



# **COVID-19**

## **Returning to your Early Years setting**

### **ADVICE FOR PARENTS**

29 May 2020

**Wiltshire Council**

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# Introduction

We have compiled this short booklet to help you and your child get ready to go back to your early years setting. From 1st June 2020 our nurseries, pre-schools and childminders are opening for more of their children. We have asked settings to prioritise Keyworker and vulnerable children and those going to school in September 2020, so that those children can start to get ready to go to school.

The booklet has the latest government guidance at time of going to print but please be aware the guidance is constantly being updated. Your school will advise with specific details for you but we hope you find this useful as a general guide.



## WHY CAN MORE CHILDREN GO TO THEIR SETTINGS?

- It is good for children to socialise with other children
- Settings are the best place for them to learn
- It is good for children's mental wellbeing

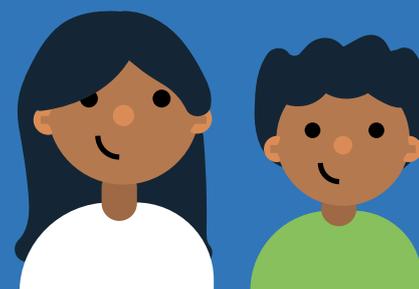


## HOW ARE YOU MAKING SURE THE SETTING IS SAFE?

- If a child or family member is sick they cannot attend the setting
- Everyone will wash their hands regularly
- Settings will be cleaned regularly
- Settings will check for risks before they open
- There will be less children in a room together
- To do this settings may need to make changes to the ways that they work and the structure of the day

## WHAT ABOUT THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS?

- Siblings can go to a different setting or school, as when they come home they will still be in a family group.
- This will still be limiting the amount of contacts that your children are exposed to



## DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO COME TO SETTING?

- No, it is completely up to you if you wish to send them back
- If you choose not to send them back your setting will continue to support you at home



## WHAT IF THERE IS A CASE OF CORONAVIRUS IN THE SETTING

- The person with symptoms must self isolate for seven days
- The people they live with must self isolate for 14 days
- If your child does have symptoms whilst at setting, staff will be wearing PPE including face masks, Please ensure that they are collected promptly as this can be distressing for young children.

## WILL MY CHILD BE TESTED?

Yes, if your child shows symptoms of coronavirus you can order a test. This has now been extended to under 5s. If the test is negative then your child can return to the setting



## WHAT ELSE MIGHT CHANGE?

- You may need to use a different entrance and there may be designated waiting areas.
- Your child may be working with a different member of the team
- Not all of their favourite toys may be available at the moment
- Your setting may ask you to bring a packed lunch if you don't already
- Your setting may ask that your child does not bring in toys from home unless they really need them to support their well being

## Top tips for parents

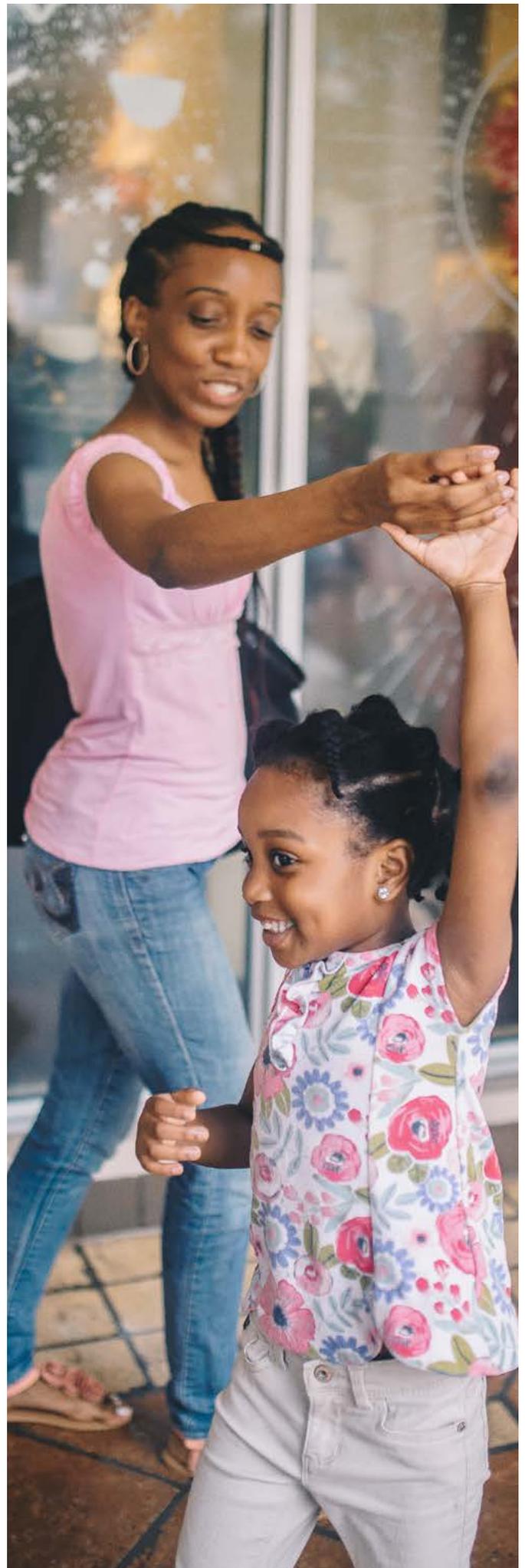
Talk through **why** they have not been at their setting, explain that things are getting better and it is ok for them to go back to their setting. Give your child a chance to ask any questions they want to and if you do not know the answer tell them it was a good question and you will find out the answer.

