

# **EIS Guidance for members in Early Learning and Child Care Settings on Education Recovery: Curriculum and Pedagogy (Updated April 2021)**



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## Background

The reopening of Early Learning and Childcare ('ELC') settings after the initial period of closure last year was welcomed by children, parents/carers, teachers, Early Years practitioners and support staff, albeit with some concerns, across Scotland. They missed the structure, certainty and social interaction which ELC provides.

The gaps in provision during periods of lockdown and the absence of opportunities for children to interact and explore a range of learning experiences through play, will have had a detrimental impact on the physical, social and emotional development of our youngest learners. In addition, for these children, the absence of engagement with grandparents and extended families will have taken its toll.

Since the start of the 2020-21 session, and with the continued prevalence of the virus within society and the emergence of new variants, we have all had to adapt to the changing circumstances in which we live and in Education and ELC, to consider alternative forms of provision, including moves to the provision of blended and remote learning.

Whilst Early Years teachers and practitioners have undoubtedly been focused on fostering nurturing and attached relationships within their settings and considering ways to address the social and emotional impact of the pandemic and periods of closure, **there must also be a realisation that the remainder of session 2020-21 cannot be 'business as usual'**.

ELC settings may have reopened for a second time in the course of a year but COVID-19 has not disappeared; the risks of the virus persist; and the wellbeing impact which it has had, both on children and their families and on staff, remains. For reasons of health and safety, in the interests of wellbeing, and in order to address the key priorities for recovery, the Scottish Government [Guidance](#), 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services' makes it clear that 'ELC settings must therefore place a very high priority on reinforcing the mitigations set out in this guidance' and emphasises that 'every possible step should be taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and staff'.

## Scottish Government Guidance

### Application and Terminology

The Scottish Government Guidance, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): early learning and childcare \(ELC\) services](#), is referred to throughout this document. In considering its application in practice, it is important to have an understanding of the scope of the guidance and the meaning behind key phrases used.

The Scottish Government Guidance applies to all providers of registered day care of children's services who provide care to children under primary school age including nurseries, playgroups, family centres and creches. This includes providers in the local authority, private and third sectors. It also applies to fully outdoor services for children aged 5 and under.

Although non-statutory in nature, it begins by highlighting the primacy of health and safety considerations and emphasises that providers should exercise their judgement when implementing the guidance, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and staff, taking into account local circumstances.

The Guidance differentiates between situations in which there is an expectation that a particular action **will** be taken by the provider or ELC setting and other situations in which action **may be advisory** and can reflect local circumstances.

The Guidance reflects this distinction by the terminology used and explains:

'Where this guidance states that providers:

- "must" do something, **there is an expectation that it is done**
- "should" do something, **this is strongly advised**
- "may" or "may wish" to do something, this is optional'

This difference in the language used should be borne in mind when considering the recommendations contained in the Scottish Government Guidance referred to throughout this EIS guidance.

Reference is also made in this EIS guidance to protective measures associated with areas which are subject to level 0-4 restrictions. These references are to the five levels of protection set out in the [Scottish Government's Strategic Framework](#) and the associated protective

measures, outlined in the Scottish Government guidance, [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): early learning and childcare \(ELC\) services](#).

## Scope of Provision in the ELC Context

The Scottish Government Guidance, '[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Early learning and childcare services](#)' sets out the scope of the return to ELC settings after the second period of lockdown, stating that 'ELC settings can re-open to all children from 22 February'.

However, the guidance makes it clear that health and safety considerations and public health measures underpin the re-opening and indeed, ongoing provision, highlighting that ELC settings must 'place the highest priority on reviewing risk assessments and ensuring that all mitigations are in place and implemented.'

Part of this process is in assessing capacity and the number of children who can **safely** access the setting if mitigations, such as the 2m physical distancing requirements between adults in the setting, are to be effectively implemented.

As part of the ongoing review of risk assessments and prior to offers of placements being made, consideration should therefore be given to the physical layout of the setting, staffing approaches and the number of children that can be **safely** accommodated at any one time, to maximise the effectiveness of room ventilation and ensure that public health requirements can be met. These considerations should be carefully documented through the risk assessment process.

Flowing from this assessment of capacity, the numbers of children in settings may require to be lower than the normal Care Inspectorate registered capacity of the setting, based on floor space requirements. **The scope of provision may, therefore, be limited to ensure compliance with these important health and safety requirements.**

Where the capacity in the setting is reduced and it has been agreed that staff are not required to attend in terms of the adult:child ratios, staff should continue to work from home.

