

Implementing protective measures in early years settings

Why is it recommended that sandpits are not used?

An important protective measure in early years settings is to keep children and staff together in small consistent groups and to keep those small groups away from each other.

Although toys and resources can be shared within groups of children, government guidance is clear that these resources should be limited to those that can be thoroughly cleaned, particularly before being shared between different groups.

As sand cannot be thoroughly cleaned between different groups of children playing with it, sandpits should be taken out of use to reduce the risk of transmission between groups.

Can sandpits be used if they are only used by one bubble?

The planning guide for early years and childcare settings advises that sandpits should not be used at this time.

Providers should risk assess all planned activities in light of coronavirus and government guidance, in conjunction with relevant staff where applicable, and consider how to implement protective measures that work in their setting and keep children, staff and parents safe.

If a provider's risk assessment demonstrated that sandpits could be used by just one small, consistent bubble of children that does not change during the day or on consecutive days, and no one outside the bubble would come into contact with it and the sand is replaced frequently, a provider may determine that they could use sandpits in a controlled way that managed risk in their setting.

Providers should ensure that if children do use the sandpit they should wash their hands thoroughly before and after use.

Can water troughs be used if they are only used by one bubble?

Providers must ensure that any toys and resources shared between groups of children are thoroughly cleaned between different groups' use.

If a water trough and associated resources are cleaned between different bubbles playing with them, they can be used in an early years setting.

Should primary schools keep group sizes ('bubbles') to a maximum of 15 or 16 children?

In nurseries or large childminding settings, providers are expected to ensure that there are no more than 16 children in each group, and where possible group sizes should be a maximum of 8 children, the aim being to keep the groups as small as possible. This aligns with the staff:child ratios stipulated for 3 and 4 years olds in the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework (EYFS).

Reception classes in maintained schools and academies are subject to the School Admissions (Infant Class Size) regulations as opposed to EYFS ratios and therefore, for reception, schools should continue to follow the primary guidelines, which sets a limit of 15 children per group.

Is testing available for children under 5?

All staff and children who are attending a childcare setting in England, including under 5s, can have access to a test if they display symptoms of coronavirus, and are encouraged to get tested in this scenario.

Visit this [guidance](#) on coronavirus testing and how to arrange to have a test, including arranging a test for children aged under 5.

Can early years providers take groups of children to outdoor public places, for example if there is not private outdoor space in the setting?

Settings should maximise use of private outdoor space, while keeping small groups of children and staff away from other groups. Childminders and early years providers may take small groups of children to outdoor public spaces, for example parks, provided that a risk assessment demonstrates that they can stay 2m away from other people at all times.

This should be restricted to small groups and should be done in line with wider government guidelines on the number of people who can meet in outdoor public places. Providers should not take larger groups of children to public outdoor spaces at one time.