



Covid-19 Childminding Guidelines

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Introduction

Childminders are allowed to remain open, for the **care of vulnerable children and those of Essential Workers until 28 March. From 29 March** Childminders can operate for all children **without restriction of eligibility.**

While no environment is without risk in relation to Covid-19, childminders, the HSE advise that careful implementation of Infection Prevention and Control guidance will help mitigate against the risk of spread of infection.

Childminding during Covid-19

What you need do:

Communicate with Parents

It will be an anxious time for parents, and it is important to inform parents/guardians of your practices detailed in your Covid-19 Parents Contract and in your updated policy documents.

Also, reassure parents about your heightened awareness on [good hygiene practices](#) including hand washing.

Remind parents to monitor their and the children's well-being and not to bring them to your service if they or any member of their household, are showing any symptoms of the viral infection. As a childminder, you and the children you mind are viewed as a natural play-pod i.e. a closed group of children and a carer who learn and play together. Social distancing between you and the children you care for is not necessary. If there are other adults in your household, their interaction with the children should be limited where possible

Discuss the following with Parents:

- Communicate with parents by phone, where possible
- Ask parents to complete and sign your updated Covid-19 Parents Contract.
- Remind existing parents and highlight to new parents that you have a Welcome Area outside the house for drop offs and collections.
- Request parents to pay the childminding fees electronically, if they are not already doing so as this will avoid handling cash. It is a great time to ask parents to set up a Standing Order or Direct Debit. Alternatively, some banks offer the facility to pay in to a recipient's bank account using a mobile app. A further alternative is a [Revolut](#) card using a mobile phone.
- Continue or start video calls or phone calls if parents want long catch-ups or discussions with you. This is instead of lengthy conversations at the door.
- Ask parents to supply:
 - soothers, bottles, beakers as required by the children that can be left in your house.

- a few sets of clothes/sleepwear for their children and keep these in your house. This is to avoid these items going in and out of your house. Wash them in your washing machine after use at the highest temperature tolerable for the item.
 - extra coats/outerwear as you will be spending more time outside
- Avoid any toys, blankets, books etc. being brought from the child's home in to yours.
- However, if soft toys /comfort blankets are essential for some children they should be personal to the child, they should not be shared and they must be machine washable.

Infection Control

It is important to take time to read the [HPSC Guidelines](#) for Childcare to ensure that you are familiar with them. These guidelines refer to Play Pods, as a childminder you and the children you mind are considered to be a natural play-pod. If there are other adults in your household, their interaction with the children should be limited where possible. The HPSC guidance will explain the following:

- The novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 disease.
- How to help prevent spread of all respiratory infections including COVID-19.
- What to do if someone confirmed or suspected to have COVID-19 has been in a childcare setting.
- Advice on how to clean /disinfect areas where there has been a case of COVID-19 in a childcare setting.

Childminding Ireland have created a Sample Covid-19 infection control policy based on the HPSC guidelines, to receive a copy please email support@childminding.ie Ensure you share this with parents.

[Complete Childminding Risk Assessment Template](#) *to access please click here*

Contract with Parents

Ensure you have shared a new Covid-19 contract with all parents. Ensure this is agreed and signed by parents. Where applicable update medical records that you hold for each of the children.

Layout of Home Environment

In line with Public Health advice, for the foreseeable future parents entering your home should be limited as much as possible. If it is necessary to have a parent enter your home e.g. to settle a child, you should try to maintain social distancing between you and the parent where possible. Perhaps create a Welcome Area; this could be placed in an appropriate outdoor space, marking the drop off/settling in and collection point in a welcoming way. Place the most popular outdoor toys in this space.

Avoid physical contact with parents/guardians if possible. This will be extremely difficult with babies and wobblers (i.e. those children not walking). Try to stagger drop off and collection times for parents to avoid overlap thereby minimising social interaction.

Think through the physical indoor and outdoor space in your home. Try to use your outdoor space as much as possible. Check if any of your outdoor equipment needs to be repaired or replaced.

Consider the indoor space, what changes could be made to ensure that children have as much space as possible e.g. moving furniture around or looking at areas where there can be congestion.

What you need to have:

Handwashing area stocked with

- soap and individual towels for children (different colours for different children), disinfectant wipes
- tissues
- plastic gloves for yourself e.g. for nappy changing.