Consideration of capacity should form part of the ongoing review of risk assessment processes.

## COVID-secure ELC Settings

### Wellbeing and Equity

All children and adults – parents, teachers and support staff – will have been affected in some way by the pandemic. Confinement, restricted social interaction, illness, bereavement, unemployment, poverty and food insecurity, financial worries, media reporting of the virus, will all have made their mark to varying degrees on individuals, families and communities.

Whilst some may have managed some recovery, others will still be suffering the harsh consequences of Coronavirus on their physical, mental and emotional health, family life, finances and employment status.

The EIS has been clear that periods of lockdown and with them, the closure of schools and ELC settings, have wreaked the most damage upon children and families who are most disadvantaged by societal inequality. With this in mind, we are of the firm view that the needs of those children and young people whose circumstances at home have rendered their families less able to support them with remote learning at that time, and potentially during further periods of closure, must be prioritised.

As we work towards education recovery, we cannot forget our youngest learners and must invest in early intervention measures as we seek to develop the holistic needs of these children and address the gaps resulting not only from the impact of the pandemic but also from poverty and socio-economic disadvantage.

It has been well documented, also, that COVID-19 has had a disproportionately high impact on people from BAME backgrounds to varying extents in different parts of the UK, both in terms of likelihood of infection and death rates. ELC settings should be sensitive to the possibility that children and staff from BAME backgrounds and their families have been affected by COVID-related illness and bereavement and/or may be experiencing higher levels of anxiety related to infection risk.

## **Education Recovery**

The EIS has been influential in setting the national priorities for education recovery through its contributions to the CERG and associated working groups. Consequently, in its Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services, the Scottish Government makes it clear that in re-engaging children in Early Years education, the same pedagogical approach – child-centred, play based learning – should continue to apply.

It highlights the importance of

- supporting children ‘to form a secure and emotionally resilient attachment base’ to help them as they grow and develop;
- creating an environment in which children will flourish through ‘nurturing and attached relationships’ in the ELC setting;
- maintaining a focus on play and interaction with their peers, to ‘meet [the] physical, social, emotional and cultural needs’ of every child; and
- in line with the GIRFEC agenda, treating their health and wellbeing as a ‘top priority’ in all decisions and actions around the delivery of ELC.

Taking care of our physical and mental health is crucial at this time, when there are many social, emotional, health and practical challenges facing all of us: children, parents and teachers. The EIS view is echoed by Education Scotland in [advice](#) published in January 2121 which highlights that health and wellbeing remains a key element of the recovery curriculum and the importance of this is clearly stated: ‘We need to be mindful of the impact of COVID-19 on our children and young people, many of whom may have suffered loss and trauma as a result. For all learners, a key focus...needs to be health and wellbeing.’

It goes on to state, ‘From the outset of the pandemic, schools and settings adapted their learning and teaching to ensure a strong focus on children’s mental health and wellbeing, and engagement. This continues to apply.’

Equally, teachers and early years practitioners should be mindful of their own health and wellbeing and the need for an appropriate balance of priorities in this regard.

Health, safety and wellbeing and the principle of equity must, therefore, be of paramount importance in the remainder of session 2020-21 and as we move towards education recovery.

In delivering this and in line with the principles outlined in ‘Realising the Ambition: Being Me’, children and their needs will continue to be at the centre of planning processes.

The Scottish Government Guidance, 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): Reducing the Risks in Schools' acknowledges this, stating,

'2021/22 will also be a recovery year, and there will a continued emphasis on issues such as: supporting student and staff health and wellbeing; transitions at all levels; the impact of tragedy in communities; identifying gaps in learning; and a renewed focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap. In particular, there should be a focus on what can be done to remedy any impact that there has been around the widening inequalities of outcome experienced by children and young people'.

This has significant implications for the curriculum and pedagogy not only in the remainder of this academic session but in the years to come.

## **Planning for Learning**

As under normal circumstances, the EIS is clear that teachers' planning for learning in school is a tool to aid them in their preparation of learning and teaching, and to support professional dialogue among colleagues with regards to this. The same is true in Early Years. Planning documentation should be designed and handled with this key priority in mind.

Primarily for teachers' own use, any associated planning template should be bureaucracy-light, and should neither be a generator of unnecessary workload nor an accountability tool. Neither Early Years teachers nor colleagues who have management responsibilities have time to dedicate to onerous planning regimes at a time when the priority in Early Years settings as well as in schools must be the wellbeing of children and staff alike.

