



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

To:

Childminders and Day Care providers
[registered under Articles 119 & 120 of the
Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995]

Email:

Marc.Baillie@health-ni.gov.uk

Date: 1 May 2020

Dear Childcare Provider

COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Ministers of Health and Education announced a package of measures on 9 April 2020, including financial assistance, to support childcare providers for the duration of pandemic to provide childcare to the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children on the Department of Health (DoH) definition list for the purposes of childcare.

At this stage, assistance is being provided from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. The scheme will be kept under review taking account of the changing public health and economic context and the Departments of Health and Education reserve the right to alter or close the scheme early if necessary. The Ministerial announcement can be accessed [here](#). Throughout this correspondence the package will be referred to as the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme.

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide you with information on the support potentially available to you, whether you are open or closed, and to advise you about what you can expect to happen next and the preparations you will need to make. Separate information is provided for childminders and daycare settings as follows:

- **Annex 1 - includes information and advice for childminders**
- **Annex 2 - includes information and advice for daycare settings (including registered day care and school age childcare settings)**

The Early Years Team within your HSC Trust must be aware that you are providing childcare for keyworker or vulnerable children (as per the definition on the Family Support NI website , [accessible here](#)). Endorsement by the HSC Trust Early Years Team is a prerequisite to applying for assistance under the open settings element of this scheme. HSC Trust Early Years Teams will take account of the demand for the service in deciding whether they will endorse the re-opening of the provision.

Support under all elements of the scheme will be by way of an application. Applications for funding and payments made under the scheme will be managed by the Business Services Organisation (BSO), a sponsored body of the Department of Health. It is intended that applications will issue from BSO to individual providers during the week commencing Monday 4 May 2020. Guidelines to assist with the completion of application forms will also be issued along with application forms and support will be available, as appropriate, from EYO, Playboard and NICMA. Employers for Childcare is available to address any queries specific to the Bespoke Approved Home Childcare Scheme.

It is expected that a high number of application forms will be received and BSO will aim to process them as quickly as possible. This will require you to provide relevant and accurate information, along with the appropriate supporting documentation, on any funding application forms submitted. Unfortunately if all the required information is not provided, this will lead to a delay in an application being processed and a payment made.

Some childcare settings may be in receipt of government funding under other schemes. This will need to be declared in full and will be taken into account in any final financial payment made under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme.

I know that some of you have raised concerns relating to insurance cover during the pandemic, specifically for COVID-19 related incidents. Those providers, who a local Health and Social Care Trust confirm are continuing to provide childcare for key workers and vulnerable children, will receive a letter of indemnification which confirms that the Department of Health will provide indemnity against all liabilities, claims, damages and costs in respect of a third party arising out of or in connection with Covid-19 during the period of the pandemic.

It is intended at this stage that the period covered by indemnity will be from the date of the issue of the letter of indemnification to 30 June 2020.

I hope that you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marc Bailie". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Marc Bailie
Family Policy Unit
Department of Health

ANNEX 1
INFORMATION FOR CHILDMINDERS

SUPPORT AVAILABLE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1 APRIL 2020 – 30 JUNE 2020

Childminders who provide child care for keyworkers and vulnerable children

If you are a childminder who has **remained open** during the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to provide services for keyworker and/or vulnerable children (definition [available here](#)), and you have not already done so, please make urgent contact with your local Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust Early Years Team to let them know of your situation. Contact details are attached.

HSC Trust Early Years Teams (EYTs) have been assessing the childcare needs of vulnerable children and key workers in their area. The purpose of the contact with the EYT is to enable the team to determine how many childminding places are potentially available and in what locations in the Trust area. The EYT will then seek to match children to available places, taking account of the views and preferences of individual parents.

The EYT will also be able to talk you through what will be expected of you in operating terms during the pandemic and, in particular, any restrictions that will apply. For example, to prevent the spread of the virus, childminders will be prevented from taking the children of more than two families for the period of the pandemic.

COVID-19 guidance has been made available for childminders and is located [here](#). It is essential that all childminders who provide childcare during the period of the pandemic follow the guidance closely and adhere to any requirements it makes.

What financial support is available?

