

COVID-19 FAQ's for Early Years Settings Version 1.0 – 27 March 2020

Note: any reference to PVI settings throughout this guidance includes childminders.

Funding

1. Early Education Funding for schools/PVI settings that have to close due to the coronavirus restrictions.

The government have confirmed that funding for the early years entitlements will continue during any periods of school, PVI setting or childminder closures, or where children cannot attend an open setting due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Schools and settings will be able to claim for:

- All children that are in actual attendance during the summer term census/headcount week **and**;
- Any children that would have been in attendance in the census/headcount week but don't attend as a result of coronavirus restrictions **and**;
- It includes any new children that were registered/booked in for the summer term, but have not yet taken up their place due to the coronavirus restrictions.

This applies to all schools/settings even if they are not open in the summer census/headcount week.

2. Funding for schools/ PVI settings that are closing and their existing vulnerable children or children whose parents are critical workers have to find alternative provision.

Wherever possible schools/settings are being asked to remain open to provide childcare for vulnerable children or for children whose parents are critical workers, if these children cannot be safely cared for at home.

Where a school/setting is unable to continue to offer childcare places to these groups of children and have to close the school/setting should still claim for these children on their summer census /headcount claim as outlined in point 1.

In the event that a child/family needs to access their early education funded hours at an alternative school/setting the second provider should also include these children on their summer census/headcount claim.

In relation to funding this scenario the county council will aim to be as fair and equitable as possible to both providers. The starting point for allocation of funding will be the headcount/school census data submitted by each provider.

In the event that two or more providers claim for the same child, with total hours exceeding the termly maximum, the claims will be apportioned initially just to ensure there are no delays to payments. Each case will then be considered on a case by case basis to determine how the funding should be allocated and adjusted accordingly, if required.

As there are just over 1000 Early Years schools/PVI providers it is not possible at this time to precisely model and determine an exact answer for every eventuality that may occur, as it will depend on the actual hours of children's attendance in the headcount/census week compared to the planned hours had all children been in attendance.

The following scenario is provided as one example:

- Setting 1 has 10 children booked in/planned present in the headcount week.
- Setting 1 has 1 child from the vulnerable/critical worker groups.
- Setting 1 has closed.
- Setting 1 has no children in attendance during the headcount week.
- Setting 1 should claim for all 10 children as they were booked in/planned to be present during the headcount week.

- Setting 2 has 20 children booked in/planned present in the headcount week
- Setting 2 has 9 children from the vulnerable/critical worker groups.
- Setting 2 is remaining open.
- Setting 2 has 10 children in attendance during the headcount week (i.e. the 9 that were already attending their setting plus the child from setting 1 that is closed)
- Setting 2 should claim for 21 children in the headcount (i.e. the original 20 plus the extra child from setting 1)

The example above will result in an over claim for the 1 child that is being claimed for at both settings.

Setting 1 would receive funding for 10 children (even though no children were in attendance)

Setting 2 would receive funding for 20 children (even though only 10 children actually attended in the headcount week).

The funding for the vulnerable child that has moved to setting 2 would therefore be allocated to setting 1 in this scenario. No setting is being financially penalised as both settings would still receive funding for the number of children that would have been present had the current restrictions not been in place.

In the event that setting 2 had more actual attendance hours than planned then the county council would look to fund both providers for the vulnerable child that had moved from setting 1 (i.e. had all 20 original children at setting 2 been in attendance during the headcount week along with the extra 1 child then setting 2 would receive funding for 21 children.

3. PVI payment terms for summer

Settings that were not required to submit on-line estimates will receive an interim payment which will be calculated as 90% of the actual hours claimed in January's headcount. This is the equivalent of 3 months interim payments of 30% per month.

Settings that have submitted on-line estimates for the summer term will receive an interim payment which will be calculated as 75% of the estimated hours submitted. This is the equivalent of 3 months interim payments of 25% per month.

The county council has processed all interim payments and settings will receive the funding before 15 April 2020.

