of school settings should be considering. It also includes updates about parent and child groups and if you have a child with health concerns.

[What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

Updated to include performances. 'In [tier 3 areas](#) should not host performances with an audience'.

[Guidance for the Christmas period](#)

This gives guidance for families about what they can and cannot do over the Christmas period and the 'Christmas bubble' during 23 and 27 December.

[Making a Christmas bubble with friends and family](#)

This sets out guidance how you can meet friends and family over the Christmas period and form a Christmas bubble.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): advice on accessing green spaces safely](#)

In Tier 3 you can visit a public outdoor place with members of your household or support bubble, or in a group of up to six people.

[Tier 3: Very High alert](#)

What you can and cannot do in an area in Tier 3 of local restrictions from 2 December. There is a section on childcare.