

Dear Colleagues

Today we provide you with a range of information including the Department for Education (DfE) Data Collection, an updated PHE South East Educational Settings COVID-19 Resource Pack, other information recently supplied by the DfE and our usual Government updates for you, your staff and your families. Also please find below information around COVID-19 testing which you are likely to be aware of already, but which we include again in case you are not for any reason.

Please be aware there is an updated [PHE / INTERIM PHE South East Educational Settings Group COVID-19 Resource Pack](#) which will also be available shortly on KELSIS. Please note that 1.1 of this document states:

Contacting the DfE COVID-19 Helpline

The DfE COVID-19 helpline was introduced to relieve the strain on the local Health Protection Teams (HPTs). Schools and other settings should call this helpline if they require advice about single or multiple cases of COVID-19 for assistance with undertaking risk assessments. However, **if an education setting is comfortable managing their own cases and feel that they do not need to call the helpline for support then it is not mandatory to do so.**

The **DfE Early Years Data Collection** has moved from weekly to fortnightly, with the next collection from the Local Authority taking place on Thursday 13 May. Thank you to those who regularly provide us with the required information, however we would take this opportunity to politely remind those providers not doing so that data collection is a requirement for all those delivering the Early Education and Childcare Entitlement. Whilst we acknowledge that this data collection adds to your workload in challenging times, provision of regular data is necessary for the DfE to have an accurate picture of the current attendance situation in Kent.

Department for Education Information

NCFE CACHE Early Years Educator (EYE) and Early Years Practitioner (EYP) qualifications 'knowledge only' pathway

To enable progression for learners who are unable to access a work placement due to the current coronavirus restrictions, the awarding body NCFE CACHE has worked together with Ofqual, Department for Education, Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and UCAS to agree a 'knowledge only' version of EYE or EYP qualifications, for those learners who wish to choose this option.

The NCFE CACHE have issued a [statement](#) with further information about this and DfE have updated the early years [qualification list](#) and [spreadsheets](#) showing the impacted qualifications.

With the introduction of this new route, the DfE has asked local authorities to pass the message to providers of the importance of checking qualification certificates carefully, as the 'knowledge only' pathway does not allow the holder to practice as an early years educator or early years practitioner.

Changes to the 30 Hours and Tax-Free Childcare Maximum Income Easement

In the early days of the pandemic, the Government laid regulations which ensured that critical workers who exceeded the maximum income threshold (of £100,000) for 30 hours free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare, due to working more hours as a result of the pandemic, could continue to take up 30 hours free childcare. A new temporary threshold of £150,000 was set for the 2020-21 financial year.

This easement came to an end on 5 April 2021. Therefore, any parents who expect to earn over £100,000 in the 2021-22 financial year will no longer be eligible for 30 hours free childcare or Tax-Free Childcare. Those who have claimed 30 hours using this easement can still use their 30 hours free childcare until their reconfirmation date, after which they may enter into a grace period during which they can still claim their 30 hours.

Please take the time to explain to such families what the grace period means for them if asked.

Support Package for Newly Arriving Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas)

Further to the information provided in February, the DfE has confirmed that the Government's support package for newly arriving Hong Kong British National (Overseas) has been officially launched. A [press release](#) was issued on 8 April. There is a [welcome guide](#) for BN(O)s, including signposting to government guidance on accessing early years childcare. There is also some [guidance for LAs](#).

Government Updates for the Sector

[Ofsted's return to routine inspection activity](#) 4 May 2021

Updated the equality, diversity and inclusion statement to set out how our return to routine inspection in the summer term fulfils the requirements placed on us by the Equality Act 2010.

[NHS Test and Trace in the workplace](#) 30 April 2021

Updated: Removed action cards section.

[Asymptomatic testing: early years staff in different settings](#) 28 April

Change made: Rapid asymptomatic testing in early years settings guidance updated to reflect that asymptomatic testing is now available to everyone in England. We have also clarified where staff, parents or carers may be eligible for Test and Trace support payments.

Government Updates for Families

[Asymptomatic testing: early years staff in different settings](#) 28 April

Change made: Rapid asymptomatic testing in early years settings guidance updated to reflect that asymptomatic testing is now available to everyone in England. We have also clarified where staff, parents or carers may be eligible for Test and Trace support payments.

DfE Testing Information

COVID-19 Testing for Early Years providers

You may already be aware of the changes to COVID-19 testing availability. We have outlined below the offers available for early years providers. Staff in schools-based nurseries, maintained nursery schools and Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) childcare providers are now eligible for regular asymptomatic testing as part of the education testing programme and are receiving lateral flow device (LFD) kits for twice weekly testing at home. PVI providers will not need to place an order to receive this initial delivery of testing supplies. No further workforce, equipment or funding is required for the administration of these tests; as a result, providers will not receive additional funding to carry out testing.

The process for how PVI providers order test kits has changed from Thursday 29 April. We have introduced a new online system for ordering test kits for testing at home. This means that providers will be able to re-order test kits and better manage stock levels and deliveries.

PVI providers will automatically receive a delivery of testing kits on Thursday 6 May, Friday 7 May or Monday 10 May. This delivery will be the final automatic delivery, after which providers will need to use the new ordering system to order further test kits.

Providers can order additional testing kit supplies using the [online form](#). They should consider their current stock level and testing demands before placing any order to ensure the order meets their testing needs. For further information on how to place an order, providers can be referred to the ordering guidance available on the [primary schools and nurseries document sharing platform](#).

We have also expanded the ways in which childminders and staff in wraparound childcare providers can access asymptomatic twice-weekly testing. As well as accessing testing through community testing sites, they can now do this by:

- Attending a test site where they will be able to see how to take the test or pick up tests to do at home. They can find their nearest test site via the postcode checker at www.gov.uk/find-covid19-lateral-flow-test-site
- Collecting tests to do at home. Information about collection sites can be found at <https://findcovid-19-rapid-test-sites.maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/>
- Order home test kits. More information can be found [on https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirusrapid-lateral-flow-tests](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirusrapid-lateral-flow-tests)

Home Testing for COVID-19

On 5 April, the Prime Minister announced that from Friday 9 April everyone in England will be able to access twice-weekly rapid tests for coronavirus. You may wish to encourage families with children attending childcare providers to order home testing kits. More information about ordering home testing kits can be found here. There is no change to the current arrangements for staff in childcare providers who should continue to access their home testing kits as set out in the section above. Twice-weekly testing should carry on throughout term time and the holidays.