

First Steps Childcare Coronavirus Update – 13th March 2020

This update provides information regarding COVID-19 – also known as Coronavirus - and specific information for parents and carers of children at First Steps Childcare, and Children First Nurseries. We are following official advice from Government and Public Health England (PHE) at all times. Their websites are updated on a regular basis and should always be the first port of call for general and medical advice. The global situation and advice can change rapidly so you should always refer to live information on these websites and we have provided links for these.

Please ensure that you read this briefing fully and carefully as it includes both general updates and specific information regarding First Steps, and Children First.

Where to find the latest information

- Updates on COVID-19: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Travel advice for those travelling overseas: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

On 12th March, the Prime Minister issued additional advice for people with a new continuous cough and/or a high temperature to self-isolate for 7 days. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

At this point in time, First Steps/Children First settings are not planning to close. We will not shut unless we are told to do so by Public Health England and/or if we have significant issues with staffing. We are drawing up contingency plans for a number of scenarios which might happen in the future but we hope not to have to implement these.

Department for Education (DfE) Coronavirus helpline

The DfE Coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions about COVID-19 relating to education and childcare. Staff, parents/carers can contact this helpline as follows:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

Latest Department for Education information is also available on social media:

- <https://twitter.com/educationgovuk>
- <https://www.facebook.com/educationgovuk/>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice

As of 10 March, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has updated advice about travel to Italy. The FCO is currently advising:

- against all but essential travel to Italy
- against all travel to Hubei Province, in China
- against all but essential travel to the rest of mainland China
- against all travel to the cities of Daegu, Cheongdo and Gyeongsan in South Korea

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is not currently advising against travel to any other country/territory as a result of COVID-19 but this can change so please review this link for the latest advice <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Updated advice for travellers returning from Italy

On 10 March, PHE updated its travel advice for travellers returning from Italy, recommending that anyone returning from Italy should self-isolate, even if you do not have any symptoms. If you do develop symptoms, call NHS 111. The advice can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Self-Isolation

Further information on what you should do if you are required to self-isolate can be found here:

- <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/20/what-is-self-isolation-and-why-is-it-important/>

The importance of hygiene

- Personal hygiene is the most important way to tackle COVID-19, especially washing hands more; and the *catch it, bin it, kill it* strategy for those with coughs and sneezes.
- Wash your hands more often for 20 seconds with soap and hot water.
- In addition to handwashing before eating and after coughing and sneezing, everyone should also wash hands after using toilets and travelling on public transport.
- Watch this short NHS film for guidance: <https://youtu.be/bQCP7waTRWU>

- We are actively implementing enhanced hand washing procedures in the nurseries

CCG Updates and Information

We do not know exactly what may happen both in the UK and at our nurseries as a result of Coronavirus. Our priority is to ensure we have a robust business continuity plan for all eventualities. We will continue to follow Government and PHE advice at all times. Emails, communications at drop off/pick up, our website and social media will be used to provide further updates.

The nursery cannot provide advice on personal health and individuals should seek this from their usual medical practitioner and/or from NHS 111 or the **111 online coronavirus service**.

Our estates teams have been regularly checking and keeping soap and hand sanitisers topped up across settings. We are working closely with our cleaning company to review cleaning requirements across all of our settings.

Absence and Absence Reporting

If your child is sick, please report their absence in a normal way. If there are concerns around Coronavirus, you will be asked a series of additional confidential questions regarding individual circumstances. This will enable us to monitor the level of risk to other children and staff.

At the moment, our absence policy and charging remains the same. We will continue to review this and in any exceptional circumstances, may consider reviewing these.

Parents and Carers should also remain vigilant and alert to advice and restrictions relating to specific countries and regions. Country-specific information is available on [FCO travel advice pages](#). With the Easter holidays fast approaching, we recommend you review this in relation to your own travel plans as restrictions could be put in place (like Italy) to require self-isolation when returning from a country.

What would happen if the nursery/nurseries had to close?

First Steps Nurseries and Children First Nursery intend to stay open and current advice from Government is to do so. To be prudent, however, we have full business continuity plans in place to manage any required closure. We are also reviewing how we might manage reduced operations if we were significantly impacted by staff illness – this could include considering prioritising places e.g. for parents who were health professionals.

If a full or partial closure is announced, we will communicate to all parents/carers via existing channels including email, phone, websites and social media.

Providing continuity of childcare services remains our priority wherever possible.

Policy for External Visitors

The safety and wellbeing of our children, families and staff remains our priority and as such, we have put in place additional steps to monitor visitors to our settings.

First Steps Village and Forest School Holiday Clubs

For parents/carers who use First Steps Village and/or the Forest School Holiday Clubs, please be advised that as per Government advice, these continue to operate as normal. We review Government advice daily and will advise if any changes are required.

Ongoing Communications

Please continue to use the official Government and PHE links at the start of this note to obtain the most up to date information regarding Coronavirus. We will continue to communicate with you as any significant updates arise.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Sue Carpenter
Senior Childcare Manager
First Steps Childcare Group