

20 March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

COVID-19: Provision for the children of 'key workers'

Late last night the government released guidance regarding maintaining education provision for the children of parents deemed as 'key workers'. I would be grateful if you could read this letter in its entirety before responding to the survey link below to register for continued provision if you require it.

Capacity within our schools will be extremely limited and could well change over time due to evolving staff absence. As a consequence it may well be that eventually provision ceases to be possible at your child's own school, in which case alternative provision at another setting will be offered. In any case, parents should be aware that provision will involve mixed age classes and will ordinarily be 'childcare' in style.

Guidance

Please see the attached guidance regarding the definition of 'key workers'

If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be – this includes key worker families

Key workers should ONLY identify their child as needing continued provision according to the following government principles, if:

- They cannot secure alternate childcare without compromising stringent social distancing categories such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions
- Their work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or they work in one of the critical sectors listed below, and they cannot keep your child safe at home
- A child needs specialist support or is deemed vulnerable then provision will be available for them

Even if you are in one of the key worker categories, before identifying your child as needing provision, you should confirm with your employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, their specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service. You must be essential to the Covid-19 response to access the limited provision.

What you need to do

To register your child as needing continued provision, please respond to the STAR MAT survey by using the link below and completing your details.

In order for us to begin our planning please complete the survey by 6pm on Saturday 21 March.

<https://tinyurl.com/keyworkers-STAR>

This will place your child on the register for 'key workers' at their school.

What happens next?

Please do not assume that this provision will be available from Monday 23 March. Your child's school will make contact to inform you when it becomes available.

It is our understanding from NYCC that normal school transport arrangements will continue at this time.

Each school will issue some guidance for pupils/students who will attend the provision but the following key principles will still apply:

- School uniform rules should still apply – this will maintain 'normality' for our pupils. However, uniform must be maintained well to ensure least possible hygiene risk; recommend putting clothes straight in the washing machine once returning home from school to minimise and control the spread of infection.
- Up to date contact details for family members must be available within school and emergency contact details should your child become poorly/exhibit symptoms of contracting coronavirus.
- If you become unwell with coronavirus symptoms, you must **immediately** contact the school and arrange for collection of your child.
- Social distancing **must** be enforced whilst your child is not in school if we are to prevent/minimise the spread of infection.
- The school **must** be informed if you no longer fall within the critical worker list or you have been asked to self-isolate.

Currently, emergency planning across North Yorkshire is only being developed for the immediate week ahead. We will of course begin planning with regard to continuity over the Easter period, but as yet we cannot state that childcare provision is secure beyond next week. **At this time, therefore, we strongly advise families to make their own arrangements for child care over the Easter holiday period.**

Please do not hesitate to contact your child's school if there is anything further you would like to discuss

Yours faithfully

Mr M Sibley
Chief Education Officer

Key Worker Categories

Health and social care

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Education and childcare

This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

Key public services

This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

Local and national government

This only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the COVID-19 response or delivering essential public services such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arms length bodies.

Food and other necessary goods

This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).

Public safety and national security

This includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

Transport

This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during the COVID-19 response, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.

Utilities, communication and 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), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.

Guidance

Closure of educational settings: information for parents and carers

Published 19 March 2020

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers>

Information for parents and carers about the closure of schools and other educational settings following the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19). This will be updated as we have further information available.

1. Closures of schools, childcare and other educational settings

1.1 What age groups does this cover?

The changes cover children at registered childcare providers (including nurseries and childminders), primary and secondary schools and further education colleges. This is for both state-funded and independent schools.

1.2 Will it be mandatory for all schools, colleges and registered childcare providers to remain open in some form?

We are asking schools, colleges, nurseries, childminders and other registered childcare settings to remain open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children where they can.

We understand that some may be unable to do so especially if they are experiencing severe staff shortages. We will work with local areas to use neighbouring schools, colleges and childcare providers to continue to support vulnerable children and children of critical workers.

1.3 How long will schools and colleges be closed for?

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, schools, colleges and childcare providers will be closed to the majority of pupils until further notice.

1.4 Will this apply to independent schools and boarding schools?

Yes. We are asking independent schools and boarding schools to do the same as state schools and remain open for critical workers and vulnerable children.

1.5 Will registered childcare providers, schools and colleges be open over Easter holidays for holiday clubs and childcare?

Where possible, we would encourage childcare providers, schools and colleges to continue to look after critical workers' children and vulnerable children throughout the Easter holidays.

1.6 I am a critical worker or have a vulnerable child - can you guarantee that my child will attend their usual school or childcare provider?

We are expecting the majority of settings to stay open for the children of critical workers and vulnerable children so they can continue to attend their usual provider, but we acknowledge this will be impossible for some - such as small rural schools.

Where a setting is unable to stay open, we will work with the local educational authority, regional school commissioners and neighbouring providers to find an alternative setting for their pupils.

