

COVID-19 CHILDCARE FOR KEYWORKERS ADVICE FOR PARENTS VERSION 2 – 12 JUNE 2020

We recognise that as more parents begin to return to work in line with the Executive's recovery plan, demand for childcare provision will increase. That is why, from Monday 8 June 2020, we have created a new definition of keyworker, for the purpose of accessing childcare. Childcare provision also remains in place for vulnerable children.

Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category, and those who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, such as elderly grandparents, or friends or family members with underlying medical conditions.

MEANING OF KEYWORKER

From 8 June 2020, for the purpose of determining which parents will have access to childcare, the following definition of keyworker will apply:

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;
- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;
- Construction and manufacturing. This includes anyone working in these sectors where it is not reasonable for that work to be undertaken from home;
- Financial Services. This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure);
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.);
- Retail. This includes those workers who have been working throughout the pandemic in food retail, for example, and will now extend to those working in other retail businesses permitted to operate by the Executive from June 2020;
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency; and
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

Only one parent is required to be a key worker.

ACCESSING CHILDCARE

If you are a key worker and require access to childcare, please:

1. **Check the Family Support NI website:** <http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk> for information on available spaces; and
2. If you cannot find a suitable option please **call Parentline on 0808 8020 400.**

OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Parents should continue to check the Family Support NI website <https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/> for up-to-date information in relation to childcare.

Employers For Childcare Family Benefits Advice Service provide free, confidential and impartial advice setting out your best options for support, and what is the best choice for your family depending on your specific circumstances. The Advisors are available on Freephone 0800 028 3008 Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm, or by emailing hello@employersforchildcare.org.

COVID-19 ADVICE

As a parent you will be anxious to know that your child will be safe and it is important to highlight that childcare settings remain safe places for children. With the decision to widen the range of workers for whom childcare is available, we have put in place a number of measures to ensure, as far as possible, that safety is maintained in infection control terms. Those measures include:

- HSC Trust Early Years Teams being part of decisions to re-open childcare settings, assisted by the Public Health Agency;
- The introduction of Play Pods in Daycare and School Age Childcare settings – organising children and staff in small groups (12 children maximum), who don't mix with other groups in the setting; and
- A gradual increase in the numbers of families childminders can provide childcare for, from 2 to 3 families from 8 June, 4 in July and 5 in August 2020. The increase will be paused at any point if it is considered that it has introduced an unacceptable level of risk.

We have issued guidance on all of the above and covering issues such as: the need for effective ventilation and the use of outdoor space where possible; PPE; testing; dealing with children who display COVID-19 symptoms while being cared for; children/staff/parents/family members deemed to be at higher levels of risk, including those who are shielding; and self-isolation in the event that any child or staff member tests COVID-19 positive. All of this guidance is available on the Family Support NI website.

Childcare providers must of course know exactly what to do if children become sick in their care including how to protect other children from COVID-19 illness. We have asked childcare providers to develop procedures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Children who are in the very high risk group for severe COVID-19 should not attend any childcare setting in line with the [guidance on shielding](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19). See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>.

Children with underlying health conditions which put them at increased but not very high risk of severe COVID-19, can attend a childcare setting if, following an individual risk assessment, it is considered to be in their best interests to do so. Parents must seek advice from the child's GP and, in complex cases, a consultant medical opinion may also be required.

If a child lives in a household with someone who is at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19), they should only attend a childcare setting if stringent social distancing can be adhered to and the child is able to understand and follow those instructions, which may not be the possible for very young children and older children without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on social distancing.

In relation to a child who has underlying health conditions which places them at increased risk (high or otherwise) of severe COVID-19, a decision about whether to use the Bespoke Approved Home Childcarer Scheme will be a matter for the child's parent(s), taking medical advice if necessary.

It is vitally important that your childcare provider is informed if you, your child or any other family member has tested positive for COVID-19.