The county council will aim to pay all final balance payments by the 15 June 2020 as normal, however this cannot be guaranteed in the event of staff shortages, which is why it has been agreed to make a larger interim payment in April to cover the first 3 months of the term.

4. PVI headcount claims for the summer term.

The summer term headcount **will go ahead as normal**. All PVI settings still need to complete the summer term headcount in the normal way even if they are closed due to the coronavirus restrictions.

The headcount week is Monday 13 April 2020 to Sunday 19 April 2020.

The Provider Portal will open on Wednesday 1 April 2020 and close at midnight on Sunday 26 April 2020. It is imperative that all PVI settings submit the headcount claim by Sunday 26 April 2020 otherwise we will not be able to calculate and process your final headcount balance payments.

If due to illness/staff shortages you are unable to complete the headcount claim by the specified deadline, please email the funding team fee234@lancashire.gov.uk in order to discuss this. Please be aware that if you are unable to submit the headcount claim by the deadline it could result in delays to the final balances that are due to be paid in June/July.

5. Funding PVI providers with multiple settings.

Where a PVI has multiple settings with a number of vulnerable children, or children of critical workers attending those settings, they are permitted to provide the service to those children from one of their settings (or a reduced number), instead of keeping all of them open if they wish to do so. Before doing this they should consider the needs of their children and families to ensure they can still be met. They will also need to ensure they are working within registration and ratio requirements.

Where a provider chooses to do this, they must ensure the children are claimed for at the 'normal' setting in their summer headcount submissions.

6. Funding for settings that decide to hub together to continue to provide childcare places to children and families in their localities.

Where settings have made local arrangements to share staff/premises in order to continue to meet the needs of their local children and families, they will need to agree the financial arrangements for this between themselves. The county council will continue to fund the early education entitlements at each of the settings for the children that would have been booked in/planned to be present as outlined in points 1 and 2 above.

7. Funding for children who take up a place or increase their hours after the census/headcount week.

Schools/settings will be able to claim the early education entitlements for any vulnerable children or children of critical workers that take up a new place or increase their hours of attendance after the headcount week, in the normal way, through the supplementary claims process (up to the termly maximum hours allowed).

All settings will be notified when the supplementary claims process will be open.

8. DAF Funding.

Schools/settings will receive DAF for eligible children in the summer term as usual. Settings must ensure they submit the DLA letter and Parental Agreement by email to fee234@lancashire.gov.uk in order for DAF to be processed.

9. EYPP Funding.

Schools/settings will receive EYPP for eligible children in the summer term as usual. Settings must ensure they submit the required information via the census/headcount processes in the normal way in order for the county council to carry out the required eligibility checks.

10. 30 Hours Funding.

In order for 30 hour codes to be valid for the summer term, the start date must be 31 March 2020 or earlier and the end date must be 1 April 2020 or later.

Under normal circumstances where a parent has fallen into the grace period they cannot take up a place at a new setting, as the grace period only applies to their original setting. However due to the COVID-19 restrictions that are being placed on settings the code will be honoured to enable the 2nd setting to also submit a claim:

For example:

Code starts = 15 January 2020
Code end date = 15 March 2020
Grace period = 31 August 2020

- Parent fails to re-confirm their code before the 31 March 2020, and therefore the grace period will now apply.
- Child should have been in attendance at setting 1 but cannot attend due to closure.
- Setting 1 still claims for this child using the 30hour code at census/headcount as the child was booked in/planned to be present. The 30 hour code will work for setting 1 via the PVI Provider Portal HC submission as the child was attending their setting in the spring term.
- Setting 2 offers the place to this child because their normal setting is closed.
- Setting 2 should also claim for this child in their census/headcount.
- Because the child is in the grace period, the PVI Provider Portal will not accept the 30hour code for setting 2.
- Setting 2 need to claim the universal hours for this child in the normal way.
- Setting 2 also need to email the Funding Team at fee234@lancashire.gov.uk with the child, parent and code details and the number of extended hours they want to claim.
- Funding Team will resolve this on their behalf.
- As both settings are claiming for the same child funding will be allocated as described under point 2.