1.7 I am a critical worker or have a vulnerable child - how will my child get to school if the only school open is not nearby?

We are working closely with local authorities to ensure that children can attend the best setting for them, and will provide transport arrangements to support them.

1.8 I am a critical worker or have a vulnerable child but I don't want to send my child to school or childcare, do I have to?

Many parents working in these critical sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.

This is an offer to parents and carers and there is no requirement for parents and carers to send their children to school if they do not need or wish to do so.

For vulnerable children, your child's social worker will work with you to assess the best option for your child.

1.9 Does this affect universities and other higher education institutions?

Universities and other higher education providers should make their own judgements based on latest Public Health England guidance. Vice chancellors are well placed to make decisions about their own institution, and many have already moved all their teaching online. The government is supporting them with these decisions.

Advice continues to be that all student accommodation should remain open unless advised otherwise by Public Health England. Many universities provide homes to international students, estranged students and care leavers who might not have anywhere else to go.

The Department is working with the Home Office to avoid individuals and institutions being penalised if online provision inadvertently leads to [non-compliance with Tier 4 visa rules](#).

1.10 Does this apply to special schools?

We recognise that children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and their parents and carers are facing numerous challenges as a result of coronavirus. We are encouraging local authorities to keep open both residential special schools and residential specialist colleges wherever possible. In addition, we want to keep the majority of day special schools and colleges open, including moving staff into these settings to avoid closure.

Special schools, colleges and local authorities are advised to make case by case basis assessments of the health and safeguarding considerations of pupils and students on an education, health and care (EHC) plan. For some, they will be safer in an education provision. For others, they will be safer at home. We trust leaders and parents to make these decisions and will support them as required.

1.11 Why is my nursery telling me that they will continue to charge me during corona virus-related closures?

The government acknowledges that in many cases, the insurance that early years providers have will not cover them for income lost during COVID-19-related closures.

That is one of the reasons why it announced on 17 March that government would not claw back early years entitlements funding from local authorities during closures, or where children are withdrawn because of COVID-19. This protects a significant proportion of early years providers' income.

In addition, the government has set out a range of support for businesses to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on them. This includes a business rate holiday for all private childcare providers for one year from 1 April. Local authorities will be fully compensated for the cost of this.

In light of these steps taken already, we are asking providers to be reasonable and balanced in their dealings with parents. The government is urgently keeping what further support businesses may require under close review.

3. Vulnerable children

3.1 Is my child counted as vulnerable?

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Children who have a social worker include children in need, children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. We will work with schools, early years, FE providers and local authorities to help identify the children who most need support at this time.

We know that schools will also want to look to support other children who are vulnerable where they are able to do so.

3.2 What will happen with free school meals for those not in school and colleges?

We know that free school meals are important for many families.

To make sure eligible children can continue to be supported, we will give schools and colleges the flexibility to provide meals or vouchers to children eligible for free school meals. They will be reimbursed by the Department. As soon as possible, we will put in place a national voucher system.

More information on [support for pupils eligible for school meals](#) is available.

4. Critical workers

4.1 Will I be counted as a critical worker?

Critical workers include NHS staff, police, farmers and food retail workers, who need to be able to go out to work.

In order to continue to offer critical services as part of the country's ongoing response to the virus, children of workers who form a central part of effort - such as NHS workers, police and delivery drivers - will also continue to attend school, college or childcare provider.

A full list of critical workers and further information is available.

4.2 If only one parent or carer is a critical worker, can I send my children in to school?

Children with at least one parent or carer who are identified as critical workers by the government can send their children to school if required.

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**Government's Official
List of Critical
Workers
(Used to inform the
HLP Tiered System)**

As a country, we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

That is why the government has given clear guidance on [self-isolation](#), [household isolation](#) and [social distancing](#).

And the most recent scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear. If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading.

That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend.

It is important to underline that schools, colleges and other educational establishments remain safe places for children. But the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

Schools are, therefore, being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, 'looked after' children, young carers, disabled children and those with [education, health and care \(EHC\) plans](#).

We know that schools will also want to support other children facing social difficulties and we will support head teachers to do so.

Parents whose work is critical to the COVID-19 response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined below. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.
2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.
3. Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.

4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.
5. Residential special schools, boarding schools and special settings continue to care for children wherever possible.

If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed below, and you cannot keep your child safe at home then your children will be prioritised for education provision:

Health and social care

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Education and childcare

This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

Key public services

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If workers think they fall within the critical categories above they should confirm with their employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, their specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service.

If your school is closed then please [contact your local authority](#), who will seek to redirect you to a local school in your area that your child, or children, can attend.

We are grateful for the work of teachers and workers in educational settings for continuing to provide for the children of the other critical workers of our country. It is an essential part of our national effort to combat this disease.