

Early Years and Childcare COVID-19 Blog 12th June 2020



Welcome and Introduction Alex Gamby

Last week I shared that, in line with government requirements for all early years and childcare providers to open where possible with effect from the beginning of June, we had seen a significant increase in the numbers of settings opening. I am pleased to be able to tell you that we have seen further increases this week with 488 group settings now being open (from 399 this time last week) and 581 childminders (from 561). The number of children being cared for across all open settings has increased from 8,500 to 11,591. In the midst of circumstances that still feel difficult, this is good and encouraging news. Thank you once again very, very much to all of you for your contribution to these developments.

In this blog last week I also shared an 'open letter' for you to share with your families if you wished, signposting them to government information about what early years and childcare providers are required to do. This has now also been made available through a range of public facing media. Building on this and in the context of a national study (please see information and link below) we will be surveying those providers who were open for any period during the lockdown caring for critical worker or vulnerable children to ascertain how many children and staff in Kent early years and childcare settings actually contracted COVID-19 so that we can share information with families by way of further reassurance (as we think this number is very low) . This will be very quick and easy survey to complete (less than five minutes) and will be emailed directly to providers who have been open during this period.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

This week Matt Dunkley (Corporate Director, Children, Young People and Education) wrote to all schools about PPE and I would like to share the same information. It still stands that the majority of PPE items required are either in stock at Kent County Supplies (KCS) or are expected to be delivered imminently. However, the reason KCS is experiencing times when stock is not immediately available is, at least in part, due to some schools, early years and childcare providers and trusts ordering what would appear to be excessive volumes. Matt therefore requests that everyone please considers carefully the supplies needed and order only when required rather than place bulk orders.

Particularly as we are moving into a period of some easing of lockdown requirements, please do everything that you can do to stay safe and well in every respect.

KCC and The Education People continue to very much appreciate everything you continue to do for the children and families of Kent.

Yours
Alex Gamby
Head of Early Years and Childcare
The Education People

Government guidance for this week

Ofsted rolling update Updated 5th June

From 8th June 2020, Ofsted will start to return to doing on-site registration visits for early years and childcare providers. Individuals who have an application that is at the 'ready for a visit' stage will soon receive a telephone call from them.

Actions for Early Years and Childcare Updated 5th June

Added a clarification on the requirement for providers to carry the appropriate insurance (for example, public liability insurance) to cover all premises from which they provide childcare or childminding, checking cover regarding COVID-19. For general advice on insurance matters (not on specific policies) including those related to coronavirus (COVID-19), Association of British Insurers (ABI) can be contacted by phone on 0207 600 3333 or email at info@abi.org.uk.

Informing DfE of the death of a colleague across children's services Published 9th June

This guidance (not a legal duty) is from the DfE asking people working within education to report:

- a death of a colleague in children's services which has already occurred, relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- if there are any further deaths of carers or colleagues across children's services relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

- if there are any deaths of carers or colleagues across children's services relating to other causes.

To notify the department of a death, email: cscovid.notifications@education.gov.uk.

[Study launched to monitor prevalence of COVID-19 in schools](#) Published 9th June

The new voluntary coronavirus (COVID-19) study will assess and monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 among pre-school, primary and secondary school pupils and teachers.

[Childminders: tell Ofsted about adults leaving the home](#) Published 12th June

You must tell Ofsted when anyone aged 16 or over stops living or working in the home where you look after children.

Updating Ofsted with Openings and Closures

You need to notify Ofsted if your operating circumstances change (i.e. you open or close). Please let Ofsted know by sending an email to enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk with 'Change in operating hours' in the subject field. In the body of the email, please confirm the Unique Reference Number for your setting and the details of the change. You can find your URN on your registration certificate, your inspection report(s), and on the Ofsted website.

Kent News and Information

SENIF Webinars for Early Years Providers

A webinar to share the new SENIF digital request form has been created by Kent County Council's Specialist Teaching and Learning Service in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The webinar will provide information and updates on the Kent Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund offer, plus a look at the new digital SENIF Request Form which will be replacing the existing Word Request Form from September 2020.

Whether you're a new SENCo or an existing member of your team wishing to refresh your knowledge, please access the webinar to discover everything that is available through the SENIF Offer and how you can support the children in your setting.

The Webinar will be live on the following three dates from 2.30pm to 3.30pm:

[SENIF Webinar 2nd July 2020](#)

[SENIF Webinar 9th July 2020](#)

[SENIF Webinar 16th July 2020](#)

To register for the webinar please click on the link above for the date you wish to join.

Aims of the session include:

- To increase the understanding of the SENIF offer in Kent
- To understand the SENIF process in Kent
- To learn about the new digital SENIF Request Form
- To support settings to provide the evidence required in order to identify the needs of the child
- To enrich information provided on the SENIF Request Form to enable more applications to be able to be considered first time
- An opportunity to ask questions and discuss the funding process.

Integrated Children's Service and Out of Hours Service

The Kent Support Level Guidance (SLG) was created and launched in 2018. It was rolled out across the county with the Multi-Agency Training being an important forum for sharing the SLG with all our partner agencies, including learning and discussing how those changes impacted upon how they made referrals. Which of course back then included the launch of the new Request for Support form.

