

Guidance for the Safe Re-Opening of ELC Settings

This guidance has been devised to support Falkirk ELC settings in re-opening from Phase 3 and provides further advice to that given in national guidance: [COVID-19 Phase 3: guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services](#) which was published on 15 June.

It also describes the model of delivery during the recovery Phase 3 and outlines the forward plans for delivering the current statutory entitlement of 600 hours per year to all eligible children and families.

Scottish Government advice states that ELC settings can operate safely without the need for physical distancing within groups of children providing that:

- Enhanced hand hygiene and cleaning practices are in place.
- Children are caring for in small groups.
- Contact between these groups is minimised.
- The use of maximizing the use of outdoor spaces.
- There is appropriate physical distancing between adults and older children in the setting including parents at drop-off and pick-up.

Guidance on the design, organisation and management of play spaces is contained in [Transition Paper 2](#) (glow login required), which was circulated to settings on 15 June 2020. It contains practical advice and includes a number of hyperlinks to internet resources and glow resources.

This additional guidance offers advice for ELC leaders and professionals as to the practical steps required to ensure the safe reopening of ELC settings in Falkirk.

To support the practical application of the advice contained within this and the overarching national guidance, we have devised [training materials](#) which staff should undertake prior to reopening. Glow login is required.

This document has two sections:

Section A: Recovery placement arrangements; and,

Section B: Specific Requirements

Work has begun on Section A with the capacity assessment and staffing information being gathered. This will follow in entirety in due course.

Section B is appended.

Section B: Specific Requirements

This section of the guidance set-outs the additional requirements during this COVID-19 recovery phase. A list of equipment and resources associated with this guidance is available [here](#). Glow login is required.

All current guidance and care standards that normally apply are still relevant and should still be observed. All ELC professionals must be conversant with and observe in the following national guidelines:

[Outdoor Play In Emergency Care Settings](#)

[Fully Outdoor Childcare Providers Guidance](#)

[Hygiene Requirements in Outdoor Nurseries in Scotland](#)

[Infection Control Guidelines in Daycare Settings](#)

[Hand Hygiene Information to Support Improvement](#)

[Management of Medication in Daycare of Children and Childminding](#)

1. Risk Assessment, Fire Safety & Emergency Evacuation

The completion of a risk assessment prior to re-opening is mandatory.

Falkirk Council Children's Services Assets Team has produced [three risk assessments](#) (glow login required) to be completed as follows:

1. Reopening of building checklist – this is an agreed list of checks to be undertaken prior to full re-occupation of the building. Parts 1 & 2 are completed on behalf of Heads of Establishment leaving Part 3 to be completed locally.
2. Physical distancing & hygiene in educational settings – this is draft guidance gathered from various sources of national, local and other guidance available to assist Heads of Establishment prepare plans for reopening schools taking account of physical distancing and hygiene. It sets out generic considerations as a working document from which decisions can be noted and referenced in the risk assessment to suit each establishment.
3. Risk Assessment: Reopening of educational setting – this is a draft risk assessment setting out a generic set of hazards to be considered to minimise the risk of infection in each setting. Decisions taken from working through the physical distancing and hygiene guidance should feed directly into the risk assessment as notes of actions to be taken to mitigate risks.

Guidance issued on 10 June 2020 outlined these actions:

1. Reopening of schools checklist – Heads of Establishment will be advised of completion of Parts 1 & 2 of the checklist.
2. Physical distancing & hygiene in schools – Heads of Establishment should apply this guidance to inform decisions and actions to be implemented.
3. Risk Assessment: reopening of schools – Heads of Establishment should complete the risk assessment for each setting.

Should you have any questions or queries about these documents please contact Kenny McNeill (x6652/07831725254) or Crawford Campbell (x6612)

All other risk assessments

- All other risk assessments previously in place, and that are not covered by the risk assessments above, need to be revised/updated to reflect the current situation and requirements.
- Evacuation routes should be planned to allow safe exit from the building and to minimise different groups crossing over or merging while evacuating. Within the muster area, areas should be identified and agreed with staff for children from each zone to muster.