In the event that planning processes or associated paperwork, particularly relating to forward planning, are found by members to be overly bureaucratic and generators of unnecessary workload, this should be raised with the management of the ELC setting in the first instance. In doing so, members may find it useful to refer to Education Scotland [advice](#) and Deputy First Minister's [statement](#) regarding excessive bureaucracy. If necessary, the EIS School Rep and/ or Local Association Secretary can assist in helping the setting to reach a collegiate and bureaucracy-light solution.

This approach should also be borne in mind when consideration is given to the completion of documentation required for the Care Inspectorate.



## **Collegiate Activities**

As under normal circumstances and as has been the case since the start of the pandemic, it is important that colleagues are able to work together to reach solutions to the many challenges that maintaining safety and providing opportunities for quality learning and teaching in the context of COVID-19 present.

Whilst collegiate activities that reflect the key Education Recovery priorities continue in accordance with Working Time Agreements, this should be in adherence to the current public health advice around physical distancing and hygiene, and with teachers and early years practitioners wearing face coverings when working on collegiate activities in shared spaces with other members of staff. Where it is not possible to comfortably maintain physical distancing for collegiate activities, particularly in light of the increased transmissibility of the new variant of the virus, these should be done using virtual means.

## **Setting Priorities**

The wellbeing of children, teachers and families is to be at the forefront of all decision-making during this initial period of education recovery.

Teachers and ELC settings should not expect to, nor feel under pressure to provide opportunities for learning in the remainder of session 2020-21 in the same ways as it would any other. Streamlining of priorities is encouraged while children, teachers, early years practitioners and support staff continue to respond to the challenges of the pandemic.

In supporting our youngest learners, we need to consider the impact of the adverse and traumatic experiences which many will have faced through the pandemic.

Education Scotland, in 'Being Me through Adversity and Trauma: Realising the Ambition in Practice 2', has highlighted the importance of this focus:

'Children in their early years returning to ELC or school are likely to need additional social and emotional support. Secure, nurturing spaces and trauma informed practitioners will be critical in supporting this transition'.

Now more than ever the importance of a strong collegiate approach is central to supporting the children in our Early Years settings, as well as the health and wellbeing of colleagues.

As we work towards education recovery, the EIS recommends that time is set aside to facilitate meaningful discussions around pedagogy with others in the setting and to agree as a collective how these central priorities around health and wellbeing can best be delivered. This may involve consideration of layout to facilitate the safe flow of play for smaller groups of children and of how collegiate planning and professional dialogue can take place, with appropriate physical distancing between adults, to ensure that learning opportunities are responsive to children's interests and needs. It is important that these conversations are ongoing to ensure that settings are continuing to review their circumstances and the challenges which the pandemic presents.

In moving forward, with a clear rationale and shared understanding of the value of play, a focus can be placed on the holistic needs of children within the setting.

Although it is clear from this that the same approach to teaching and learning will continue in early years, we must recognise that, in delivering this safely, important health and safety measures require to be adopted and reviewed in the weeks and months to come.

## **Planning and Risk Assessment in Early Years**

Essential health and safety procedures and standards required to minimise the risk of infection in ELC settings have meant that much will be different and will remain so for the foreseeable future, in terms of how settings operate and in terms of the physical environment.

This has implications for how things are done from now on. From how children move around settings, to how play-based learning opportunities are planned, to how hygiene and cleaning is arranged – and this is necessary as settings endeavour to keep children and staff safe in a COVID-secure setting.

The Scottish Government Guidance, Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services, provides that 'every possible step should be taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and staff', with

settings placing 'very high priority on reinforcing the mitigations set out in [the] guidance'.

It makes it clear that risk assessments should be conducted following any period of closure to assess whether the risks presented by the re-opening can be managed safely and to identify the appropriate mitigation measures which must be adopted to manage these risks effectively.

Risk assessments should be reviewed on a regular basis or when circumstances change and all identified risk mitigation measures should be in place and strictly adhered to.

EIS representatives should be consulted and involved in the risk assessment process, which should continue to have the health and safety of staff and children as their primary focus.

