



TO: CIW
Childcare and Playwork settings
LA Childcare teams
LA Playwork teams
LA Environmental Health teams
Sports Governing Bodies

CC: Cwlwm
Play Wales

9 February 2021

Dear Colleague

Half Term Childcare and Playwork Provision

The First Minister and Minister for Education recently indicated our ambition to allow more children to return to school after the half term holidays, and we are conscious that many settings will be wondering about what they can and cannot do in respect of the half term holiday. Many of you will doubtless have questions about whether you could, or should, open regular holiday childcare and play schemes, or if you can care for school age children that have continued to attend schools.

There are currently no operational restrictions in place for childcare and playwork settings. The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services published a written statement on 18 January confirming this position and setting out the data and evidence we have been using to inform our thinking. Settings can remain open and continue to care for all children if they wish to do so; this includes day care, child minding, sessional, crèche; out of school/holiday provision and Flying Start provision. Nannies can also continue to provide childcare.

With regards to half term, there are currently no plans to introduce specific restrictions, but we are mindful that attendance at holiday childcare and staffed playwork provision will potentially bring staff and children into contact with people from other settings, schools or contact groups. This represents an increase in the number of contacts staff and children will be having, at a time when it remains important to keep contacts low.

In the past few weeks we have seen a reduction in case rates of coronavirus, and while this is very welcome cases remain higher than we would like. Consequently we wanted to remind those settings that are planning to be open over half term of the continued importance of operating in accordance with current [Welsh Government guidance](#) which

emphasises the importance of settings taking mitigating measures to prevent the transmission of coronavirus.

Welsh Government has produced [guidance](#) about the actions employers should take. All settings are now required to undertake a COVID workplace risk assessment following recent changes to the law, and this should be completed as soon as possible. Staff and children who are clinically extremely vulnerable, or [shielding](#), should not be in attendance. All settings should ensure they practice the mitigation measures set out in our protective measures guidance including the use of face coverings where appropriate, regularly cleaning and ventilating spaces and hand washing. Where possible, settings should make use of outdoor space as much as possible. Contact groups should be kept small, and consistent. It is important that if settings take children from more than one school, they are in school based contact groups as a minimum; year or class based groups would be better. This is particularly important in light of the ambition for children to return to school after half term.

Any change to the current situation will be communicated to settings immediately.

We would also like to remind you that Wales remains at [Level 4](#) of our response as set out in the [Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales](#). The current [Regulations](#) only allow for gatherings in very limited circumstances. This includes providing, receiving or accessing care or assistance including childcare, however there is no allowance for other gatherings including attendance at wider children's activities, sport or leisure activities or other social groups. We are aware that in the school holidays a number of organisations run activity clubs and sessions for children, which while not registered as childcare are often used as childcare by parents. Many of these operated under the relevant exceptions within the Child Minding and Day Care (Exceptions) (Wales) Order 2010. This can include sporting or coaching activities, but also , performing arts, arts and crafts, school study and homework support and religious and cultural study.

Depending on the primary nature of the activity, it is possible that organisations whose primary purpose is not childcare may find they are not able to operate as 'holiday activity clubs' under the current circumstances. Anyone considering running provision like this should discuss proposals with Care Inspectorate Wales where it is intended to be childcare, to ensure they are exempt from registration. Where the core intention is not to provide childcare, but that provision is incidental to the wider activities, organisations should discuss that with their local authority covid enforcement teams. Appropriate action will be taken against any such organisations who operate in contravention of current coronavirus restrictions.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all that you are continuing to do in caring for our children and young people, and supporting the response to Covid-19.

Yours sincerely



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