Those who continue to provide childcare services to keyworkers and vulnerable children during the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic should continue to charge parents. Those

parents who have been identified as key workers for the purpose of accessing childcare, and who require more costly childcare now than before the Pandemic (including those who did not require childcare previously but do now), will be able to claim the additional costs back from their employer, who in turn will be able to claim those costs from Government.

Subject to consideration of other financial support available to childminders those who continue to provide childcare for keyworker and vulnerable children will be able to claim additional payments of **£125 per place filled per month up to a maximum payment of £500 per childminder per month.** Please note for the payment to apply, the childminder will be expected to have provided childcare for a minimum of 20 days per place (or child, if a full time place) in any calendar month.

Full disclosure

All providers will be expected to make a full disclosure under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme. A failure to disclose all receipts of funding, COVID-19 or otherwise, will be treated as fraudulent activity and may lead to a criminal prosecution.

Application Process

The period for which claims can be submitted is 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. A single application form must be submitted for each of the Claims made for each of the 3 months (April, May and June). The Business Services Organisation (BSO), a sponsored body of the Department of Health will issue application forms, which will include the return address. BSO will also issue payments when applications have been assessed and agreed. It is essential that you make your Trust Early Years Team aware if you are caring for keyworker and/or vulnerable children. Trust Early Years Teams will be advising BSO who should be invited to apply for funding. It is also important that the Family Support NI website has your most recent contact details, including e-mail address (if you have one) to ensure that applications issue to your correct address. Your email address will not be shared publicly if you make it clear that you do not wish it to be.

Childminders who will NOT be providing services during the Pandemic Period

It is anticipated that childminders who are not working during the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic will avail of the UK Government support package for self-employed individuals.

Further information is available at:

- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-business-and-employers>
- <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-support-and-advice-self-employed>

ANNEX 2

INFORMATION FOR REGISTERED CHILDCARE PROVIDERS SUPPORT AVAILABLE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1 APRIL 2020 – 30 JUNE 2020

By Registered Childcare Providers we mean:

- **Day care settings; and**
- **School age childcare settings**

OPEN CHILDCARE SETTINGS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

If you are a registered childcare provider who has **remained open** during the COVID-19 pandemic, and if you have not already done so, please make urgent contact with your local Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust Early Years Team. Contact details are attached.

HSC Trust Early Years Teams (EYTs) have been assessing the childcare needs of vulnerable children and key workers in their area. The purpose of the contact with the EYT is to enable the team to determine how many childcare places are potentially available and in what locations in the Trust area. The EYT will then seek to match children to available places, taking account of the views and preferences of individual parents.

The EYT will also be able to talk you through what will be expected of you in operating terms during the pandemic and, in particular, any restrictions that will apply. It is essential that you seek approval from your local EYT on the measures you have established including issues in relation to ratios, number of children in a room etc. to ensure they are reasonable and proportionate in responding to local circumstances. The responsibility for ensuring the safety and the welfare of the children in your care will remain with you,

the registered childcare provider, but the Trust will still retain their responsibilities in relation to the provision of safe care.

COVID-19 guidance has been made available for registered childcare providers and can be located [here](#). It is essential that all providers who provide childcare during the period of the pandemic follow the guidance closely and adhere to any requirements it makes. The Childcare Partnership team is also developing online resources which will be ready soon and available on their website:

<http://childcarepartnerships.hscni.net/>

What financial support is available?

Subject to consideration of other financial support available (both childcare-specific support and other COVID-19 financial relief measures) open childcare settings, which continue to provide childcare services to keyworkers and vulnerable children during the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic, will receive payments which:

- ***meet their monthly costs (both fixed running costs and staffing costs for those staff who continue to work during the pandemic); and***
- ***provide a temporary uplift in the salaries of staff who continue to work during the pandemic of 1.2 times their normal rate of pay.***

Parental Fees

Each open setting should continue to charge parents, who use their services, their normal fee. All fees collected from parents by childcare settings, which remain open (or re-open) during the pandemic, will be deducted from any final financial settlement under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme.

Other COVID-19 financial measures & other relevant funding/income

Payments under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme will be made in consideration of any other COVID-19 financial entitlements and other relevant funding streams.

Full disclosure

All providers will be expected to make a full disclosure under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme. A failure to disclose all receipts of funding, COVID-19 or otherwise, will be treated as fraudulent activity and may lead to a criminal prosecution.