Also, ensure that you have:

- sanitising sprays for surfaces
- washing powder for toys and towels
- kitchen paper
- bin bags.

Hand Washing

Create heightened awareness around Hand Washing techniques and coughing etiquette with children. Make it a fun activity if possible (e.g. singing along while doing it) [Childminding Ireland Handwashing Video](#)

Apply the following practice for hand washing:

- wash hands regularly.
- wash hands with soap and running water when hands are visibly dirty. If hands are not visibly dirty, wash them with soap and water or use a hand sanitiser.

Wash hands specifically:

- before and after preparing food
- before eating
- before and after caring for sick individuals
- after coughing or sneezing
- when hands are dirty
- after using the toilet
- after changing a nappy
- after handling animals or animal waste

Follow the HSE hand hygiene guidance at <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

Display your hand hygiene poster at all times. [link to HPSC poster](#)

One child in the bathroom at a time.

Discard tissues after one use and empty bins regularly.

Respiratory hygiene:

Cover your mouth and nose with a clean tissue when you cough and sneeze and then promptly dispose of the tissue in a bin and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your elbow instead, not into your hands. [Posters on preventing spread of infection are available on the HPSC website.](#)

Monitor Wellbeing

Be aware of the symptoms of COVID-19:

- Fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above) - Note that a temperature of 38C should not be discounted on the basis that a child is teething. For information on teething see the link below:
<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/baby-teething-and-gums.html>
- Cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

There are no new symptoms which childminders or parents needs to look out for; however, you are advised to take a very precautionary approach where a child or someone in their household or family unit is displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. They should not attend your service if they or the children are displaying symptoms. They should stay home and contact their GP.

If a child becomes newly unwell, such as with a runny nose, then a precautionary approach should be taken to observe them at home for 48 hours, to assess whether any further symptoms develop.

Any symptoms of concern should be discussed with their GP. The best way to prevent person-to-person spread of COVID-19 is to use proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette and practice physical distancing between adults.

Children with symptoms (or where their family members have symptoms) should not come to your childminding service. If you or a family member have symptoms, you should not care for children until cleared by a doctor (i.e. tested and advised as to next steps). Look at [HPSC advice](#).

Children with additional support or care needs

- Social distancing is not a requirement for children in early learning and care and school age childcare settings and may not be practical or reasonable to implement where children have personal care or assistance needs.
- The focus should therefore be on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which might suggest

illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present, children should not attend for childcare.

- Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean their hands using either soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as outlined previously.
- If healthcare is provided to children in a childcare setting the childcare worker, nurse or healthcare assistant should follow the standard infection prevention and control practice for healthcare delivery, as advised by the child's parent and the health professional.
- Some children may have care needs (physical, emotional or sensory) which require the use of aids and appliance and/ or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment. Where cleaning of aids and appliances is carried out in the childminding home, it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is provided, detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. For guidance to develop such cleaning schedules, go to HPSC Guidelines

Visitors

Restrict visitors to the home in line with HPSC advice during childminding hours.

Other adult household members

Keep a record of all people in your home, daily, to facilitate contact tracing

Outdoor Space

Use your outdoor space as much as possible. If you have a garden, think about the children playing outside in the air as much as possible. Consider eating outside, particularly if it is not raining. If practical, create new play opportunities in the garden for the children.

Cleaning Toys

As per HPSC guidelines:

All toys (including those not currently in use) should be cleaned on a regular basis, i.e. weekly. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs.

- Toys that are used by very young children should be washed daily
- Toys that children put in their mouths should be washed after use or before use by another child (you should discourage or prevent sharing of toys that children have put in their mouths)
- Toys used by older children and larger play equipment (e.g. dolls' house, Wendy car) should be cleaned weekly
- All toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or body fluids must be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal. Toys waiting to be cleaned must be stored separately

March 2021 Update

- Soft toys need to be machine washed on a hot cycle taking care to follow manufacturer's instructions prior to use by another child
- Replace soft modelling materials and dough regularly

Books

Hard back glossy books with glossy pages are ideal to use now as they can be wiped down with a disinfectant liquid or disinfectant wipes. Try to avoid paper books.

Jigsaws

Avoid using jigsaws at this time, as they are more difficult to wipe down.

Arts & Crafts

Wipe down paint bottles, water jars after use with a disinfectant liquid or disinfectant wipes.

