

Early Years and Childcare CORONAVIRUS Questions and Answers

These replace the previous document issues on 2nd April 2020

1. Where can I find the coronavirus government information for early years and childcare providers?

This can be found [here](#).

2. Which children should I take at my setting?

You should only be providing childcare for children of critical workers and those who are vulnerable.

2.1 Critical workers

The government has determined which workers are critical and the list can be found [here](#).

Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home must be.

Only one parent needs to be a critical worker.

2.2 Vulnerable children

Vulnerable children are those with

- a social worker (these are children who have a child in need plan, or are on the child protection register, or who are looked after by the local authority) – see section 2.2.1 below
- have an Education, Health and Care plan or draft EHC plan – see section 2.2.2. below
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who are therefore in need of continued education provision – see section 2.2.1 below

Details can be found [here](#).

2.2.1 Children who have a social worker

These children are encouraged to attend provision, unless their social worker decides that they are at less risk at home, for example, due to underlying health conditions.

If any children in your setting have a social worker you must let the social worker know if you have closed or are closing.

The social worker will discuss the child's situation with you and whether the family will need support to find alternative provision, or if they are happy that the child can stay at home.

If the social worker is happy for the child to stay at home, please make sure that you stay in touch with the family, even if you are closed.

If you are concerned about a child who you believe is vulnerable (for example they have previously had a social worker, or because you know that the family is struggling to care for their child) and you believe that they should still be attending your setting, please let Vicky

Jenkins, Childcare Strategy Manager vicky.jenkins@brighton-hove.gov.uk or Caroline Parker, Head of Early Years and Strategic Lead for Whole Family Working caroline.parker@brighton-hove.gov.uk know and they will discuss the child with social services. They will let you know when a place has been agreed for the child.

In addition a social worker may contact you to ask for a place for a child who they deem vulnerable or who is newly classed as vulnerable.

For any child with a social worker, please let the child's social worker know if they do not attend for any reason, including if they are self-isolating or not attending because of coronavirus.

Please also telephone the family of any child with a social worker each week if they have told you that they will not be attending your setting so that you keep in touch with them and check on their well-being.

2.2.2 Children who have an EHC plan or have a draft EHC plan

Children at your setting who have an EHC plan or a draft EHC plan are classified as vulnerable, and so you should complete a risk assessment for the child in consultation with their parents and the SEN team to decide whether they still need a childcare place or whether they can safely have their needs met at home.

The risk assessment is a new process because of coronavirus. You must complete a risk assessment for children with an EHC plan or a draft EHC plan even if your setting has closed, so that alternative provision can be made if necessary.

Draft EHC plans will continue to be issued during the summer term. Providers should check for these draft plans, even where they are remaining closed, so that they can complete a risk assessment.

The risk assessment form and further guidance is available from Carole Tinsley at BHISS who can be contacted by email

carole.tinsley@brighton-hove.gov.uk
or by telephone on 01273 296375.

3. Where can I find up to date information on safeguarding?

Information on safeguarding arrangements was attached to the Early Years Bulletin 88 sent by Helen Beaumont on 30th March 2020.

A new safeguarding campaign has been launched called by the Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership called “**See Something, Say Something**” and calls on the city's residents to help protect vulnerable children and their families during the pandemic.

If you see or hear something that worries you and think a child may be at risk or in need of support – please:

- call the council's Front Door for Families on 01273 290400, or
- email your concerns to FrontDoorForFamilies@brighton-hove.gov.uk, or
- complete an [online referral](#).

There are “See Something, Say Something” posters for the campaign attached with this guidance and for you to use to promote the campaign.
You can also share [this message](#) from the council.

Please also see the [Covid-19 page on the BH Safeguarding Children Partnership website](#)

Also attached is information

4. As I am open, can I take other children who are not children of a critical worker or classified as vulnerable?

No, the government guidance is clear that you should only take children who fall into the above categories. If you do not have any of these children you should not be open. This includes childminders.

5. Can I close my setting?

The government expects the majority of settings to stay open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children so that they can continue to attend their usual setting. We know that some settings may not be able to remain open because of staff sickness or absence in relation to coronavirus.