Application Process

The period for which claims can be submitted is 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. A single application form must be submitted for each of the Claims made for each of the 3 months (April, May and June). The Business Services Organisation (BSO), a sponsored body of the Department of Health will issue application forms, which will include the return address. BSO will also issue payments when applications have been assessed and agreed. It is essential that you make your Trust Early Years Team that your setting remains open or of your intention to reopen your setting to provide childcare to keyworkers and/or vulnerable children. Trust Early Years Teams will be advising BSO who should be invited to apply for funding. It is also important that the Family Support NI website has your most recent contact details, including e-mail address to ensure that applications issue to your correct address.

CLOSED CHILDCARE SETTINGS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

If you are a registered childcare provider who has remained closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, please consider the official COVID-19 Government advice and support at:

- <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-business-and-employers>

You should also inform your local Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust Early Years Team that you are closed. As detailed in the next section, you may be entitled to apply for financial support to help with operational running costs excluding staff costs (which cannot be deferred) under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme. However, amounts payable will be assessed and calculated based on any other COVID-19 financial entitlements in addition to any other funding settings are continuing to receive from an alternative source including from government. Any applicable funding settings continue to receive will be deducted before an allocation is made under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme. The calculation will be made on a setting by setting basis based on the information and supporting documentation provided.

What financial support is available?

Under this scheme, for closed settings government will meet up to 80% of all non-deferrable operational costs incurred while the setting remains closed to children during the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic (1 April to 30 June 2020). Examples of these costs include mortgage/rent, utilities, insurance costs etc. Please note that non-deferrable operational costs covered under this scheme do not include staffing costs, nor do they include the full range of costs, which would be incurred if a setting remained open, for example, heat, power and light except at a substantially reduced rate. Robust supporting documentation will be required with each claim.

The Application of Caps

To ensure resources to support the sector are maximised a cap will be applied on the amount payable to each setting under this part of the package. The caps have been set below and are based on average incurred fixed costs for settings. However, if the 80%

contribution towards fixed costs (less relevant income) is less than the maximum caps, the lesser amount will be paid.

Day Care Settings

- Settings (with less than 75 registered places) can apply for up to £4,000 per month.
- Settings (with 75 or more registered places) can apply for up to £6,000 per month.

After School Settings

- Settings (with less than 40 registered places) can apply for up to £1,100 per month
- Settings (with 40 or more or more registered places) can apply for up to £1,600 per month

Settings with Dual Provision (Day Care and After School Care)

- Subject to the number of registered day care and registered after school places, settings with dual provision can apply for an amount up to the caps set for day care settings (£4,000 or £6,000) plus an amount up to the caps set for after school settings (£1,100 or £1,600).

Other COVID-19 financial measures

Payments under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme will be made in consideration of any other COVID-19 financial entitlements such as the small business grants scheme, and you should ensure you are availing of the appropriate and most beneficial support.

There is an expectation that Day Care and After School Providers will have already taken all actions possible to mitigate cash flow difficulties during the period of the pandemic including mortgage, loan holidays, rent reduction/deferral etc. Any other COVID-19 financial assistance measures settings have secured will be taken into account in making an allocation under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme.

Other Relevant Funding/Income

Some settings will be continuing to receive early years and childcare funding from government or other sources. This may include, but is not restricted to:

- Pathway Funding (from DE);
- Preschool Education Programme allocation (from DE);
- Brightstart Grant (through DOH);
- Other government funding for childcare; and
- Parental fees, including any retainer fees.

Payments under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme to help with non-deferrable operational running costs fixed costs will be made in consideration of any alternative source of funding settings are continuing to receive and use for the same purpose. Any such funding received will be deducted before payment, calculated at 80% of non-deferrable operational costs are made under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme.

Application Process

The period for which claims can be submitted is 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. A single application form must be submitted per setting for each of the 3 months (April, May and June). The Business Services Organisation (BSO), a sponsored body of the Department of Health will issue application forms, which will include the return address. BSO will also issue payments when applications have been assessed and agreed. It is essential that you make your Trust Early Years Team aware of your decision to close. Trust Early Years Teams will be advising BSO which settings are eligible to apply for funding. It is also important that the Family Support NI website has your most recent contact details, including e-mail address to ensure that applications issue to your correct address. Your email address will not be shared publicly if you make it clear that you do not wish it to be.

