



To All Parents and Carers – Early Years

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Date	14 th May 2020
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Dear Parent and Carer,

I hope this letter finds you well and managing at a time that is incredibly challenging and, as often said, unprecedented.

I am writing to you on this occasion to update you on the Government's recent announcement and conditional plans for the re- opening of Early Years provisions to more children. The debate on Early Years provisions opening their doors to a wider group of children continues to have a national focus, and with it raises anxiety, concerns and questions for both the profession and parents.

The national debate will reach some sort of compromise but the challenge of getting more settings and child minder provisions open at some point will still remain. Any further guidance can only provide us with a set of parameters that we can use to determine a local answer.

I would like to assure parents and carers that Early Years professionals and the Local Authority had started some time ago to plan and consider what actions they need to consider before more children and young people could safely attend Early Years provisions.

As you are aware, since 23rd March 2020 Early Years provisions have remained open only to children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday evening, Early Years provisions will potentially open for all young children from 1st June for those children who are eligible for the three and four year old early years entitlement offer; for eligible two year old entitlement children; for children who are eligible to the 30 hour working parent offer and for working parents' babies and young children who pay for provision.

The Government have asked all Early Years provisions and Primary schools to open for all children in Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.

Secondary schools, sixth forms, and further education colleges will begin some face to face support with Year 10 and Year 12 pupils, although it is not expected that these pupils will return on a full-time basis at this stage.



For special schools they will continue to prioritise the most vulnerable pupils and those of key workers as they have been doing up until now and only then consider whether it might be possible to offer additional pupils places when these can be safely catered for in their setting and the individual needs have been considered.

All schools will continue to remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children in all year groups.

The Government's position is backed by high scientific confidence that children of all ages have less severe symptoms than adults if they contract coronavirus and there is moderately high scientific confidence that younger children are less likely to become unwell if infected with Coronavirus. Furthermore, transmission rates from children to adults is limited.

In Halton, for example, all schools are open and we have a number of early years settings open my understanding to date, after 8 weeks, is that there have been no case of transmission from children to adults.

Nevertheless, limiting the numbers of children going back to settings, schools and college initially then gradually increasing numbers, guided by scientific advice, reduces risk of increasing the rate of transmission.

With this advice central to the Government's decision, the Department for Education has provided advice to Early Years child care and school leaders on the steps they should take to increase the number of children and young people attending provision.

Halton provisions are guided by the following principles:

- The 1st of June date is the earliest date and an ambition and not a mandatory start date.
- In planning the health, safety and welfare of children and young people and child care staff is paramount and a new risk assessment undertaken by each provision before opening to these additional pupils will directly address risks associated with coronavirus so that sensible measures can be put in place to minimise those risks for children and staff.
- Early Years provisions, schools and the Local Authority are working together to ensure that we recognise the need for consistency but each provision will have to respond to its own individual circumstances
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- Provision will open only to the number of children they can safely accommodate, and that might mean that not all children can attend at the same time.
- We have and will continue to prioritise vulnerable learners and children of key workers.
- Make sure that children do not attend if they or a member of their household has symptoms of Coronavirus.

It is important to recognise that Early Years provisions and schools will have limited and varying numbers of staff available and your child may not necessarily have their regular key worker at all times. Staff will be very conscious that routines and learning will be different and be sensitive to the extra support some children will need.

As part of the approach provisions will, as examples:

- Carrying out additional stringent cleaning everyday so that when children leave, the spaces and resources that they have used are thoroughly cleaned to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus.
- Put away Items and resources that cannot be easily cleaned.
- Activities will be limited to things that can be cleaned regularly.
- Children will be in small groups with the same adult
- Arrangements will be made to prevent larger groups mixing
- In order to allow as many children to attend provision, they may offer places on a part-time basis or for a certain number of sessions per week.
- Staggered times to arrive at provisions and to collect children so that provisions can try to safely manage this and ensure there is minimal adult contact – 2m distancing between adults must be maintained. Parents must not gather when arriving or departing.

For parents you can expect that:

- Only one adult can accompany children to school
- Children will be expected to wear clean clothes each day
- Home learning will continue and you should continue to support your children to access home learning resources promoted by provisions
- Families must continue to observe the current social distancing guidance out of school



The Government has produced further information for parents and carers. This information provides answers to a number of key questions.

You can find the detailed answers to these questions by following the link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude for your patience as this will take time and I can assure you that as soon as provisions are in a position to share their plans for opening, they will.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'M. Vasic'.

Mil Vasic
Strategic Director, People