The above principles will also apply to maintained settings who will need to submit their 30 hour codes in the normal way through the ROSE data collection process.

Any 30 hour codes that have ended on or before 31 March 2020 and have a grace period of 31 March 2020 will not be valid for any school/setting to claim funding as the parent has not reconfirmed eligibility before the end of their grace period.

11. Parental Agreements for the summer term.

All schools/settings should still have parental agreements in place for the summer term even if the setting is closed, or the child cannot attend due to the coronavirus restrictions. The parental agreement provides the school/setting with the necessary consents to claim the funding as well as the necessary consents to enable the county council to carry out the eligibility checks for EYPP and 30 hours.

Where a child needs to attend a different setting due to their 'normal' setting being closed both settings should still ensure completed parental agreements are in place. The first school/setting parental agreement should be based on the hours of attendance that the child would have been accessing had they been open. The second school/setting parental agreement should be based on the hours agreed for the summer term.

If a parent has given formal notice to the first provider due to them being closed, the first provider should still ask the parent to sign the parental agreement on the basis that their child would have been there, so that they can still claim for this child in their census/headcount. The second setting will also be able to claim for this child in their census/headcount.

In this scenario where more than one school/setting claims funding for the same child, it will be dealt with as outlined under point 2 above.

Schools/settings can ask parents to complete the agreements via email if necessary.

12. Funding for childcare places and services that parents pay for directly (i.e. not the early years entitlements).

The government have confirmed that funding for the early years entitlements will continue during any periods of nursery, preschool or childminder closures, or where children cannot attend due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

The government has also put a number of measures in place to provide financial support to businesses during this period as outlined in the letter issued to the early years sector on 24 March by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families (Vicky Ford MP).

Through these measure the government have confirmed that all UK employers will be able to access financial support to continue paying part of their employees wages (80% of furloughed workers wage costs, up to a maximum of £2500 per month), in addition to the continued funding for the early years entitlements that they will receive from local authorities. The government are also considering what support can be put in place for the self-employed.

With this in mind **all settings are being strongly urged** by the Government to be sensitive to the financial burden that they may be passing on to parents, given the great uncertainty that they will also be facing at the moment.

Whilst the county council cannot intervene where parents are paying for childcare provision that is not part of the early years funded entitlements settings are expected to be as sensitive and reasonable as they can be for the reasons outlined above.

Service Delivery

13. Childcare places for vulnerable children and children of key workers.

The government has asked schools and childcare providers to continue to provide care for the following groups **if it is not safe for the child to be cared for at home**. This applies to the following groups.

- i. Children whose parents are critical to the COVID-19 response and cannot be cared for safely at home. Government guidance clearly states that the safest place for all children is at home.

Parents who are able to secure support from within the family home should be encouraged to do so. Where this is not possible schools and childcare settings are expected to continue to provide the usual pattern of childcare for those critical workers.

Only one of the parents needs to be a critical worker (as defined by the government).

- ii. Vulnerable children are defined as 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.

Please also refer to the point below 'managing risk for vulnerable children'

[Full government guidance for schools, colleges and local authorities on maintaining educational provision](#)

14. Managing risk for vulnerable children.

- i. Children Looked After:

The Virtual School will ascertain the school/provider's educational offer for all Lancashire looked after children wherever they are placed. If parents or carers wish to keep children at home rather than access education on site of a school, this must be agreed by the Social Worker. Social Workers will monitor the safety and well-being of looked after children through regular keep in touch (KIT) contact.

- ii. Children with Child Protection Plans or designated CIN will be risk assessed and monitored by social workers.

- iii. Children and young people with an EHC plan

These children and young people should be risk-assessed by their school or college in consultation with the local authority (LA) and parents, to decide whether they need to continue to be offered a place in education to meet their needs, or whether they can safely have their needs met at home. Many children and young people with EHC plans can safely remain at home.