2. Dropping off and picking up

- Consideration needs to be given to the number of entrances and exits in and out of the building to minimise gathering or waiting.
- These should be communicated clearly to parents and should be standardised for groups, wherever possible. That is, groups are to use the same entry/exit path on the days they attend the setting. Timings should be communicated clearly to parents and with the aim of them having a set pattern of starting and finishing on the days their child attends.
- It is not possible for groups or patterns to be changed once they are established. It is important that parents understand the reason for this.
- In most situations, there will insufficient entrances/exit points to accommodate all different groups who attend on any given day. Therefore, staggered start and finish times for different groups of children will be needed. In those considerations, every effort should be made to maximise the amount the time for each group in the setting, so that each group receives an equitable service.
- Parents will not be able to come in to the play space, so signing-in and signing out must take place as children are received and handed over to parents. See [Transition Paper 2](#) (glow login required) for ideas/suggestions as to how to involve parents in the daily life of the setting.
- All adults arriving at the establishment must sanitise their hands on arrival.
- To minimise footfall, only one adult dropping off or collecting should be practiced.
- Staff should reference signage to reinforce physical distancing, hand hygiene and other hygiene protocols.

- Car parking areas may need to be temporarily reassigned to allow physical distancing when coming and going from the setting. Parents should be encouraged to walk with their child to the setting or 'park and stride' from a safe point out with the car park area. Where car parking has to be reduced, priority should be given to children and adults with a disability.

3. Make the Environment Safe - Hygiene Protocols

(a) Hand Hygiene

Every effort should be made to promote the importance of regular and thorough hand hygiene. Washing hands with soap and water is preferable. Hand sanitisers can be used on clean hands. Antibacterial hand gel **should not** be used by children under 12 months.

- Upon arrival at the setting and before engaging in play experience children should be supported to wash their hands with soap and warm water. Appropriate baby wipes can be used for young babies.
- Drying hands is of equal importance. Where possible paper towels should be used for drying hands. Re-useable cotton towels should not be used or shared.
- With key groups, staff should establish routines for children to wash their hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds. Children **must** wash their hands: before eating food; after toileting; and, at all points of transition, for example, going from outdoors to indoors. Adults should model this practice to and with children.
- When in toilets, children should be supervised to ensure that handwashing is thorough. **Under no circumstances, indoors and outside, should children use a communal bowl for hand washing.**
- Staff must practice excellent hand hygiene. They should wash or sanitise their hands on arrival at work and regularly throughout the session.

This helpful website, [Kids Independently Developing Skills \(KIDS\)](#), has a range of age-appropriate materials and resources to help children understand and develop vital skills for a healthy life. The handwashing section can be found [here](#).

Hand Hygiene Outdoors

- Where possible, disposable paper towels or kitchen roll should be used for drying hands. Where this is not practical, individual towels should be available for each child and should be laundered every day.
- Washing hands with soap and water is always preferable. Thermos flasks with warm water and liquid soap should be taken/be available outdoors.

- Washing hands outdoors when restricted to plumbed toileting and hand washing facilities, staff should ensure to, use hot water, never share water in a communal bowl when washing hands, use liquid soap, dry hands thoroughly using paper towels.
- Hand gel should not be used by children under the age of 12 months.
- If children or young people have trouble washing hands properly, ensure help is available.
- Supervise children washing their hands and staff should provide assistance if required.

(b) Respiratory Hygiene

- Extra vigilance should be given to good respiratory health. There are challenges associated in the care of young children.
- Staff must be supported and reminded of the importance of refraining from touching their face and faces of children.
- Staff must observe the *catch it – bin it – kill it* advice. A helpful poster can be downloaded [here](#).
- Tissues should be available at all learning experiences. Adults should carry a fresh tissue on their person at all times. Wherever possible, children should carry a fresh tissue in their pocket/sleeve. Used tissues must be binned appropriately.
- If a child sneezes, he/she should have their face cleaned with a tissue or baby wipe. If there is visible soiling, the child's top should be changed.
- If gloves are worn, hands must be washed as soon as these are removed. Gloves can be used only for performing one task. Staff should not touch their face when wearing gloves.
- When assisting a child to clean their nose staff should immediately wash their hands with warm water and soap. This [video](#) shows how to wash hands thoroughly.

(c) Toothbrushing

National guidance states that tooth brushing is still permissible.

We have sought additional advice from NHS Forth Valley – Child Smile Team.