- **Talk about the positives** of going back to their setting. Ask your child what they are looking forward to doing when they go back to their setting; who are they looking forward to playing with; what things do they enjoy doing their setting.
- **Talk about what you have done** during lockdown – what have you all learned, what new things have you done? What might you say if the teacher asks you what things you have been doing?
- Explain **when** this is going to happen, it's a good idea to talk in "sleeps", e.g. there are 20 more sleeps until you go back to your setting, consider using a calendar and get them to cross off or colour in the days as they pass. However don't raise children's expectations until the situation is **crystal clear** both from government and early years settings as to when and how they will return. A day at a time is a useful motto for the whole family!

- Create **structure, routine and predictability** for your child. In the run up to going back, talk through what you will be doing the night before to get ready for "the first day back" and then spend time talking about what will happen when they wake up on "the first day back". Try to put a routine in place for that morning and keep to it for a while until your child gets back into the swing of things. Get your child to tell you about what they would like the routine to look like
- **Encourage open discussion:** acknowledge that it will be natural to have a mixture of emotions (e.g. excitement at seeing friends, anxiety or worry about what might have changed). These discussions can be less intense when you are doing something together such as cooking/drawing/Lego/playdough/travelling in the car rather than sitting face to face. If your child is feeling **anxious or worried** explain to them that this is ok and lots of other children will be feeling this too. Give your child some time to talk about their worries and be comforted with a cuddle. Remember you don't have to fix this for them, just be there and let them know you understand. Consider using a **worry box** so they can act on their worry, especially before bedtime



- Think about ways for them to connect with their friends before they start back e.g. help them to have a short video call or send a video/voice message to them.
- Be prepared that for some children with SEND where feasible, transitions may be more gradual with more of a mix of home-learning balanced with attendance to settings. Be aware that staffing is going to be limited and your child might not be working with the people they are used to and this can be difficult for some children.
- We know that many children like to bring in special objects, at the moment can you please try to avoid this where possible. It may be possible to bring in items such as a comforter where it is in the interest of your child's well being, but this will be up to your child's setting and their policy.
- Remember to take children's individual medical circumstances into account and get advice from medical professionals where needed



# Frequently asked questions

## **Are settings re-opening after half term?**

Many settings are already open in Wiltshire for the children of critical workers and vulnerable group pupils. We have been encouraging families with social workers to send their children to their setting as we believe this is the safest place for them in the widest sense and are grateful to all of our Wiltshire settings that have been able to stay open over this very difficult time.

## **How will settings open differently after half term?**

The government has asked Early Years (EY) providers to open for all of their intake from 1 June onwards. Your child's EY provider will let you know when your child can return.

All Early Years (EY) settings, primary and secondary schools are risk assessing their sites in relation to the need for social distancing.

They have been asked to prioritise as follows;

- Maintaining the existing offer to vulnerable children and key worker children
- Keeping staff and children safe by maintaining social distancing where possible and much smaller group sizes
- Inviting more children back as it is safe to do so

When they have risk assessed and converted their setting site for wider attendance at a safe distance, they will contact you and ask you about your needs and then explain what the changes will mean for you and your child. They will let you know when they are ready for your child to start setting again.

## **Will this opening happen on 1st June?**

Settings will be able to open to more children from the 1st of June as was confirmed by the government on the 28 May. Your child's setting will let you know when they have a place available for them and you can then decide if you would like to send your child back. Some settings may not open until later in June or July and in some cases September. Your setting will be in touch to let you know when they are opening.

## **What do I do if my setting does not re-open on the 1st June?**

Contact your setting to find out when they will be re-opening, If you need childcare before this date ask them if they can contact any other local providers to see if they have availability for you. Your settings will be able to contact the local authority for support.

## **I am a critical (key) worker how will things change for me and my child?**

Settings have been asked to continue to prioritise the children of critical workers, whose parents cannot work from home and vulnerable pupils.

## **My setting has offered me a place but I am afraid of sending them back to their setting?**

Settings will only open when they believe it is safe to do so.

If you are worried or concerned, please talk to your child's setting and ask them to talk to you about the measures they have put in place to keep your child safe. They are working very hard to make their settings as safe as possible for your children.

## **How might your setting look different?**

Each setting will look different and be set up in a different way. They will be in touch to tell you any new arrangements and it would be good to give them a call to discuss this if you are concerned.

## How can parents support their child to return to their setting?

- Start to increase the number of times that you encourage your child to wash their hands and practise maintaining social distance.
- Look at how they could walk or cycle to settings.
- Read you settings' joining instructions - most will not want parents and other adults on site and will have set out safe entry and exit points.
- Arrive at the time you are asked to attend and don't arrive early or linger later.
- Explain any changes in behaviour policies to your child. Social distancing is really important and although settings and children have missed each other, it's important that we keep each other safe.
- Settings will tell you what children can/should wear and whether they can bring any kit or food with them. Make your child aware of any changes.
- Explain that they will be in different groups to March and may have a different member of staff working with them. This will mean if there is a suspected case of COVID-19 the child will be sent home. If that child then tests positive for COVID-19 the bubble of pupils will be sent home for self isolation.
- Explain to children that they cannot bring in toys from home for 'showing' but you may be able to send a photo to the setting that they can share and talk about
- We would recommend that children's clothes are washed daily after a day in the setting, so explain that they may need to wear different clothes each day.