Education providers and local authorities in discussion, with health partners, need to make a risk assessment for each child or young person, considering a number of risks including:

- the potential health risks to the individual from COVID-19, bearing in mind any underlying health conditions. This must be on an individual basis with advice from an appropriate health professional where required;
- the risk to the individual if some or all elements of their EHC plan cannot be delivered at all, and the risk if they cannot be delivered in the normal manner or in the usual setting;
- the potential impact to the individual's wellbeing of changes to routine or the way in which provision is delivered.

Those children **with an EHCP and an allocated social worker attending specialist provision** will be contacted by a social worker to discuss and make arrangements. These children must remain in school at least until a risk assessment has taken place. The social worker must be informed if these children do not attend school.

Those children **with an EHCP and an allocated social worker attending a mainstream school** will be contacted by a social worker over the next few days to undertake a risk assessment. These children must remain in school at least until a risk assessment has taken place. The social worker must be informed if these children do not attend school.

The school or setting should contact the named health worker identified on the EHCP to discuss continued intervention or any concerns.

If you are struggling to get a response, then you can contact the DCO service for your locality:

- **North - Lancaster, Wyre and Fylde:**
Kathleen Freear Tel: 01253 956 168 Email: bfwh.ehcp.blackpool@nhs.net
- **East - Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale:**
Carole Kay Tel: 01254 612722 Email: lcn-tr.dcopennine@nhs.net
- **South - Preston, South Ribble, Chorley and West Lancashire:**
Anne Hardman Tel: 01254 612723 Email: lcn-tr.dcosouth@nhs.net

As part of the government's emergency powers statutory duties on local authorities to maintain the precise provision in EHC plans will be modified, to expect educational settings and local authorities to use their reasonable endeavours to support children and their families.

15. Support and guidance in relation to vulnerable children.

A letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families has been issued to the SEND sector restating guidance on how to support vulnerable children. A copy of the letter and link to the full government guidance is provided below:

[Letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families](#)
(PDF 327 KB)

[Guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)

16. Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL).

Schools/settings must ensure that a designated safeguarding lead is accessible at all time. The DSL does not necessarily have to be on the premises providing they are contactable by phone.

17. Settings wishing to change their operating hours/days to support vulnerable children or children whose parents are critical workers.

Settings need to email Ofsted enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk and let Ofsted know what changes they are making, when they will be doing this from and confirmation that they will still be complying with all the registration requirements of the EYFS Statutory Framework. Settings must include the setting's Ofsted Unique Reference Number (URN) within the subject line and within the body of the email.

Settings also need to update their insurer to check their public liability insurance still covers everything needed. Settings should also check their planning permission to check there are no restrictions around days or times of opening. If there are then they should contact their local planning office and have a discussion.

18. Settings who want to continue to offer childcare places despite not having any children or children whose parents are critical workers.

The government have announced that schools, colleges and childcare settings (including nurseries, pre-schools, childminders and wrap around childcare for school aged children) **must** close to everyone except children of critical workers and vulnerable children from Friday 20 March, as part of the country's ongoing response to COVID-19. Keeping as many children at home as much as possible is essential to protect the NHS and save lives and all schools and setting are asked for their support in ensuring this advice is understood and followed by families in their communities

This decision was made to limit the spread of the virus. That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible.

Schools/settings are therefore only allowed to provide childcare places to vulnerable children or children of critical workers in order to limit the spread of the virus as defined (i.e. where it is not possible to safely care for those children at home, and in the case of vulnerable children where it is has been agreed with the social worker/parent/carer or in line with any risk assessment).

If individual settings do not currently have any vulnerable children or children whose parents are critical workers they can choose to stay open to offer childcare places to other vulnerable children or children of critical workers whose normal setting has closed.

19. Government ordered closures and business insurance policies.

As the government has told a number of different businesses and venues to remain closed from 21 March onwards, insurers have agreed that this advice is sufficient for businesses covered for COVID-19 losses to make a claim (if the only barrier to them making a claim was a lack of clarity on whether the government had ordered businesses to close). As such, intervention by the police or any other statutory body is no longer required to trigger cover in the current circumstances.

