

FAQs FOR SCHOOLS and PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION SETTINGS OPENING FOR CHILDREN OF KEY/CRITICAL WORKERS

Update as at 24 March 2020

SUPERVISED LEARNING

Q1: Why are schools in NI expected to provide supervised learning for children of key/critical workers and vulnerable children when schools across Europe have completely closed?

A: The most recent scientific advice on how to further limit spread of the COVID-19 virus is that children who can stay safely at home, should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading. Schools across the UK are being asked to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend. This is different from other counties and jurisdictions but is based on sound scientific advice, so that we can both maintain key/critical services and reduce the spread of the virus. Parents / carers should only send their child to school if there is no other viable option.

Q2: Which schools and educational settings are closed?

A: All schools and educational settings are closed to pupils. This includes all pre-school education settings participating in the Pre-School Education Programme, Primary and Secondary schools and further education settings.

Q3: What is 'supervised learning'?

A: Supervised learning is about providing a facility in schools and pre-schools for vulnerable children and those of key/critical workers to allow parents to continue with their vital jobs. By providing the facility for supervised learning, school and pre-school education staff will play a vital role in ensuring key/critical services, including the health service, can continue to operate. Children attending school or pre-school settings will not experience a continuation of their usual classroom based teacher led education routine, although they will be able to access appropriate learning opportunities they would otherwise have accessed at home.

Q4: How will schools and pre-school settings resource the supervised learning of children during this time?

A: Teaching and non-teaching staff who are not ill, self-isolating or at risk (as defined by PHA guidance) should be available to support the supervised learning of vulnerable children and those of key/critical workers over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on the number of staff available, consideration may be given to developing a rota for staff in each educational setting, based on staff working a reduced number of hours per day/days per week or alternate weeks without any loss in pay.

If a school leader concludes that the school cannot operate safely, either because there will not be sufficient staff, or too many children are seeking to attend, the school should consider the following options (EA local School Development Service officers are available to assist):

- Contacting neighbouring settings to identify whether staff can be shared;
- Contact EA to identify other public sector workers, with the requisite security clearances, who may be able to assist;
- Identifying whether neighbouring settings can accommodate additional children;
- Limiting the number of children who can attend and prioritising children of health and social care staff in the first instance.

It may take some time for schools and pre-schools to establish the demand for this service and it is expected that settings may, over time, agree to work in partnership to provide cover collectively.

In addition substitute cover may be required, and can be accessed through the Northern Ireland Teachers Register (NISTR).

WHICH CHILDREN DOES THIS COVER?

Q5: What age groups will schools and educational settings provide emergency care for?

A: The changes cover children from pre-school through to pupils in Year 10 and vulnerable children regardless of age. Emergency care in schools should only be accessed when there is no other alternative care available for a vulnerable child or a child of a key/critical worker. Children should only attend when necessary – they are not required to attend or to attend every day.

Q6: Who are ‘key/critical workers’?

A: The list is not prescriptive. However, to give some guidance the following outlines the broad categories of what would be defined as a key/critical worker:

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;
- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;
- Financial Services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure)
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (eg hygiene, medical, etc);

- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency;
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

Q7: Will the ‘key/critical workers’ list be changed in future?

A: The definition of ‘key/critical worker’ will be flexible and dependant on the circumstance and requirements over the course of this critical period. There will be flexibility shown on the definition of key/critical workers to ensure all those who need support receive it. You will be updated of any change to the definition.

Q8: Who are the vulnerable children and how are they affected?

A: The term vulnerable encompasses those children who are in need of protection, or in need, as defined by the Children (NI) Order 1995.

Children and young people in need may include those:

- Receiving support from Health & Social Services including family support, child protection and looked after children services;
- On the Child Protection Register;
- With statements of special education needs;
- Accessing EOTAS;
- Accessing Education Nurture Units;
- With emerging and diagnosed mental health needs;
- Who are homeless;
- Who are young carers;
- Subject to paramilitary threat;
- Whose parents have mental health problems;
- Whose parents have alcohol and drug addictions;
- Affected by domestic violence.