If this is the case, please ensure that you help critical worker families to make alternative childcare arrangements. The Family Information Service has a list of open settings which is updated daily and can be found [here](#).

The Family Information Service can also be contacted on
01273 293545 and by email
familyinfo@brighton-hove.gov.uk

If you have a vulnerable child at your setting and you have to close you must contact the child’s social worker to let them know and talk about alternative arrangements (see also section 2.2.1 above).

6. Can I be required to re-open my setting?

The Coronavirus Act 2020 includes continuity powers to keep childcare provision open. The DfE will give further information if it is necessary to invoke this power.

7. If my setting is closed will I still get early years free entitlement (EYFE) payments for the summer term?

The government has committed to continue to fund local authorities so that we can pay you EYFE during the coronavirus emergency. You will have received your 75% advance payment for the summer term at the beginning of April, and we are now working on arrangements for the balancing payment. As soon as we have more information we will let you know.

8. If children on my roll go to a new setting temporarily because I am closed, will I still get EYFE for them?

Yes, you will continue to get EYFE if children transfer temporarily to a new setting.

9. If children transfer to me from a closed setting can I still get EYFE for them?

If children transfer to you temporarily because their setting is closed as a result of coronavirus you can claim EYFE for them. We will be asking you to complete a monthly

spreadsheet with the attendance of any new children during the summer term, and then will pay you for their EYFE hours in arrears.

10. If parents want to transfer their child to me but their setting is not closed, can I claim EYFE for them?

It may be that the child of a critical worker needs different childcare from that which they would normally use because of coronavirus and so we will look at these situations on an individual basis.

11. Will I be able to claim EYFE for children who were due to start at my setting in the summer term but who had not yet started and I have not included in my estimate payment?

We are looking at arrangements for summer term adjustments, and will let you know.

12. What about the extended entitlement to 30 hours?

We will continue to let you know where codes are about to expire so that you can remind parents to renew. It is our understanding that parents will need to continue to reconfirm eligibility and will be reminded by the Childcare Service to do so.

13. Can I take children who have already started school into my early years setting?

Some parents have asked if their child who has already started school can attend an early years setting for reasons related to coronavirus. It is possible to do this and claim EYFE for the child if they have not reached compulsory school age (they have not reached the term after their fifth birthday, i.e. are summer born). If the child is compulsory school age you may be able to take them as long as your Ofsted registration allows it. You would have to come to an arrangement with the parents regarding any fees, although you should consider using empty EYFE funded places for these children.

14. What information must I provide to the early years and childcare team?

So that we can monitor demand for childcare in the city please send a list of the children attending your setting each day to eyc@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

15. Can I charge parents if I am closed?

The DfE has asked that providers are “reasonable and balanced in their dealings with parents, given the great uncertainty they will be facing too”. We are aware that some providers are asking parents for a small voluntary contribution for retention of their childcare place for which a fee is normally charged (i.e. not EYFE hours) during the closure period and as long as this is “reasonable and balanced” there should be no objection.

16. What about other fees and charges?

Fees outside the EYFE continue to be a private arrangement between you and parents and so you can continue to charge parents as you would normally. You can also continue to charge for consumables as you normally do, but should consider the impact on disadvantaged families. You should also ensure that any children transferring to your setting are able to access their EYFE in the same way as they would have done, prior to coronavirus. As many settings have empty places which are funded by EYFE we do not expect you to tell parents that your EYFE places are full.

17. Will I still get additional support funding (ASF) for children who are not attending my setting because of coronavirus, or where my setting is closed?

Following new guidance received from the DfE on 17th April 2020 we are changing arrangements for paying ASF for children in the summer term.

- If you have a child attending who was in receipt of ASF in the spring term, you will continue to receive this for the summer term.
- If a child is attending intermittently with periods of time off because of coronavirus (for example the child is ill or the family is self-isolating), we will continue to pay ASF
- If you had a child attending in the spring term who was in receipt of ASF, and they did not leave your setting before the end of that term, we will continue to pay you ASF even if you are closed or if the child is not attending your setting because of coronavirus
- The exception to the above is where a child attended your setting in the spring term but you are now closed because of coronavirus and the child is attending or starts attending a new setting. In this case we will pay ASF to the new setting and you will not receive ASF for the child.