However, most businesses' commercial insurance policies (including for denial of access) are unlikely to offer cover for COVID-19. Insurance policies differ significantly, so businesses are encouraged to check the terms and conditions of their specific policy and contact their providers.

20. Expiration of health and safety and first aid training certificates.

The HSE has announced a [three month extension to the validity](#) for all certificates coming up for renewal on or after 16th March during the current COVID-19 crisis.

The Department for Education has introduced the same extension for all **Paediatric First Aid certificates** coming up for renewal on or after 16th March.

21. Registration requirements for PVI settings.

All Ofsted registered childcare settings will be registered on one or both of these registers – to check settings should look at their registration certificate.

Early Years Register

Being on this register allows you to care for children from birth to 5 years of age, right up until the 1st of September when the child starts year 1 at school. You will follow the Learning and Development requirements and the Safeguarding and Welfare requirements.

This is all nurseries and pre-schools and some out of school clubs, holiday clubs and childminders who look after this age of child.

Childcare Register There are two parts to this register:

- **Compulsory part and Voluntary part – most settings on this register will be on both.** To check this you should look at your registration certificate.
- **Compulsory part** – you can care for children from year one to the day before their 8th birthday (under 8's).
- **Voluntary part – this is the part of the register to care for children over 8 or under 2 hours and some** other reasons you might join this register. But it is voluntary so you can care for children over 8 or less than 2 hours without changing your current registration.

You will follow the core requirements and then the additional requirements for whichever one/s you are on.

The settings usually on the childcare register are childminders, out of school clubs and holiday clubs. Some nurseries will also be on this register to look after older children in the holidays or before and after school.

Adding registers

If you are on one part of the Childcare register and want to join the other part this is simple and requires you emailing or phoning Ofsted. Currently, to join a different register requires a new application for that register.

The [Ofsted website](#) has very clear information about the registers and how to change registers and further information around offering crèches or childcare for less than 14 days per year etc.

22. PVI settings wanting to remain open on sites that are closing.

If your setting is based in rented facilities, either on a school or elsewhere, you will need to come to an agreement with the person/s responsible for the building as to whether or not you can continue using the premises for the provision of your childcare.

23. Part time and full time hours of attendance.

In the event that vulnerable children or children of critical workers still require a childcare place, the expectation is that the school/setting would continue to offer the 'normal' hours of attendance. If increased hours were required wherever possible the school/setting is encouraged to support the request, providing they are still working within their registration/ratio requirements.

However, if the school/setting was unable to offer the increase then they should signpost parents to other open schools/settings in the local area, or to the county council's Family Information Service (FIS) in order for the parent to be supported in finding alternative childcare.

The contact details for FIS are:

- Phone: 0300 123 6712
Phone lines available Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.
- Email: lancsfis@lancashire.gov.uk

Sustainability Support for Businesses

24. Government support packages available to businesses

The government has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19.

This includes a package of measures to support businesses including:

- a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- deferring VAT and Income Tax payments
- a Statutory Sick Pay relief package for small and medium sized businesses (SMEs)
- a 12-month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality, leisure and nursery businesses in England
- small business grant funding of £10,000 for all business in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief

- grant funding of £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000
- the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme offering loans of up to £5 million for SMEs through the British Business Bank
- a new lending facility from the Bank of England to help support liquidity among larger firms, helping them bridge coronavirus disruption to their cash flows through loans
- the HMRC Time To Pay Scheme

[Full guidance and support to employers and businesses](#)

The government has stated they are also considering what support can be made available for the self-employed.

25. Business rates.

To support providers the government has announced they will be eligible for a business rates holiday for one year from 1 April 2020. Local authorities will be fully compensated for the cost and the Barnett formula to the additional support will be applied. All private, voluntary and independent nurseries will be exempt and this will also apply to childminders.

[News article – nursery exemption from business rates](#)

Links to national guidance documents and DfE FAQ's

- [Government – Coronavirus](#)
- [Guidance for schools and other educational settings](#)
- [Closure of education setting – Information for parents and carers](#)
- [Guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)
- [Implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings](#)
- [Q&A guidance](#)

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