



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

FAQs for Practitioners on Reopening of Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare settings



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FAQs for Practitioners

1. *Will I need to have my temperature checked when attending for work?*

No, the public health advice is that routine temperature checking for staff is not required.

2. *Do I need to get tested for COVID-19 before I go back to work?*

No, public health advice is that you do not need to be tested for COVID-19 unless you are displaying symptoms such as fever (high temperature), cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. You should not attend the service if you are displaying symptoms but should instead stay home and contact your GP. You should also let your manager know that you are displaying symptoms and are unable to come to work.

3. *Will I be prioritised for testing?*

Current public health advice is that you do not need to be prioritised for testing. You should not attend the service if you are displaying symptoms. You should self-isolate as quickly as possible and telephone your doctor. Your doctor will arrange testing for you if you need a test. You should also let your manager know that you are displaying symptoms and are unable to come to work.

Information on testing and contact tracing can be found on the Integrated Information Service – Testing and Contact Tracing Dashboard on this webpage:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/>

4. *Will I need to wear PPE/masks?*

As per normal practice in childcare services, you should wear disposable single-use plastic aprons, and non-powdered, non-permeable gloves when there is a risk of coming into contact with body fluids (such as nappy changing).

The National Public Health Emergency Team recommends the use of cloth face coverings by people aged 13 years or older in certain indoor settings. This guidance is applicable to adults in childcare settings where it does not pose a barrier to care. In some instances adults may wear masks or face coverings, including visors but this will generally be when they are not caring for children i.e. interacting with parents, during breaks.

While masks or face coverings are not recommended while caring for children they are not prohibited. If you feel that you really want or need to wear one you should speak to your service manager and discuss your concerns with them.

The National Public Health Emergency Team also recommends the use of cloth face coverings by people aged 13 years or older on public transport. This guidance is applicable in vehicles dedicated to transport of children to and from childcare settings where it does not pose a barrier to care. If the transport personnel are protected by a screen a face covering is not required. If no screen is available and a cloth face covering is not practical, a visor can be expected to provide substantial protection from droplets.

Your service should keep a small supply of surgical masks in a readily accessible place for use by a staff member who develops symptoms of COVID-19 or by staff members caring for a sick child if they feel they need to use them.

5. *Will the service be shut and will I be sent home there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in my service?*

If a child/staff member in your setting is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 they will be advised to leave/their parent/s will be advised to collect them from the service immediately. They will also be advised to contact their doctor. Their doctor will arrange a test for them if they need one.

If they test positive, the childcare setting will be contacted by local public health staff to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.

The service will not be required to take any action in relation to closing, partially or in full, until it has been contacted by local public health staff and they have advised as to what action is required in the particular case.

6. *What is a play-pod?*

The “play pod” model is a safe and playful approach to restricting interactions between closed groups of children and adults **as an alternative to social distancing**. ‘Play-pods’ are not physical structures, they are simply a way to describe a group of children and adults who learn and play together.

The purpose of ‘play-pods’ is to limit the number of people a child has contact with, to facilitate contact tracing, and to support close, positive interactions between children and their adult caregivers, like in a key-worker system, which is characteristic of many childcare settings. This system will also reduce the amount of contact adults have with each other.

7. *Do I need to observe social distancing while working in my service?*

It is not practical to enforce social distancing between children (either pre-school or school age) in a childcare setting. Neither is it possible to observe social distancing between children and their carers. The play-pod model is recommended as an alternative to social distancing. Children do not need to observe social distancing from other children or their carers within their play-pod. Wherever possible social distancing should be practiced between play-pods and between adults who are not in the same play-pod.

8. *How will staff breaks be managed with the play-pod model?*

It is acknowledged that floating /relief staff members will be essential as a way of managing breaks, but this should be limited as much as possible and steps should be taken to minimise risk of cross-infection. For example, a floating/relief staff member should wash hands before entering and after leaving a room, and should only provide relief in a small number of play-pods. Service providers will need to manage this in conjunction with staff in the context of their own setting.