



By Email

Reply to Alison Hurley
Telephone 0117 9224682
E-mail Alison.hurley@bristol.gov.uk
Our ref
Date 15.01.21

Dear Early Years Colleagues

As we come to the end of what I know will have been another exhausting week, I wanted to write and communicate my appreciation and support for the excellent work you are doing. Throughout the pandemic, the sector has risen to a host of unprecedented challenges, providing the support and stability children and families need. I know that you continue to provide high quality education daily under very difficult circumstances and work tirelessly with the communities you serve, putting them at the centre of your decision making. There is no doubt that the sector plays a crucial role in both our current response and our future recovery.

During this third lockdown, early years providers have been asked to remain open to all children. I understand that this has caused much concern and anxiety as well as increasing pressure on funding, staff capacity, parental anxieties and the challenges of managing Covid control measures. As early years leaders and practitioners you are doing a great job in organising and responding to these issues. I know that you keep risk assessments and operating arrangements under regular review so you can respond swiftly to changing circumstances. At the forefront of your minds will be the safety and wellbeing of staff, children and the communities you serve as well many questions that still need to be answered at a national level to provide some level of assurance to the sector.

I am aware we have received requests for support with PPE from providers. I am pleased to let you know that the Early Years team has secured additional PPE for the sector and this will be available from next week. Each setting will be able to access a PPE pack containing:

- Gloves
- Visors
- Masks
- Aprons
- Anti-bacterial hand gel

The team will be contacting you separately to provide pick up dates and times early next week. We hope this will go some way to supporting you all with the additional costs of managing Covid controls within each setting or provision.

Testing arrangements have recently been clarified for early years and providers. We are aware that the sector is questioning why lateral flow testing (LFT) is not being rolled out more widely and we are also asking this question of the DfE. At the same time, there are ongoing concerns about the introduction of LFT tests as an effective approach to managing transmission.

LFTs are used to detect asymptomatic individuals, and if repeated regularly (at least 2 times a week), may pick up infectious individuals without symptoms. If there is a positive test result, a

PEOPLE DIRECTORATE

PO Box 3399 Bristol City Council
Bristol, BS1 9NE

Alison Hurley
Director - Education and Skills

Website
www.bristol.gov.uk

PCR test should be completed to confirm the test result. Lateral flow tests result in a high number of false negative results, so anyone who has a negative result should still behave in a way that assumes they may have Covid, and ensure the usual individual preventative actions are in place (face, space, hands), and that the provision is also ensuring it is continuing to apply all preventative actions (including ensuring those with symptoms do not attend, minimising bubble sizes, ventilation).

Lateral flow testing for individuals who do not have symptoms may be available through the following routes:

- As asymptomatic testing is extended into primary settings for staff, this will also include nursery classes in school settings, starting from next week. This is a nationally led programme.
- Large early years employers (>250 employees) may be eligible for access to workplace kits, which may include some early years providers – full details have not yet been issued by the government.

The most important message to staff and families is to maintain social distancing, handwashing, and wearing of face masks, and to ensure that anyone with symptoms and their household self-isolates immediately and seeks a (PCR) test. Anyone with a positive test result and their contacts must self-isolate for 10 days. This is the most effective way to break the chain of infection. We can confirm that early years staff will continue to be able to access PCR testing for people with symptoms as a priority workforce, or through the usual online test booking portal.

As you will be aware, the National Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation have identified four initial priority groups for vaccination based on vulnerability and those most at risk of serious illness or death. We, along with our Local Authority colleagues across the country, continue to advocate for the inclusion of the education workforce, including early years, to be considered as a priority group. The education workforce, and particularly those who work with the youngest children or those with special educational needs, are critical workers often working in an environment where social distancing is limited and there are high levels of anxiety amongst staff and families. We feel that prioritising the education workforce for vaccination would go some way to recognising the vital work of the sector.

The Early Years team will continue to communicate and update you regularly and please contact the team if you need any additional support or guidance. I want to assure you that we are continuing to champion and advocate on the sector's behalf at regional and national levels so your feedback to the team is immensely helpful in shaping our conversation with the DfE and government.

Best wishes



Alison Hurley
Director, Education and Skills

PEOPLE DIRECTORATE

PO Box 3399 Bristol City Council
Bristol, BS1 9NE

Alison Hurley
Director - Education and Skills

Website
www.bristol.gov.uk