Fast forward to 2020, we have been using the SLG and the new referral for 2 years but like all things time and progress does not stand still. Therefore it stands to reason the SLG has to be updated to reflect the progress. The 4 levels of support have not changed but the language used within it has. The key indicators in each of the levels are now from the child's perspective. There is a new section under each level which is titled 'Risks to me outside my home' to separate these from the within the home. On page 2 there is a useful flow chart making the process clear and easy to follow, so the referrer can understand what actions they can consider and take. Also, page 2 defines the contextual safeguarding approach that is applied within 'Risks to me outside my home'.

The launch date for the updated SLG is 1st July 2020. The information regarding the Support Levels Guidance currently on the KSCMP, Kelsi and Kent.gov websites including the webinar, will be updated during June to reflect the updated SLG.

There will be multi-agency SLG training taking place later this year for everyone to book on to. It is likely to be rolled out in September/October time. It is currently unclear whether the SLG training will be via an online platform such as MS Teams, or direct

training. This will be dependent upon what happens regarding COVID-19 rules going forward.

All agencies will be notified when there is more information available.

The highlights are:

- The 4 levels of support have not changed
- The language used in the Support Level Guidance sheet has changed with the key indicators being from the child's perspective
- Each level includes a new heading 'Risks to me outside my home' to separate these from the risks within the home
- Page 2 defines the contextual safeguarding approach that is applied within 'Risks to me outside my home'
- Page 2 has a useful flow chart making the process clear and easy to follow so the referrer can understand what actions they can consider and take.

“Silly Squad”, Summer Reading Challenge 2020

With libraries currently closed and many children still being home schooled, this year's challenge is a bit different – it's digital only for the first time, but still retains many of the familiar features that are so popular with children and their families from this annual Challenge - and it's all free!

The Summer Reading Challenge for children aged 4 – 11 helps address the “dip” in children's reading that can occur over the summer if they don't have regular access to books and encouragement to read for pleasure. Last year 19,111 Kent children took part, with 11,175 children completing the Challenge - significant increases of 12% and 15% respectively on 2018.

It also introduces families to their library and encourages children to choose books freely and independently. While physical libraries are closed at present, the digital library is still very much open for business. There are lots of children's eBooks and eAudio books to borrow, with a special children's catalogue to browse. The website launched this weekend, so it's all up and running now (until the end of September).

It's free to access, featuring games, quizzes and downloadable activities to incentivise and encourage children and their families to take part in reading related activities at home. Children can choose their own reading goals, create book reviews, play games and collect virtual rewards. Parents and guardians can register their children online at www.sillysquad.org.uk via the safe, sign-up process.

Find out more about the Challenge at www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk.

There is a special Schools Pack, full of ideas on how your school can get involved – free to download from the resource bank on The Reading Agency's website - <https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/4427/>.

Frequently Asked Questions

The Early Years and Childcare Service has published a Frequently Asked Questions document which was recently updated on Kelsi and can be accessed by the link below:

https://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/106491/EYC-Providers-FAQs.pdf

Good practice examples of how settings have supported vulnerable or key worker children

This week we have examples of good practice from childminders across the county:

Childminders across the county have been sharing that they regularly reach out to families using Zoom, getting together for a group activity with the families and children who may be missing their friends. Some childminders have been doing a story time via Zoom which has worked really well with positive feedback.

In addition this week we have included an email from a parent to a setting in appreciation of all the hard work the setting is putting in to make the environment as safe as possible for their child's return.

We wanted to say thank you for all of the close contact and communication you have provided over the past few weeks. It has been so much appreciated and has helped provide some well needed structure and focus for xxxxxx during this difficult time.

We also wanted to wish you the best and say that we are so impressed with your meticulous planning for the coming weeks. We have every confidence in you and your team that xxxxx will be kept safe within your care and that your usual high standards will be maintained throughout this difficult time. For the record we are 100% comfortable bringing xxxxx back to your care based on the plans you have communicated to us and he is so excited at the prospect of coming back! We also take our hats off to you for embracing such a monumental challenge that we are sure has caused you many a sleepless night!

Good luck and, as much as tomorrow will be a very daunting task for you, we are sure that you have everything in place to operate as you have planned so hard for over the past few weeks.

Please tell more us about the excellent work you are doing so that we can share your stories in this section.

Contact Us

Threads of Success	www.ThreadsofSuccess.co.uk ThreadsofSuccess@theeducationpeople.org
Threads of Success Recruitment Hub	https://www.threadsofsuccessrecruitment.com/home
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Education for Sustainable Development	ESD@theeducationpeople.org
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Equality and Inclusion	EYInclusion@theeducationpeople.org
Collaborations	EYCollaborations@theeducationpeople.org
Childminding	childminding@theeducationpeople.org
Emporium Plus	Emporiumplus@theeducationpeople.org
Workforce Development	Earlyyearsworkforce.ask@theeducationpeople.org
Kent Children and Families Information Service	Kentcfis@theeducationpeople.org
Management Information	eyfe@kent.gov.uk
Free for 2 (FF2) Team	Eyfreefor2@kent.gov.uk
KELSI	http://www.kelsi.org.uk
Schools e-bulletin	http://www.kelsi.org.uk/working_in_education/news.aspx