Risk assessments should make specific provision to ensure that:

- Capacity and cohort sizes are limited to a level which enables the safe implementation of mitigation measures, including the 2m physical distancing requirements between adults and the provision of adequate ventilation
- Adults in the ELC setting can adhere to the 2m physical distancing from other adults requirements, at all times, including during lunch and break times as well as during transition periods
- Arrangements are in place to enable strict adherence to 2m physical distancing between adults, including parents at drop-off and collection times
- In circumstances where the 2m physical distancing requirement between adults cannot be adhered to, face coverings will be worn
- There is adequate ventilation in the setting, with risk assessments being updated to take account of seasonal changes and their impact on ventilation and heating
- Enhanced hygiene and cleaning practices are in place
- Commonly touched objects and surfaces are cleaned on a regular basis (at least twice daily)
- Toys and equipment are cleaned when groups of children change, between sessions and at the end of the day or start of the morning session
- Where staff are required to come into close contact with pupils in order to provide intimate care and personal support, provision is made for the use of PPE by the member of staff

- A supportive approach to the use of face coverings is adopted, e.g.in circumstances where staff are working directly with children, they will be supported to wear face coverings, if they choose to do so
- Groupings of children remain consistent
- Staff can work in consistent groups
- Arrangements are in place to ensure that all mitigations are adhered to at lunch, break and transition times

### **Mitigation Measure – Specific Considerations in ELC Settings**

- **Limiting children’s contacts and group sizes** – a key part of managing risk in ELC is to reduce the number of interactions which children and staff have. Contacts must be limited by managing children within consistent groupings. Whilst the size of groups will depend on a number of factors (including the age, the overall number of children in the setting and the layout), government advice is clear that **‘the general approach should be to minimise the size of groupings where possible’**, with large indoor groupings being avoided. Although groups of between 25-33 are permitted by the guidance, the advice notes that this may result in more staff and children being required to self-isolate in the event of anyone within the group testing positive. In addition to reducing the potential for transmission of the virus and enhancing the effectiveness of ventilation systems, limiting group sizes to smaller numbers has the added pedagogical benefit of enabling greater individual support to be provided to the children in those groups. The EIS supports this approach.
- **Limiting staff contact with each other** – the guidance recommends that ELC settings should try to maintain consistency within groups of staff who are working in close proximity to each other. The EIS would recommend that a collegiate approach is taken to informing decisions on staff groupings.
- **Face coverings** – Although the guidance does not make provision for the wearing of face coverings when staff are working directly with children, it does highlight that **staff who wish to wear a face covering in these circumstances, should be supported to do so.**

The EIS is clear that any teacher or early years practitioner wishing to wear a face covering, should feel free to do so and will continue to campaign for medical grade face coverings to be made available as an additional mitigation to all staff.

It is recognised that particular consideration may require to be given to the impact of wearing a face covering on very young children and for children with additional support needs. The EIS believes that transparent face coverings, where considered appropriate, should be supplied by the ELC setting to support learning and the health and wellbeing of the children involved.

There may also be situations in which staff with a disability, such as a hearing impairment, will require other adults, with whom they are working, to use transparent face coverings. The EIS would recommend that in these circumstances, appropriate adjustments are made and transparent face coverings are supplied to staff to support communication.

ELC settings should provide clear guidance for staff on how to put on, remove, store and dispose of face coverings to avoid inadvertently increasing the risk of transmission in the setting.

- **Peripatetic Staff** – The Scottish Government guidance provides that peripatetic staff should only attend settings in person ‘where it is demonstrably in support of the health and wellbeing of young children’. Careful consideration should, therefore, be given to whether attendance on this basis is necessary or whether alternative methods of engagement, such as remote provision, would suffice. If, after collegiate discussion, the attendance is considered necessary, then the time spent in the ELC setting should be kept to a minimum. Where possible, the EIS would suggest that efforts are made to consolidate the attendance of peripatetic staff in one location.
- **Staff employed in more than one childcare setting** – where staff are employed by a single employer, they should only work in more than one setting if this is absolutely necessary. Where staff are employed by more than one childcare provider, risk assessments should be carried out to minimise the risk of transmission between settings and careful attention paid to any evidence suggesting bridges of transmission.

Staff should not work across two settings, if there is an outbreak in one.

- **Blended placements** – government advice is that parents and carers should be ‘encouraged and supported to limit the number of settings their child attends, ideally attending one setting only’. Existing blended placements can, however, continue if through the process of a joint risk assessment, it is deemed safe to do so and necessary in the interests of the child. Appropriate mitigation measures should also be adopted to ensure that the risks identified can be managed safely in both settings.
- **Visitors** – Adult visitors should be strictly limited to those who are necessary to support children or are required to complete necessary construction and maintenance.

Further advice on the completion of risk assessments can be accessed on the EIS Website General Risk Assessment [Guidance](#) and EIS Additional [Advice](#) on managing the risks of COVID-19 for Early Years Teachers.

