

Information for Families about Early Years and Childcare Settings in light of Covid-19

Dear Families

We know that many of you who are critical workers or have vulnerable children will have been sending your child/ren to their usual setting, or another setting that has been able to accommodate your requirements during the lockdown period and hope that (if you have used this) you have found our Brokerage Service helpful in securing the childcare that you have needed to support you in your important work, or to support your vulnerable child/ren. No doubt since the lockdown you will have experienced some less than familiar practice in settings as they follow the Government's guidelines on social distancing and protective measures in order to keep your child/ren safe during this challenging time.

Many other families will, since the first of June been returning to childcare whilst others may still be feeling anxious about the prospect. We have been very pleased with the numbers of settings that were able to remain open either fully or partially during this period and equally those who have been able to open more widely since the 1st June and wanted to learn how COVID-19 had affected our settings in Kent. Therefore we surveyed our settings (including childminders) who were open during the lockdown period to see what the incidences of confirmed cases were and we were surprised to learn that there were in Kent only 3 children and 13 staff who reported confirmed cases of the disease (of 408 respondents). You may be aware that the Government has issued updated guidance to early years and childcare settings (including childminders) to ensure they continue to carry out robust risk assessments and follow the new 'system of controls' set out below. We hope this information will support you in making an informed decision about accessing early years and childcare provision during this time.

I hope you enjoy the summer with your child/ren and would remind you that our final edition of our *Growing and Learning Together* family flyer will be launched just prior to the end of term.

System of controls

This is the set of actions early years settings must take. They are outlined in more detail below.

Prevention:

1) minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend settings

2) clean hands thoroughly more often than usual

- 3) ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- 4) introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach
- 5) minimise contact between groups where possible
- 6) where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all settings, all the time.

Number 5 must be properly considered and settings must put in place measures that suit their particular circumstances.

Number 6 applies in all specific circumstances.

Response to any infection:

- 7) engage with the NHS Track and Trace process
- 8) manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the setting community
- 9) contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

Very best wishes

Alex Gamby
Head of Early Years and Childcare