

A young child with curly hair and glasses, wearing a striped shirt, stands in a doorway. The child has paint on their face and hands, suggesting a creative activity. The background shows a doorway with colorful paint splatters on the wall.

**Covid-19
Information for
parents/carers
Supporting your child to
return to their setting.**

**Early Years Educational Effectiveness
Team – May 2020**



**SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Supporting your child/children to return to their setting

Introduction:

On the 11 May 2020 government set out their plan and issued guidance for the return of all children into early years settings from the week commencing the 1 June 2020. 1 June is the earliest point at which this phased return will begin. It will only happen providing that the five key tests set by government justify the changes at the time.

Some children in England will have spent longer than ever before away from their childminders, nurseries and classrooms this year. The uncertainty the Covid-19 outbreak has caused has been felt far and wide and will impact on children, parents/carers, teachers and practitioners.

Every family's situation has been different. Your child may have been able to continue at their usual setting (but in very different circumstances). Your child may have had to attend another setting for several weeks and is now returning to their usual setting, or your child may have been with you at home during the lockdown period. You also may well have had to spend some time in isolation. Whatever your situation, all children need to feel safe and secure in order to learn and develop. This is why it is so important to give time to nurture children's well-being, confidence and friendships as they return back to their setting.

As a family, you may have experienced bereavement during this time and it is essential you talk to your child's setting about your situation. Also share any key milestones that your child has reached, with the setting.

There are plenty of steps you can take to support your child in the run up to going back to their setting.

Children who are unwell in any way, not just with recognised Covid-19 symptoms ie cough or persistent high temperature, should not attend their setting.

Why is it important for your children to go back to their setting:

- By returning to the setting, your children can access a rich range of resources and experiences which their early years setting can offer. These include playing and learning alongside friends, exploring and developing their thinking skills and being active and creative. By going to the setting on a regular basis again, your child will begin to feel the sense of routine, security and belonging they previously felt there.
- Having spent such a long time at home with perhaps only their parents or parents and siblings to interact and play with, they can now spend time at the setting socialising with friends, which can support relationships at home. Socialising with other children is vital for your child's development. It teaches them key life skills such as taking turns, sharing and empathy. Being with other adults outside the family supports children to develop their confidence with others and their social skills.
- Some children will be making the move to school or to another setting in the coming months and being back at the setting can help prepare them for this next big step in their life journey. Separating from parents can be challenging at the best of times for both you and your child, but by coming back to the setting, your child can readjust to being away from you while being with familiar adults and their friends in an environment that they are used to. For you as parents, knowing the adults and children that your child will be with, will help you to feel secure in the knowledge that your child is being well cared for and having fun.
- Early Years settings not only support children to learn and develop but they are also a great source of support for you as a parent too. Practitioners often play a role in helping parents

through the challenges they face of parenting by providing advice and support regarding your child's development. Parents often share their concerns with practitioners who can offer advice and guidance based on their experience and knowledge which can help alleviate some of your worries and anxiety as a parent. They will also be able to seek any additional support if you or your child requires it.

Supporting children to return to their setting:

- This has been and continues to be a very worrying time for most of us. As we begin to think about 'returning to a new normal', we may experience 'new worries'. The most important thing however is not to share our anxieties with our children about returning to their setting. Children are very astute at picking up feelings and emotions and your anxieties will make them feel more nervous. Don't keep these worries or anxieties to yourself however as it is just important that you talk to others about them. Although everyone's situations are different, other people will be feeling the same as you.
- Talk to your children about going back to their setting in happy and positive way, rather than being something to worry about. If your child is worrying, reassure them with lots of cuddles that it is ok to feel worried. Listen to their worries, answer their questions and be sympathetic.
- Hopefully you will have had some contact from your child's setting while they have been absent. Remind your child of the things they have done such as did they receive a postcard, speak to them on the phone, have a story read to them online? Reassure your child that their setting has missed them and will be very glad to have them back.
- Ensure you have all the information you need from the setting BEFORE starting back. Things will be different and it is important to prepare your child for these changes. Ask the setting if there is something you are not sure about and share any concerns you have with them.
- Differences you may see in the setting are staggered drop off and pick up times, indicators on the floor of where to stand, handwashing procedures, the layout of the setting environment, the amount of resources available, what the children are/are not allowed to take in from home. It is important that your child sees you in control of the situation. If you turn up on the first day back and don't know about the new routine of entering the setting for example, this could cause your child to panic.
- Ensure you know who your child's key person is. Look at a photo of them with your child reminding them of the things they used to do with them. If the setting uses Tapestry or other online systems, can you look back at the entries in this together?
- Try and find out if any of their friends are going back, remember some may not be. The friends who are, is it possible to link up with them over social media for example so they can get used to seeing and engaging with them again?
- Remember, although the 'new normal' is different to the 'old normal', children are incredibly resilient. They tend to deal with and accept change much more easily than adults. The important things such as the adults who care for them and their peers, will still be there.
- Take each day at a time. Your child may be excited to go back to their setting on the first day, but then perhaps the changes they experience, cause them to become anxious. Changes in behaviour or their sleeping patterns for example may indicate that your child is worrying or anxious. Keep repeating the ideas suggested above and remember this 'new normal' may take some time adjust to.