Where possible all children, including those who are vulnerable, should stay at home; however, there may be some instances where continued access to education settings provides a safer option. Schools in conjunction with parents and social services, where children have a social worker, should work closely together on

determining the safest option for each child. A risk based approach should be adopted.

Q9: Are all children with SEN covered in the 'vulnerable children' category?

A: No. Only children with a statement of SEN are covered in the vulnerable category. Again, all children should, where possible, stay at home. For those with statements, where there is no other viable option, then parents should contact schools to discuss arrangements and if the school can provide a safe environment. It may not always be possible for schools to deliver the full provision of services according to statements.

Q10: Are looked after children covered in the 'vulnerable children' category?

A: Yes, including those without a statement of SEN.

Q11: As a parent of a vulnerable child do I have to send them to school?

A: Schools can offer these vulnerable groups a sense of stability and routine; however, if you are concerned about your health or the health of your child then factor those concerns in when assessing whether attendance at school is currently in their best interests. Children should, where possible, stay at home.

Q12: What about support for children who need therapies?

A: Arrangements for maintaining therapies for children who normally receive them in school are currently being developed by the Health & Social Care Trusts. Further guidance will follow.

Q13: What about children with specific conditions?

A: Parents should only send their children to school if there is no other viable option. In that event, parents should discuss arrangements for their children with the schools. The school will advise if it is able to provide a safe environment.

Q14: What are my options if a family does not meet the definition of key/critical worker or their child is not vulnerable but wants to attend?

A: Families can be directed to the Family Support NI website which has details of a range of support available to families including registered day-care provision in the area.

Q15: Do both parents of a child need to be key/critical workers to be able to attend school?

A: No. The purpose of opening schools is to ensure that key/critical workers can still attend their place of work and provide vital services.

STAFFING ISSUES

Q16: Can I bring in staff from another school to support my staff?

A: All schools and pre-school education settings are being asked to work together to deliver this service. This may include the attendance of staff at a setting other than their own or the attendance of children at a setting other than their normal setting.

Q17: How will I be expected to balance delivery of remote learning to children who are at home with staffing a school or pre-school to accommodate children of key/critical workers?

A: In many cases schools and pre-schools will already have arrangements in place to continue to teach young people remotely. Schools and pre-schools should be able to explore how they can use the same approaches adopted to deliver remote learning to young people whether or not they are in school or pre-school.

Q18: What if I cannot guarantee sufficient staff to pupil coverage, or am concerned at the number of children seeking to attend?

A: If a school leader concludes that the school cannot operate safely, either because there will not be sufficient staff, or too many children are seeking to attend, the school should consider the following options (EA local School Development Service officers are available to assist):

- Contacting neighbouring settings to identify whether staff can be shared;
- Contact EA to identify other public sector workers, with the requisite security clearances, who may be able to assist;
- Identifying whether neighbouring settings can accommodate additional children;
- Limiting the number of children who can attend and prioritising children of health and social care staff in the first instance.

**Q19: Can I accept volunteers to work in my school to support teaching staff?
Will volunteers from across the public sector be provided?**

A: Yes, the school can accept volunteers. If required, public sector workers can and will be redeployed to support teaching staff. The school must ensure the suitability of all persons looking after children and that appropriate supervision is in place as part of its safeguarding responsibilities for children attending school.

Q20: Previous guidance indicated that if there is a need to require teachers to be class committed over the contractual 23.5 hours post primary, 25 hours primary, a payback arrangement would be provided by the school to reduce class contact following the return to normal arrangements. Does this still stand?

A: COVID-19 school closures will mean fewer children attending school to be looked after. Schools will want to plan their staffing levels accordingly and use a rota system to limit class contact to minimise the risk of individual exposure to the coronavirus. If a teacher has been required to work longer than the contractual 23.5 hours post primary, 25 hours primary, schools should put in place arrangements to allow their class contact time to be reduced following the return to normal arrangements.

Q21: Can I require parents to provide proof of their keyworker status?

A: At this stage there is no requirement for documentary proof of occupation as we expect only genuine key/critical workers to avail of this service. This will be kept under review in the event that numbers become large and social distancing is deemed to be at risk.

