

Dear early years and childcare providers

Please find below Government updates for you, your staff and your families.

Please note that settings can now sign up to receive a daily Coronavirus Briefing direct from the DfE for early years, children's social care, schools and further education settings [here](#). Yesterday's briefing contained the following information:

Department for Education Coronavirus (COVID-19) Helpline Opening Hours over the Easter Holidays

The Department for Education coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline will be open every day over the Easter holidays to answer any questions you have about coronavirus (COVID-19) relating to education settings and children's social care. Over the bank holiday weekend (Friday 2 April to Monday 5 April), lines will be open from 10am to 4pm.

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Our usual opening hours will resume on Tuesday 6 April.

Updates for the Sector

[How tests and testing kits for coronavirus \(COVID-19\) work](#) 23 March 2021

Page summary: The different types of tests and testing kits for COVID-19, and the specifications for manufacturers. Change made: Added new guidance page of testing kit providers.

If you have any problems with COVID-19 testing products, you should report them as soon as you can. This can help the Government to identify any potential issues with the kits. Details on what and how to report are outlined below.

Patients - what to report

Examples of problems to report include, but are not limited to:

- taking more than one test and getting different results
- the test being invalid (for example, the control line did not appear)
- finding the instructions for use or the labelling difficult to understand
- the kit (or part of it) breaking
- the buffer liquid leaking
- not being able to take a sample for any reason
- having difficulty using the software app (for example, you cannot report the result).

[Asymptomatic testing: early years staff in different settings](#) 24 March 2021

First published: How staff in early years settings can access regular rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) testing.

Updates for Families

[New one-off £500 payment for working households receiving tax credits](#) March 2021

Updated to clarify that the payment is non-taxable and will not affect benefits. It does not need to be declared as income for Income Tax Self Assessment or for tax credit claims and renewals. If you want to change your bank details, you must do this by 8 April.

[Test and Trace support payment](#) March 2021

Parents and carers of children who have been advised to self-isolate by their education setting or by NHS Test and Trace are now able to apply for a [Test and Trace Support Payment](#) or discretionary payment of £500, if they meet the eligibility criteria. The extension of the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme, which is administered by district and unitary local authorities in England, ensures that parents receive the financial support they need if they are unable to attend work due to childcare responsibilities.

Parents and carers should apply to their local authority to receive a payment. Applications for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme are made via the local authority in which the parent or carer resides, not the local authority where the setting is situated, if these are different.

To be eligible applicants must meet all of the criteria that:

they are the parent or guardian of a child or young person in the same household and need to take time off work to care for them while they self-isolate. This is limited to one parent or guardian per household for the child or young person's self-isolation period, they are employed or self-employed and they cannot work from home while undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result. The parent/carer meets all the other means-tested eligibility criteria for a Test and Trace Support Payment or locally determined criteria for a discretionary payment.

[Making a support bubble with another household](#) 24 March 2021

Change made: Updated to clarify rules on eligibility for bubbles, providing care and support, and advice on self-isolation.

[Making a childcare bubble with another household](#) 24 March 2021

Change made: Updated to clarify rules on eligibility for bubbles and advice on self-isolation.