If you are receiving ASF for a child who is no longer attending, including because you are closed, please stay in touch with the family and continue to provide them with support.

For the summer term ASF payments will be made monthly in arrears, with the first payment being made for April 2020. Payments will be made to match the child's normal weekly hours of attendance in the spring term, and in accordance with your EYFE offer (term time only or stretched).

If, when lockdown ends and early years settings reopen, a child in receipt of ASF returns to their original setting, the ASF payments will revert to that setting.

18. Will you still pay Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and Disability Access Fund (DAF) for children who are not attending because of coronavirus or if I am closed because of coronavirus

We will continue to pay EYPP and DAF for eligible children who are not attending because of coronavirus or if you are closed because of coronavirus.

19. What support should I provide to parents while I am closed?

Please keep in touch with parents who have their children at home. We will continue to share resources through our fortnightly bulletin and will put them on our Facebook page.

The government has published guidance to support home learning for two to four year olds [here](#). Please encourage parents to use:

[Hungry Little Minds](#)

and

[Tiny Happy People](#)

Please ensure that you make weekly contact with the family of any vulnerable children who are attending or have been attending your setting to check on their well-being, even if your setting is closed.

[Here](#) is information for parents from Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health about what to do if a child is ill, during coronavirus.

20. What support is available to early years and childcare businesses?

Support for early years and childcare businesses is outlined in [this](#) document under the heading “What additional business support is available to childcare providers during this period of disruption?” There is further information on support for businesses [here](#). This includes information on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, as well as support for childminders who are self-employed.

21. What is happening with Ofsted?

Routine Ofsted inspections have been suspended. However, Ofsted inspections can be triggered by safeguarding concerns. Ofsted guidance in relation to coronavirus which is updated regularly can be found [here](#). The government continues to expect childcare to take place only within registered settings and Ofsted will consider legal enforcement action against those who set up unregistered childcare.

22. My paediatric first aid certificate is due to expire – what should I do?

Paediatric first aid certificate expiring on or after 16 March 2020 can be extended for a period of up to three months. There is new guidance on paediatric first aid which can be found [here](#).

23. Can I operate under different ratios than outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage?

The EYFS allows for ratios to be changed in exceptional circumstances and the extent of the coronavirus outbreak is considered to be an exceptional temporary circumstance in which the staff to child ratios set out in the EYFS can be changed if necessary. However, childcare providers remain responsible for ensuring the safety and security of children in their care. Details of EYFS coronavirus disapplications can be found [here](#).

24. What is happening with the Early Years Professional Development Programme cascade?

We now expect this to start in 2021.

25. Can I get in touch with the early years and childcare team for support?

Yes of course! We are all working from home and have limited staff cover, which means that we may take a little time to get back to you, but are happy to respond to emails. We will continue to send out the DfE’s daily update, and add our own local information as the situation changes. We will also continue to send out our fortnightly bulletins.

Please continue to contact Helen Beaumont, Angie Casey and Sophie Harvey for advice on any matters related to the Early Years Foundation Stage including early education, safeguarding, supporting disadvantaged children and Ofsted requirements in nurseries and pre-schools. Annette Barnard is available to advise childminders.

We are also looking at online training as part of our summer programme and will let you know when more information is available.

Telephone numbers are

Helen Beaumont 07584 580971
Angie Casey 07590 005463
Sophie Harvey 07833 480084
Annette Barnard 07584 580969

26. Changes to this information

This information is correct at the time of writing. As well as being distributed to our email address list it will be published on our web pages at

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/early-education-and-childcare-professionals

We will amend this information as and when government guidance changes.

27. The DfE Helpline

DfE coronavirus helpline

Telephone 0800 046 8687

Lines are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm and weekends 10am to 4pm.

Vicky Jenkins
Childcare Strategy Manager – Free Entitlement
27th April 2020