Q22: What attendance code should I be using for recording of pupils who are present or absent from school wef 23 March 2020?

A: For pupils not attending school – “Code ! - No attendance required” should be used. Since schools have been asked to stay open for some children of key/critical workers, schools should record their attendance as appropriate in the am and pm. “Code ! - no attendance required” should be used for the vast majority of children until the end of term, “Code # - Holiday for All” would be used to cover the summer period as normal. An exceptional closure request is not necessary for the foreseeable future since schools are in the main, closed to pupils from 23 March 2020. **Given the changing nature of the situation, we would expect to update this advice on a continual basis over the next number of weeks/months.**

Q23: Can I accept children who are registered pupils at another setting, including in another phase of education?

A: You may accept children into your school or pre-school setting whether or not they are normally enrolled at your school or pre-school if you can do safely and in compliance with PHA guidelines. Pre-school settings are not suitable environments for older children.

This needs to be in conjunction with EA/DE so that accurate registers of children’s whereabouts are maintained. Further guidance will be provided.

Q24: Can schools work together to provide a service for affected children?

A: Where schools wish to work together to create a localised cluster arrangement, ie whereby certain schools in a close geographical area wish to agree collectively to have a ‘hub’ school to service all children within the area, this is permissible where it is sensible to do so and the daily data capture will continue to collect information around local arrangements. Officers from the Education Authority’s School Development Service will support schools locally who wish to engage in a collaborative arrangement. If schools wish to explore this, contact details of the School Development Service are below.

	Nursery & primary schools	Post primary and special schools
Locality east – Belfast, Lisburn & Castlereagh, Ards & North Down, Newry, Mourne and Down	Jonathan Cockroft, Shane Comer	Mary Lowery
Locality south west – Fermanagh & Omagh, Mid Ulster, Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	Debbie Powell Averil Morrow	Michael Burns
Locality north – Derry City & Strabane, Causeway Coast & Glens, Mid & East Antrim, Antrim & Newtonabbey	Caroline Woods Seamus Bradley	Glenn Walsh

Q25: Will staff who work longer than their contracted hours get paid for additional time they work during this period?

A: Schools should look to rota arrangements to minimise the number of staff working beyond their contracted hours. If time off in lieu is not operationally possible, additional pay can be considered. This may be the case where staff volunteer to work in schools at evenings or weekends or over the Easter period. Schools should keep records of additional hours worked and ensure that form TR269 is completed for teachers. If this creates an additional financial pressure for the school, then the school should contact the Education Authority, as Funding Authority, in the first instance at the appropriate time

Q26: Will child protection arrangements be modified in any way during this period?

A: Existing safeguarding and child protection arrangements will continue to apply. DE Circular 2017/04 “Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools” can be found at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201704-safeguarding-and-child-protection-schools-guide-schools>

Q27: Who will lead on child protections/safeguarding/disclosures? Will pupils from other schools require a teacher present?

A: Existing safeguarding and child protection arrangements will continue to apply. DE Circular 2017/04 “Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools” can be found at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201704-safeguarding-and-child-protection-schools-guide-schools>

If necessary schools should seek advice from the EA’s Child Protection Support Service on 02895 985590.

Q28: How will First Aid be covered if no First Aiders volunteer?

A: All schools are advised to have at least one trained first-aider on the premises at all times during school hours. Further guidance can be found at:

<https://www.eani.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/First-aid.docx>

SERVICES (INCLUDING FOOD AND TRANSPORT)

Q29: Will school transport be running?

A: From Monday 23rd normal school transport will not be running. However as the situation develops and is assessed, this may be amended. Currently this is to ensure health and safety of children.

Q30: Will school meals be provided?

A: Parents should be advised, at least in the interim, to provide packed lunches for their children. Our data suggest that the numbers of children in schools are very small (ranging from 0 – 17 per school) that it would not be feasible for Education Authority to provide catering in these circumstances therefore parents should continue to send packed lunches with their children

The Department of Education and the Department for Communities (DfC) are working together to ensure continuity of provision for children and young people who may be vulnerable or who currently avail of free school meals through school. DfC is currently working on this aspect and will be including the community and voluntary sectors, youth services and local councils as well as considering the availability of EA catering services and canteens to assist in the provision and distribution of meals to those who need them – not just children and young people.