Full disclosure

All providers will be expected to make a full disclosure under the COVID-19 Childcare Support Scheme. A failure to disclose all receipts of funding, COVID-19 or otherwise, will be treated as fraudulent activity and may lead to a criminal prosecution.

Re-opening

It is essential that you liaise with your local Trust Early Years Team if you are intending to **re-open** your provision during the COVID-19 pandemic period to discuss your proposed arrangements and ascertain the level of demand for childcare for vulnerable children and keyworkers. The requirement to have two members of staff in each room remains. The date you plan to re-open will also have an impact on your application for funding under this 'closed' scheme.

Any relaxation of ratios will be approved by the Trust Early Years Team on a case by case basis. The Trust Early Years Team approval should only be granted on the basis that the measures being proposed by the childcare provider are reasonable and proportionate in responding to local circumstances and ensuring the provision of childcare to the children of key workers and vulnerable children. The responsibility for ensuring the safety and the welfare of the children in their care will remain with the registered childcare provider.

APPROVED HOME CHILDCARE SCHEME

If you are a provider who has agreed to continue to employ any member of your staff to register as an Approved Home Childcarer under the temporary bespoke COVID-19 Scheme, you should note the following:

- Each staff member is entitled to receive 1.5 times their normal hourly rate of pay ;
- Where you have agreed to continue to employ the individual and manage the home childcare arrangement you can claim a 10% management fee calculated on the standard gross monthly pay of the approved home child carer.
- You will also be required to arrange public liability insurance for the AHC and can claim for this up to a capped amount of £75.

Day care providers who have staff working as approved home childcarers, during the COVID-19 pandemic, will receive the difference in salary normally paid to an employee and the salary paid under the Bespoke Approved Home Childcare Scheme, including the difference as a result of the higher rate of pay. Each setting will also receive a payment to cover the cost of managing the arrangement, equivalent to 10% of each approved home childcarer's final salary. Keyworker parents will continue to pay their normal pre COVID-19 childcare fee to the provider.

Application Process

The application process for the Approved Home Childcare Support Scheme is consistent with the process mentioned above. There will be a separate form for claiming Approved Home Childcare costs which should be submitted along with your application for funding for the open or closed setting (depending which is applicable).

Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust Early Years contacts

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Everton Complex
585-587 Crumlin Road
Belfast
BT14 7GB
Tel: 02895 042811
Email: earlyyears@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Route House
Route Complex
8e Coleraine Road
Ballymoney
BT53 6BP
Tel: 028 2766 1340
Email: northernearlyyearsteam@northerntrust.hscni.net

Ellis Street
Carrickfergus
BT38 8AZ
Tel: 028 9331 5112
Email: southeasterlyearlyyearsteam@northerntrust.hscni.net

Ballymena North Business Centre
120 Cushendall Road
Ballymena
BT43 6HB
Tel: 028 2563 5111
Email: centrallyearlyyearsteam@northerntrust.hscni.net

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Grove House
Antrim Road
Ballynahinch
BT24 8BA
Tel: 02844 513807
Email: early.years@setrust.hscni.net

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Armagh Team
87 Lisanally Lane
Armagh
BT61 7HW

Tel: 02837 564020

Email: Dianne.calvert2@southerntrust.hscni.net

Banbridge Office

Banbridge Health and Social Care Centre

10 Old Hospital Road

Banbridge

BT32 3GN

Email: earlyyears.banbridge@southerntrust.hscni.net

Email: zoe.morton@southerntrust.hscni.net

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Londonderry team

Clooney Hall Centre

36 Clooney Terrace

Londonderry

BT47 6AR

Tel: 02871 320950

Email: josephine.doherty@westerntrust.hscni.net

Omagh Team

Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital

Omagh

BT79 0NS

Tel: 02882 835108

Email: marian.donaghy@westerntrust.hscni.net

Fermanagh Team

Ward 10, Level 1

South Western Acute Hospital

124 Irvinestown Road

Enniskillen

BT74 6DN

Tel: 02866 327734

Email: marian.donaghy@westerntrust.hscni.net