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8th June 2021

NOTE FOR ALL CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

To all registered childcare providers,

END OF TERM CELEBRATIONS

The Scottish Government has received queries about whether groups of parents can attend end of term celebration events (such as leaving ceremonies or graduations) in ELC settings. Our COVID-19 safety [guidance for ELC settings](#) sets out a framework for settings to use when deciding whether these kind of events are appropriate and is regularly updated in close collaboration with scientific and public health advisors. It does not specifically mention these kinds of celebrations so we thought it would be helpful to address this in a separate provider notice.

Our COVID-19 safety guidance seeks to minimise the number of contacts that children and staff have by, for example, limiting adult visitors to those that are strictly necessary, and avoiding large gatherings of parents at pick up times. Limiting contacts reduces the risk that children and staff need to self-isolate in the event of someone in the setting testing positive. We know that attending high quality ELC supports children's social, emotional and physical development. So it's vitally important we keep these settings as safe as possible so that they can remain open. We also need to keep settings as safe as possible for the staff who work there and have supported families and children throughout the pandemic.

Groups of parents attending end of term celebration events would bring together staff, parents and children from multiple households – thereby increasing the risk of contact and transmission. Even when held outside, these events are likely to mean there is an increased chance of groups of parents gathering in close proximity for longer periods of time. They are also likely to lead to increased contact between children attending settings/schools and other adults and children.

We hope that, in view of the potential risks outlined above, ELC settings will find alternatives to celebration events, without attendance by groups of parents. We have heard that many settings have found other ways to celebrate, that don't involve groups of parents gathering at settings.

We understand this message may be disappointing to parents, especially when they can see restrictions being removed in many other areas of their lives. Many of the restrictions being eased across society support us to make individual choices, such as meeting others socially or attending hospitality venues. It's important to remember that in workplace and educational settings, staff, parents and children have less scope to make individual choices about whether to attend settings, or who to interact with and how, than they do in their private lives.

We are currently considering whether and how to adjust some of the risk mitigations in the ELC guidance as settings move down through the protection levels in the strategic framework.

Adjustments will be made cautiously and with advice from the Advisory Sub-group on Education and Children's Issues, public health experts and in consultation with sector representatives and the trade unions.

The easing of any of the risk mitigations will have an impact on risk of transmission. Decisions about which mitigations to ease will be made by carefully weighing up this risk against the benefits. Some of the current risk mitigations are impacting on families' ability to access the pattern and type of ELC that best meets their needs. Where it's safe to do so, we will therefore prioritise changes that will have a positive impact on access to high quality childcare that supports children's development and supports parents to work, train or study. While we understand that parents are pressing for a change that would allow them to attend events over the next few weeks, making these changes could drive up risk and impact on our ability to make other more important changes later in the summer.

Please feel free to share this communication with parents, if you think it will help you to address any concerns that they are expressing.

Thank you again for everything you do for Scotland's children and families, particularly in these challenging times.

Alison Cumming
Director, Early Learning and Childcare