Work is underway to identify which schools will be served directly with an inevitably reduced service and schools will be kept informed as soon as this becomes clear.

Q31: How can my school access hand soap, sanitizer etc.?

A: The EA can provide emergency supplies to those schools that find themselves short of supplies. The EA will be able to provide either a collection or delivery service if schools need supplies. Individual schools will need to contact the EA's Covid -19 operations centre 8am to 8pm. The number is: 028 38368186.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Q32: Can I accept children who are registered pupils at another setting, including in another phase of education?

A: You may accept children into your school or pre-school setting whether or not they are normally enrolled at your school or pre-school if you can do safely and in compliance with PHA guidelines. Pre-school settings are not suitable environments for older children.

This needs to be in conjunction with EA/DE so that accurate registers of children's whereabouts are maintained. Further guidance will be provided.

Q33: Can I accept children who are not children of key/critical workers?

A: The aim of closing schools and pre-school education settings to pupils is to reduce the number of children in those settings to enhance the effectiveness of our response to the Covid-19 outbreak, therefore the children attending settings for supervised learning should be limited to those of key/critical workers and vulnerable children .

Parents should be encouraged to source alternative safe and appropriate provision if they are not prioritised for this service and such children should not attend school.

Q34: Is there a limit on the number of children I can admit into the school or pre-school?

A: While there is no set limit, if you find there to be a high demand for places at your school, you may wish to consider utilising space at neighbouring settings to adhere to the Public Health Agency (PHA) if you can do safely and in compliance with PHA guidelines. Pre-school settings are not suitable environments for older children.

The DE and EA will advise you further if this arises.

Q35: My school is a single sex school, can I accept children of both genders at this time.

A: Yes. These children will be in attendance at your school so normal admissions requirements do not apply for supervised learning.

Q36: Can the children of teaching and non-staffing teaching staff attend?

A: Yes in line with guidance.

Q37: What are the implications for class size limits and teacher/pupil ratios?

A: This should be assessed based on what is being delivered in the classroom and bearing in mind guidance in relation to PHA advice about social distancing. For non-statutory pre-school providers, the ratio of adults to children is 1:8.

Q38: Is there guidance on what constitutes 'social distancing' in schools?

A: Northern Ireland's Public Health Agency are using 2m as a simple message the public can understand for social distancing. It is a 'rule of thumb' and therefore principals are expected to take account of general UK guidance on social distancing which can found here:- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

Q39: How many children should be permitted in one room?

A: Room sizes in schools vary considerably and principals should exercise their judgement focusing on the safety of both staff and children and taking into account PHA advice on social distancing, recognising that no class arrangement, including composite classes, should exceed 33 pupils or 20 in practical classes where practical lessons take place. In extremis, a teacher may volunteer to cover over these numbers for a short period of time. There will be no relaxation of class sizes for special schools and units.

Q40: Will teachers and other school based staff be provided with Personal Protective Equipment?

A: Current NHS guidance is that where staff and children are not symptomatic, then no personal protective equipment is required above and beyond normal good hygiene practices. More stringent guidance applies to care workers, nurses & doctors who are providing patient care activities that bring them into close personal contact.

General interventions may include increased cleaning activity to reduce risk of retention of virus on hard surfaces, and keeping property properly ventilated by opening windows whenever safe and appropriate.

The EA can provide emergency supplies to those schools that find themselves short of supplies. The EA will be able to provide either a collection or delivery service if schools need supplies. Individual schools will need to contact the EA's Covid -19 operations centre 8am to 8pm. The number is: 028 38368186.

Q41: What should I do if a child displays symptoms of Covid-19 whilst in school or pre-school education setting?

A: If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in an educational setting they should be sent home and advised to follow the home isolation advice on the PHA website

If a child is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least two metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell.