(d) Ventilation

- Effort should be made to ventilate play spaces and staff areas by opening windows and doors (not fire doors).
- Oscillating fans **should not** be used.

(e) Laundry

- Cloths and towels must be laundered daily, therefore, consideration of stock quantity needs to be assessed.
- Bedding from children's cots and sleep areas must be laundered daily. See number 9.
- A rota should be devised for laundry for key groups so that items can be reassigned to the same zone/group of children.
- Laundry cycles should be complete before the end of the working day so that appliances are not running unsupervised and so that laundry can be aired for drying.
- Painting aprons should be sanitised at the end of each session or washed.
- Provided children are in small groups and have designated zones, there is no need for children's clothes to be changed or washed daily.

(f) Office and Adults-Only Spaces

- Staff should observe physical distancing when working together in zones and at other times.
- Rotas for lunches will require staff working in different zones to lunch together, therefore, physical distancing must be observed. Staff should wash their hands with warm water and liquid soap on entering and leaving the space (hand sanitiser can be used on clean hands). Staff should provide their own cutlery and crockery for lunch. There should be a clean-down protocol for the shared use of kitchenware such as: kettle, microwave. The practice of safe hand hygiene and no face touching is essential at all times.
- ELC professionals and support staff are responsible for the day-to-day management of the environment. During the day, particular attention should be paid to door handles in communal areas and surfaces to which a number of adults have access.
- Staff must follow in house practices daily to keep hygiene standards and spot cleans can take place as required.
- In office spaces staff should clean desk-tops and telephones a minimal of twice daily.
- Staff should be provided with cleaning materials in bathrooms. Staff are responsible for cleaning down the space after use.

4. Toileting

Young children may require assistance with toileting. In arranging access to toilets during this period, children's right to privacy and issues of dignity cannot be compromised.

- It is likely that in most cases, there will be insufficient toilet areas to allow each group of children sole access. Therefore, toilet cubicles and sinks should be zoned to a group/play space. Preferably, this should be shown by photos of children in the group to assist. If this is not possible or impractical, colour-coding/numbering cubicles/sinks can be used.
- As a temporary measure the use of disabled toilets and adults toilets should be considered as an alternative. Where this is deemed necessary, children should be provided with supports. This [fact sheet](#) gives examples of appropriate support equipment.
- If a child needs to use a potty or toilet seat, this must be provided by the parent and used in the establishment for the identified child only. It should be kept in a sealed bag labelled with the child's name and sanitised after each use. These should not be transferred between home and the setting.
- Child-friendly handwashing facilities must be available in all toilets being used by children and/or adults.
- It is likely that there will need to be a higher level of supervision of the coming and going from toilets and cleaning regimes will need to be more frequent. Consideration should be given to the role of support staff in assisting with this vital task.

Toileting Outdoors

- It may be possible for children in the outdoor group to use an indoor toilet if:
 - o They are able to directly access the toilet without travelling through another play space assigned to a different group to their own.
 - o Toilets are clearly zoned for their purpose only. This may be an adult toilet or disabled toilet.
- In almost all cases, it will not be possible for children in the outdoor zone to safely enter the building to use the toilet. In these cases, the outdoor area should be self-contained with access to a toilet. Information has been provided by Jane Jackson as to suitable equipment for this purpose. The resource list can be accessed [here](#) and the advice paper [here](#).

5. Personal Care

Personal care routines are an important part of the care ELC professionals provide to young children. In doing so, children should be aware and understand the process in a way that

comforts and nurtures them. For staff to be able to perform care routines putting the child's feelings, emotions and rights at the centre, they need to feel safe and protected for any personal harm.

There is no evidence to support the wearing of PPE during routine interactions with children.

In all cases, the wearing of face coverings is not permitted as this would undermine the values of the service being provided to children.

- Best practice guidance on national infection prevention and control suggests that nitrile gloves should be used where there is a risk of exposure to blood/body fluids, or when using hypochlorite for cleaning. Vinyl gloves continue to be suitable for uses where there is no risk of such exposure.
- In all cases, staff must wear two pairs of disposable nitrile gloves, removing the pair that has been used to clean soiled child before replacing nappy/pull up. These should be removed and discarded according to [infection control guidelines](#). A new apron and gloves should be used for each individual child.
- The changing area must be sanitised thoroughly before and after every nappy change.
- Children requiring a dummy must have a tub for this which is clearly labelled with their name, it, must be stored in this when not in use and kept out of the reach of children. Tubs must be sterilised every 3 days.
- Items required for children's personal care must be laundered daily.