Cleaning your home

Droplets carrying the virus that causes COVID-19 can fall from the air on to surfaces such as tabletops, toys, and other things that we touch. If people contaminate their hands while sneezing or coughing, they may contaminate surfaces by touching them. A person may become infected when they touch a contaminated object or surface and they then touch their own mouth, nose, or eyes. For example, someone may touch a contaminated door handle and then rub their eyes or put something in their mouth. The virus cannot grow on surfaces, but it can survive if they are not cleaned. The virus gradually dies off over time and under most circumstances, the amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surfaces is likely to have decreased significantly by 72 hours.

Regular cleaning of frequently touched hard surfaces and of hands will therefore help to reduce the risk of infection.

Increase the frequency and extent of cleaning regimes and ensure that they include:

- clean regularly touched objects and surfaces using a household cleaning product
- pay particular attention to high-contact areas such as door handles; grab rails/handrails in corridors/stairwells, plastic-coated or laminated worktops, desks, access touchpads, telephones/keyboards in offices, and toilets/taps/sanitary fittings.
- wear rubber gloves when cleaning surfaces, wash the gloves while still wearing them, then wash your hands after you take them off.
- [Check for updates here](#)

If a person with suspected COVID-19 is identified in a childcare setting, all surfaces that the person has been in contact with should be cleaned and disinfected. For specific guidance on this, please see HPSC guidelines/advice on cleaning.

Outings

Outings in the community are permitted. For updates [follow HSE guidelines](#) The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) states that "it is important to note that there is **no infection**

prevention and control requirement to limit outdoor activities in the childcare centre and that trips to nearby parks and amenities can be managed with a low risk of infection if physical distance from other people is maintained”.

Transport – where a childminder provides transport to and from setting

- The driver will not work if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been identified as close Contacts of COVID-19.
- The driver will refuse to transport a child who has obvious symptoms of infection.
- During transport the driver must wear a cloth face covering/ visor unless they are protected by a screen and so long as it does not pose a barrier to care.
- The driver should regularly perform hand hygiene.
- Children should embark and disembark in a controlled way from the bus/car that is one at a time and should perform hand hygiene on boarding.
- Supplies of hand sanitizer, tissues, gloves or wipes should be supplied on board the transport vehicle for the driver and children to use as needed.
- Contact surfaces within the bus/car should be cleaned with water and detergent at least daily and whenever there is visible contamination.

Buggies

No buggies inside the house. Leave them in your car or a shed at the front of your house.

Your Mental Health

The Government’s “In This Together Campaign” provides information on minding one’s mental health as well as tips on staying active and connected and may be useful for you during this time: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/together/?referrer=/together/>

Childminding in the Child’s Home - Additional Considerations

- Visit the home in advance to familiarise yourself with the surroundings, but also to make it ‘normal’ for the child to see you in their surroundings.
- Find out if there are any special requests you wish to ask of the parents, in advance of you starting to work e.g. are you clear about working hours, bed time and routine for children as necessary, are the parents leaving prepared meals or will you be cooking?
- Anything you need to bring with you from your home, e.g. arts and crafts will need to be left in the child’s home.
- Handwashing: Wash your hands straight away as soon as you enter the house. Use hand sanitizer.
- Your Mobile Phone: Wipe this down as soon as you have washed your hands.

- Handbag: Have a small bag for your keys. Leave your handbag at home. In summary, this means that the only thing coming in to the house with you are your mobile phone and your keys.
- Food/Drinks/Books/Toys: Do not bring food, drinks (e.g. coffee/flasks), books, newspapers or toys from your house to the children's house. This means you will need to arrange with parents/guardians that they supply your food & drinks while at work.
- Have a phone or video call with parents/guardians if they want to have long discussions.

Useful links

To ensure you have the most up to date information and guidance [visit HPSC regularly](#)

For more information on the guidelines applying to businesses returning to work which were issued the Government, click here www.gov.ie/business

The Return to Work Safely Protocol: COVID-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers which was issued by the Irish Government is here [file:///C:/Users/LaraHughes/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/74103_6b5dc9ecab2a489280a5a0cdcc647c5c%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/LaraHughes/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/74103_6b5dc9ecab2a489280a5a0cdcc647c5c%20(1).pdf)

For more information on the health guidelines during COVID-19, click here <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

To contact your local CCC

www.myccc.ie