Q42: What do I do if a parent contacts the school to advise that a child who recently attended the school has been diagnosed with Covid-19?

A: Maintain hygiene within the school environment and ensure all staff and children wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds. General interventions may include increased cleaning activity to reduce risk of retention of virus on hard surfaces, and keeping property properly ventilated by opening windows whenever safe and appropriate.

Q43: What do I do if a parent contacts the school to advise that the family has moved to self-isolate because a close contact of a child who has been in attendance at the school has been diagnosed with Covid-19?

A: Maintain hygiene within the school environment and ensure all staff and children wash their hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds. General interventions may include increased cleaning activity to reduce risk of retention of virus on hard surfaces, and keeping property properly ventilated by opening windows whenever safe and appropriate.

Q44: What if parents indicate that they will have to leave their children unattended if we cannot take them?

A: Advice on the law on leaving children unattended at home is available at <https://www.gov.uk/law-on-leaving-your-child-home-alone>

There is no law about when you can leave your child on their own but it is an offence to leave them alone if it places them at risk. You should advise parents to use their judgement on how mature their child is before deciding to leave them at home. It is important to be aware that parents can be prosecuted if they leave a child alone 'in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health'. Children under 12 are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time, children under 16 shouldn't be left alone overnight and babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone

The Department of Health has confirmed that while registered day-care settings remain open, the number of children attending each setting may need to be restricted in line with public health guidance on limiting the spread of COVID-19. The Department of Health is preparing specific guidance for day care settings. Information will also be prepared for parents and, when available, can be accessed on the NI Family Support Website. <https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/>

Q45: What if too many parents wish to send their children into school?

A: Parents of vulnerable children and parents who are key/critical workers should only avail of this service if they have no other option. This group may choose to avail

of the facility, but they do not have to and the Department's strong advice is that they do not send their children to school if they have alternative childcare options.

Q46: Can staff administer medicine to children or take temperatures?

A: Existing guidance to schools on supporting pupils with medication needs continues to apply. The guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/support-pupils-medication-needs>

Schools should exercise judgement when accepting pupils from other schools and be fully informed by parents of pre-existing conditions and medication needs to determine if a safe environment can be provided.

Q47: Will a nurse or a medical professional be available/contactable?

A: Not all schools will have a nurse or medical professional. Schools should seek medical advice from the PHA if necessary.

Q48: How will the medical needs and allergies of children be known if schools are providing meals for children from other schools?

A: Schools should seek information on medical needs and allergies from parents of children who do not normally attend the school and carry out a risk assessment to determine if they can provide a safe environment for those children.

PRE-SCHOOL

Q49: What if my setting or class normally provides part-time pre-school provision?

A: Children should attend as usual. Further guidance will issue.

Q50: What happens with pre-school children who usually attend in the morning/afternoon?

A: Children should attend as usual. Further guidance will issue.

Q51: What if a child is usually in part-time nursery or part-time pre-school education provision?

A: Children should attend as usual. Further guidance will issue.

Q52: Does this cover nursery schools and nursery units in primary schools?

A: Yes.

Q53: Does this cover non-statutory pre-schools settings?

A: Yes. Non-statutory pre-school education providers will continue to be funded by the Education Authority and will not lose funding as a result of the closure arrangements. Non-statutory pre-school education providers should continue to submit monthly claims to the Education Authority in the usual way. Pre-school education provision in non-statutory community and voluntary settings is provided on a part-time basis, for a minimum of 2.5 hours per day, five days per week.

Q54: Can children attend a pre-school setting for part of the day, as well as attending another childcare setting?

A: Parents of vulnerable children and parents who are key workers should only avail of this service if they have no other option. This group may choose to avail of the facility, but they do not have to and the Department's strong advice is that they do not send their children to school if they have alternative childcare options. If childcare provision is available in another setting, children should not attend a pre-school or school.

EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Q55: Can external childcare providers continue to operate after school childcare provision in the school?

A: Yes, if the school is satisfied that it complies with PHA guidance.

Q56: What is the position with childcare provision outside of school?