For the provision of PPE contact Roy.Nimmo@Falkirk.gov.uk

6. Eating, drinking and lunch

The nine principles of our Marvellous Mealtimes approach remain relevant and still apply (Appendix 1).

During this recovery period however, it is important to make the following concessions to allow children to eat and drink sociably and safely.

- Lunches and snacks will be provided by the setting. As per usual arrangements, the provision of food and drinks from home is not permitted. Children with specific diets will be catered for by Falkirk Council Catering Services.
- When preparing snacks for children staff must wear a disposable apron and ensure good hand hygiene. Long hair should be tied back.
- If serving food to children or assisting children to eat disposable gloves and apron must be worn.
- The practice of self-serving/buffet-style snack should not be operated at this time. Children should be encouraged to independently prepare their own food selection but they cannot prepare foods for others to eat.

- Serving and eating areas must be cleaned with an anti-bacterial spray and paper towels prior to children eating. Areas should be re-cleaned as required whilst snack is served. Crockery and cutlery must be washed in a dishwasher according to [infection control guidelines](#).
- Feeding bottles for babies should be washed and sterilised in a unit following instructions for use.
- All staff serving and/or assisting with children's lunches must wash hands with soap and water. Staff should also wear disposable aprons and if assisting with eating disposable gloves.
- Staff feeding babies their lunch must wear a disposable apron and gloves and have their hair tied back. Good use of baby wipes for children's hands and faces help ensure good standards of hygiene.
- Children's lunch tables may need cleaned between courses.
- Children and staff should wash or sanitise their hands when transitioning back to play.

7. Safe Sleeping for Babies/Toddlers

The usual level of diligence for making arrangements for safe sleep applies during this period. Arrangements should be made according to [Safe Sleep Scotland](#) advice and ELC practitioners must be conversant with this advice. This helpful poster of summaries the [key advice](#) for observing when planning for safe sleep.

In addition, during the COVID-19 recovery phase the following applies:

- Bedding should be assigned to individual children.
- The strictest level of hygiene should be observed; all bedding should be changed after each use and the cot/mattress/pram wiped down with anti-bacterial spray after each use. These should be assigned to individual children within the group.
- Bottles and soothers used to comfort children and aid their sleep should be stored in an individual lidded box with their name. The box should have child's picture, full name and date of birth clearly written.
- On waking, babies should have time with a staff member. They should be comforted by whatever means is appropriate for them to orientate themselves in the environment. Children should be offered a drink and any comforters they require.

8. Medication & First Aid

(a) Medication

- There is no change to the regulations for the storage, administration and safe disposal of medication. ELC professionals should be conversant with Care Inspectorate policies relating to medication [here](#).
- Arrangements should be made to store medication for ease of access in each zone. Temporary storage can be created in each zone, however, medication must be stored out of reach of children and in a lockable area.
- For new requests, consideration should be given as to whether forms can be emailed to and from the setting. In these cases, a telephone conversation must be carried out about the completed form.

(b) First Aid & Accidents/Incidents

It is a fact of life that during their time at nursery children will have accidents and incidents will occur. Best practice in applying care and ensuring rigorous record-keeping remain vital. Should accidents/incidents occur, children should be comforted by any means necessary, including cuddling.

- Protective nitrile disposable gloves and aprons must be used when dealing with accidents where blood is spilled.
- It is vital that practitioners' first aid training is up-to-date during this period. Staff on duty in each zone must be able to carry out basic first aid. The setting's First Aider can be consulted for advice.
- Parents must be provided with the record of the accident/incident on the day it occurred. To minimise the level of physical contact required to exchange such records, consideration should be given to emailing records and a note of parental acknowledgement kept on file. These must be password protected. If that is not feasible or appropriate, a clipboard with pen can be handed to parents to review and sign. Pen and board to be cleaned after each use.
- Staff and children must at all times follow good handwashing procedures and wash hands with soap and water for 30 seconds.

(c) Procedures for dealing with children & staff who become COVID-19 symptomatic

- Staff should be aware of the current guidance on the current signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Up-to-date guidance can be found [here](#).
- Each setting should identify a well-ventilated isolation area for use by children and staff should they become symptomatic. This space cannot be used for any other purpose.

