

Childminder agencies (CMAs) undertaking visits during Covid-19

Quality assurance visits during Covid-19:

Q. What are the quality assurance visit requirements for CMAs?

1. The legal requirements for CMAs are set out under the “prescribed requirements for registration” in [The Childcare \(Childminder Agencies\) \(Registration, Inspection and Supply and Disclosure of Information\) Regulations 2014](#).
2. As part of the “prescribed requirements for registration” CMAs must undertake quality assurance visits to their registered childminders to assess the standard of care and early education being delivered.
 - For early years childminders (those caring for young children aged 0-5), CMAs must carry out a minimum of two quality assurance visits (including one unannounced visit) in the first year of an early years childminder’s registration, and a minimum of one quality assurance visit (unannounced) for every subsequent year of registration.
 - For later years childminders (those caring for children aged 5 and over), CMAs must carry out a minimum of one quality assurance visit for every year of registration.

Q. Will Ofsted cancel a CMA’s registration if the CMA is unable to carry out the required minimum number of quality assurance visits during Covid-19?

3. Following the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we know that CMAs will struggle to carry out quality assurance visits whilst also adhering to the government’s social distancing guidance to reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). For example: where a childminder closed between 23 March and 31 May 2020 because they were not caring for vulnerable children or the children of critical workers; or where CMA staff undertaking the quality assurance visit (or someone in their households) has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and they are following the [government’s advice on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) to self-isolate; or where childminders are following the government’s [guidance for households with possible coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) to not allow visitors (except carers) to enter their home etc.
4. Therefore, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, Vicky Ford MP, has written to Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI), Amanda Spielman, setting out her support for HMCI to exercise her discretionary powers (under section 69B of the [Childcare Act 2006](#)) in a way that supports CMAs to retain their registration where the required minimum number of quality assurance visits has not been met as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. This will support CMAs (and their childminders) to continue to adhere to the government’s social distancing guidance – to keep staff, children and parents safe – and protect the NHS.
5. All other prescribed requirements for registration must continue to be met.

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Q. What are the safeguarding arrangements for CMAs during Covid-19?

6. The safeguarding responsibilities of CMAs and their childminders have not changed. CMAs must continue to prioritise visits to any of their registered childminders if they have concerns about the quality of a provider or wish to check any registered non-domestic premises (as set out in section 3.4 of the government's [Guidance for Childminder Agencies](#)).

Q. Can CMAs still carry out routine quality assurance visits during Covid-19?

7. Yes. However, CMAs must continue to comply with the government's guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19), including social distancing guidance, to ensure they – and their childminders and any children they are caring for – remain safe.
8. The Department for Education (DfE) has also published a [Planning guide for early year and childcare settings](#) to help early years and childcare settings (including childminders) prepare to open their settings for all children from 1 June, which includes health and safety advice for children, staff, parents and carers, and any other visitors in light of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Q. Do CMAs need to update their Statement of Purpose during Covid-19?

9. As set out under the “prescribed requirements for registration” in [The Childcare \(Childminder Agency\) \(Registration, Inspection and Supply and Disclosure of Information\) Regulations 2014](#), CMAs must compile a written Statement of Purpose that must be kept under review and, where appropriate, revised and supplied to the Chief Inspector within 28 days of making the revision. This will include, where appropriate, any matters that relate to quality assurance visits.

Pre-registration visits during Covid-19:

Q. Can CMAs continue to register new childminders during Covid-19?

10. Yes, CMAs may continue to register new childminders (including undertaking pre-registration visits) as long as they – and their childminder applicants – continue to comply with the government's [guidance on social distancing](#), which includes a link to [specific guidance in relation to work carried out in people's homes](#).

Q. Can CMAs carry out virtual visits during Covid-19?

11. Where a pre-registration visit is required, CMAs will need to carry out a physical visit to the setting.