Although the advice sets out a number of considerations to be taken into account in the risk assessment process, the list is not exhaustive and care should be taken to ensure that any specific issues relevant to the individual setting are also included in the risk assessment process.

Members are encouraged to review the risk assessments, which underpin the practical arrangements in place in their setting, on a regular basis and ensure that any changes both in the environment and in staffing arrangements are reflected in the mitigation measures in place.

**Risk assessments should be kept under regular review and should also reflect and be adapted to respond to local issues, such as local increases in cases of COVID-19, local outbreaks or a change to the protection level of the area in which the ELC setting is situated.**

If a teacher is concerned about the mitigation measures which have been identified and has concerns about their safety or the safety of anyone else in the setting, they should raise this with the management team and seek advice and support from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary thereafter as necessary.

Dedicated time should be set aside for staff training on the risk mitigation measures being implemented in the setting and consideration given to any additional local training which staff feel would be helpful in increasing confidence in the safe provision of ELC.

The Scottish Government has produced an [animation](#) to raise awareness of some of the key mitigation measures which are highlighted in its guidance. The animation is designed to be used as part of training sessions and as a stimulus for further discussion within the staff group.

The EIS is maintaining a close watching brief on emerging data, particularly about the impact of the new variant of the virus on transmission amongst children and young people. With this in mind, we will continue to keep our guidance under review and updated as evidence emerges.

## **Practical Activities and Subjects**

In addition to the mitigation measures outlined above, additional mitigations may be required for the safe delivery of practical aspects of the curriculum in ELC settings. Education Scotland has produced advice in relation to some of the practical subjects and this can be accessed [here](#). This advice should inform the risk assessment process for the subject areas involved.

Some subjects require specific consideration:

- **Physical Education** – the updated [Guidelines](#) outline key indicative dates (dependent on the suppression of the virus and the continued rollout of the vaccine) relevant to P.E. within ELC settings:
  - **From 5<sup>th</sup> April 2021** – Children can participate in **contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors**. P.E. will **not** be permitted indoors at this time in ELC settings.
  - **From 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021** – Children can participate in **individual non-contact activities indoors** and **in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors**.
  - **From 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021** – Children can participate in **group non-contact activities indoors** and **in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors**.

The guidance outlines some practical considerations which should be considered as part of the risk assessment process and provides some advice on aspects of implementation. This includes advice on minimising contact between individuals and groups; the importance of maintaining the strict 2 metre physical distancing requirements between adults; the use and cleaning of equipment; appropriate hygiene measures; greater emphasis on ventilation and the importance of reviewing procedures adopted.

- **Music** – [Advice](#) from the Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children’s Issues shows that there are increased transmission risks associated with music and drama activities. The Scottish Government Guidance, Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services makes it clear that providers should consider carefully this advice and the advice from Education Scotland on these activities.

Education Scotland’s updated [Guidelines](#) on Music, whilst acknowledging the importance of music in promoting the health and wellbeing of children, continues to adopt a precautionary approach to music in schools, and by implication, early years settings.

The guidance highlights the sliding scale of risk associated with different musical activities and provides a grid, outlining low and high risk activities. Only where there is a combination of low-risk factors can an activity go ahead.

Singing has been categorised as ‘high risk’ and so, would not fall within this category. Education Scotland’s advice provides that ‘young people should not engage in singing’ as this poses a higher risk of transmission. The Advisory Sub-Group referred to above also concluded that singing should **not** happen indoors as an organised, large group activity.

The guidance recognises that children sing naturally in the course of activities and play and should not be discouraged from doing so. It also acknowledges that singing may be used to comfort a child. In these situations, it would be envisaged that the singing would be at a low volume, with lower respiratory exertion as there would be no need for staff or a child in such circumstances to project their voice.



- **Dance** - the updated [Guidelines](#) outline key indicative dates (dependent on the suppression of the virus and the continued rollout of the vaccine) relevant to the Dance within ELC settings:
  - **From 5<sup>th</sup> April 2021** – Children can participate in **contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors**. Dance will **not** be permitted indoors at this time in ELC settings.
  - **From 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021** – Children can participate in **individual non-contact activities indoors** and **in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors**.
  - **From 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021** – Children can participate in **group non-contact activities indoors** and **in contact and non-contact physical activities outdoors**.

The guidance outlines some practical considerations which should be considered as part of the risk assessment process and provides some advice on aspects of implementation. This includes advice on minimising contact between individuals and groups; the importance of maintaining the strict 2 metre physical distancing requirements between adults; the use and cleaning of equipment; appropriate hygiene measures; greater emphasis on ventilation and the importance of reviewing procedures adopted.