- Anyone showing signs of COVID-19 should not be admitted to the setting. If a parent appears symptomatic, the parent nor the child can be admitted. Staff should not be expected to give medical advice.
- The setting should provide as standard on all correspondence to parents information on the current symptoms of COVID-19 and the advice on isolation.
- If a child becomes symptomatic while at the setting, parents and all emergency contacts should be called and asked that the child be collected as soon as possible. The child should be moved to the identified isolation space. The child must be accompanied by an adult. No child should ever be left unsupervised. Staff should make all reasonable efforts to comfort to the child. Resources used during this time need to be washed immediately or discarded. During this time, staff physical distancing should be observed.
- If a member of staff becomes symptomatic, they should be immediately sent home immediately and every effort should be made to create a route out of the building that minimises passage through the setting.
- Your link Team Manager/Line Manager should be notified in the event of a child or member of staff having to be sent home.
- Notification to Care Inspectorate is required only where COVID-19 has been confirmed either in children or in staff.
- If a child or adult is confirmed as having COVID-19, all children and adults within the group must be informed and asked to follow Public Health Advice. Families will be contacted by Public Health as part of contact tracing protocol.

Appendix 1

Marvellous mealtimes is based upon 9 key values. It is important that these 9 key values are taken account as we move forward in providing snack and mealtimes in our current climate.		
<p>Promotes children's choice and voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that children's voice and choice is still an important factor in snack and mealtimes will be paramount. Children can help to choose and create a snack menu, or choose what foods they'd like on their snack and lunch plate. Visuals are a great way of ensuring all children take part in this experience, if they wish. Remember voice is not necessarily spoken- think about how this can be promoted through snack and mealtimes. 	<p>Relaxed and unhurried atmosphere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is vital that snack and mealtimes don't revert back to a "must do task". It still needs to remain as a rich learning experience. Children will need time to transition between experiences, including getting ready for snack and lunch. You might find that staggering snack and mealtimes supports in organising handwashing, etc. While snack and mealtimes may need specific set times, children still need a relaxed and unhurried experience. 	<p>Role modelling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be hugely important as children adapt to a new way of ELC life for a while. Routines will have changed and children may find this daunting. Role modelling snack and mealtimes will help children to feel at ease and adapt. Role modelling cutlery skills, table manner and good hygiene practices will be extremely important.
<p>Homelike and nurturing environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While all of our environments will change, there will need to be particular consideration to designated eating areas in each of the groups spaces. While some resources and equipment will not be suitable, ensure that the area is nurturing, relaxing and enables children to have a positive experience. Crockery, glasses and cutlery can still be used- we find that these are better to wash in a dishwasher and left to air-dry as opposed to plastic plates, etc. This area will need to be free of clutter and appropriate cleaning and hygiene rules followed. 	<p>Positive social experiences for all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is absolutely vital that snack and mealtimes continue to be a positive experience for children. Snack and mealtimes can be used as a time to talk about the day, you will find that this is a time where most children feel at ease. The inclusion of an adult in this experience is vital to support, encourage and nurture children. 	<p>Positive associations with food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all children will like or want to try the food offered to them. We must trust and respect the choice of children during snack and mealtimes. Gently encouraging children to try new foods is important and you will find that by role modelling and interacting positively, children will be more likely to develop positive associations with food.
<p>Cooking and baking expericnes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking and baking is an integral part of marvellous mealtimes. The way in which we do this needs to be adapted. Some settings bake and cook with children in small groups (max 3) and each child has their own ingredients and tools. Whatever the child bakes or cooks is only eaten by them to reduce cross contamination. Some settings are using simple non cook or easy cook recipes which still ensure children explore food but limits the many factors included in baking or cooking in a larger quantity. 	<p>Healthy snack and mealtimes</p> <p>Snack and mealtimes should still be planned around current national guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Setting the Table Food Matters 	<p>Positive interactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive interactions will enable children's independence, social skills, life skills and curiosity to still flourish within the change of service. Encouraging children and speaking to them about their snack and mealtimes will lead to better experiences for all. Remember to respect children's choices and to not get caught up in the structure of the day- take time to stop and listen- what do you notice- what went well and what needs to change?