## Transitions

The importance of planning and supporting children through transition periods is well recognised in early years education. Teachers and early years practitioners play a vital role in sensitively supporting children as they encounter new arrangements in ELC settings.

Any arrangements for transition and settling-in periods should be the subject of risk assessment with appropriate risk mitigation measures being adopted. Consideration should be given to greater use of outdoor space to facilitate this process and the use of virtual tours for parents to enable them to support their child prior to attending for the first time.

Education Scotland have developed two resources to support transitions during COVID restrictions: [Transitions in 2020](#) and Wakelet on [Supporting young children at points of transition](#).

## **Additional Support for Learning**

For children with additional support needs, who are starting/recently started nursery for the first time or who are re-engaging with a setting following a period of absence, consideration should be given to an enhanced transitions and to the allocation of appropriate support to facilitate this process.

Arrangements for providing this should be carefully considered in light of public health measures, with risk assessments being initiated or updated as necessary and appropriate mitigations put in place to protect children with additional needs and any adults who will be supporting them.

Consideration should be given, where appropriate, to the use of social stories, appropriate visuals and videos shared with children in advance to explain what will be new and to explain what the nursery day will be like.

## **GIRFEC**

The strong emphasis on wellbeing in the Early Years curriculum means that there is likely to be much GIRFEC-related activity in ELC settings, some of which may involve multi-agency teams.

All associated arrangements should be made with public health imperatives in mind, both regarding meetings and conversations with parents/carers and meetings with other professionals such as Health Visitors, Educational Psychologists and Social Workers.

The Scottish Government Guidance is clear that ‘adult visitors to settings should be strictly limited only to those that are necessary to support children or the construction, maintenance and running of the setting’.

It provides that ‘visits to the setting should be avoided unless necessary, and this should be with the permission of the manager, head teacher or local authority’.

The guidance outlines that ‘telephone calls, online meetings and ‘virtual’ visits should be the norm for regular and other meetings with specialists and

parents'. It acknowledges that there are some essential services which are central to the delivery of children's care or educational plans which necessitate, inter alia, visiting professionals attending schools.

In these circumstances, collegiate dialogue and partnership working will assist in determining when attendance is 'necessary' and when support could otherwise be provided remotely.

Where attendance is considered 'necessary', then movement across locations should be minimised and a robust risk assessment undertaken (and reviewed on a continuous basis) to identify appropriate mitigation measures. Risk assessments should be jointly prepared between the ELC setting, the relevant partner service and the trade unions involved.

2m distancing should be maintained between staff and other adults attending the setting for such meetings. This applies irrespective of whether an individual has been vaccinated. Vaccination does not change the need to continue to comply with all current COVID-19 mitigation measures.

Face coverings should also be worn by parents and all visitors to ELC settings, at all times.

## **Workload**

The EIS is clear that priorities at this time should be streamlined to ensure that there is no additional strain on weekly working time within the parameters of the 35-hour working week.

In accordance with the Scottish Government Guidance on Education Recovery, priorities should be centred around the wellbeing of teachers and Early Years practitioners, as well as of children and young people, and be agreed on a collegiate basis. Teachers and Early Years practitioners should be mindful of their own health and wellbeing and the need for an appropriate balance of priorities in this regard.

If a teacher or Early Years practitioner has a concern about workload, this should be raised with the management of the setting in the first instance. If necessary, the EIS Rep and/or Local Association Secretary can assist in helping the setting to reach a collegiate and bureaucracy-light solution.

## **Early Years Practice**

In delivering the Early Years curriculum, the same child centred play based approach, described above, may be a central feature of the pedagogy adopted in the initial stages of Primary education.

The Scottish Government guidance makes it clear that

‘For the early stage (P1-P2), schools may consider making use of ELC models of managing children’s interactions and other mitigations, where appropriate, particularly when adopting a play based approach.’

Where this approach is being adopted, then the EIS is clear that the additional risk mitigation measures, identified through thorough risk assessment processes, must be put in place to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff, as well as pupils.

The EIS additional advice for Early Years members on the control of Covid-19 within the workplace, which is referred to above, will apply.

If a teacher in Early Years within the school setting is concerned about the mitigation measures which have been identified and has concerns about their safety or the safety of anyone else in the school, they should raise this with the management team and seek advice and support from their EIS school representative or Local Association Secretary thereafter as necessary.