A: The Department of Health has issued guidance to the child care sector and indicated further guidance will be prepared to provide clarity for the sector.

<https://www.health->

[ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/HM%20Letter%20to%20Childcare%20Sector_0.pdf](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/HM%20Letter%20to%20Childcare%20Sector_0.pdf)

Q57: Will registered childcare providers and schools be open over Easter holidays for holiday clubs and childcare?

A: Where possible, we would encourage registered childcare providers and schools to continue to look after critical workers' children and vulnerable children throughout the Easter holidays.

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Q58: Are special schools to open?

A: Yes – as those children who attend special schools have statements of special educational need and they fall within the definition of vulnerable children.

The schools should continue to work in partnership with parents and/or legal guardians to ensure that the best interests of children take precedence.

FUNDING

Q59: Will I receive additional funding to complete a deep clean or for additional cleaning products?

A: If a setting incurs additional costs, arising from exceptional or emergency situations, such as completing a deep clean, the purchase of additional cleaning products or the setup an isolation room, the school should contact the Education Authority, as funding authority, in the first instance.

Q60: When will schools be notified of their 2020-21 delegated budgets?

A: Following the Chancellor's budget statement on 11 March, the Finance Minister laid a statement to the Assembly on 16 March setting out the level of UK Government funding. The final 2020-21 budget for Northern Ireland Departments will be confirmed by the end of March. As soon as the Department is able to do so, it will advise schools immediately of 2020-21 delegated budgets.

Q61: Will funding be provided to enable the school to set up an isolation room?

A: If a setting incurs additional costs, arising from exceptional or emergency situations, such as completing a deep clean, the purchase of additional cleaning products or the setup an isolation room, the school should contact the Education Authority, in the first instance. In support of all schools opening on Monday the EA can provide emergency supplies to those schools that find themselves short of supplies.

The EA will be able to provide either a collection or delivery service over the weekend if schools need supplies. Individual schools will need to contact the EA's Covid -19 operations centre, which will continue to be operational over the weekend 8am to 8pm. The number is: 028 38368186.

Q62: A large number of pupils wish to attend my school. What do I do?

A: Schools should ascertain as soon as possible the likely number of children who will be attending. Schools should accommodate these children where possible, whether on their own premises or in consultation with other schools. The children who attend should be those highlighted and not children outside of these groups. If it

will take a period of time to make necessary arrangements, parents should be advised as to when their child can attend and should be advised not to send their child until this time.

Q63: Will I receive additional funding if I accept children who are not registered at my setting?

A: If a setting incurs additional costs arising from exceptional or emergency situations, the school should contact the Education Authority, as funding authority, in the first instance.

Q64: Will my school be indemnified for any legal claims arising out of Covid-19?

A: Existing arrangements will continue to apply for all controlled and maintained schools. Should schools in these sectors be notified of a legal claim (or potential legal claim), they should contact the Education Authority as Funding Authority in the first instance, who will liaise with the Department as required.

For Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated Schools and non-statutory pre-school settings participating in the pre-school education programme, a letter of comfort was issued by the Minister of Education on 22 March 2020 to provide cover for legal claims specifically in relation to Covid-19

GENERAL

Q65: If a hub school is not available and a parent has children which attend different schools, can they be taken to one school?

A: Yes, if one child's host school is not open or has indicated that it is unable to supervise a child, then the parent/carer may approach a sibling's school or an alternative school in their locality. The school would be permitted to admit the child as long as they can accommodate the child safely. The EA School Development service is available to help schools to manage solutions locally. Schools are permitted to work together to provide local solutions for local people.

Q66: What hours am I expected to open?

A: Schools and pre-schools should open for their normal hours at present. Further guidance will issue on part-time and full-time pre-school provision.

Q67: Can schools and pre-schools group together to provide 'hubs' where one setting caters for pupils from a number of settings?

A: This may be a suitable solution for some settings when staffing and child numbers become known.

Q68: How long is this anticipated to run and will schools be expected to open at weekends or over Easter holidays?

A: The focus is on providing care for a limited number of children of key/critical workers. Where possible, we would encourage, pre-education settings and schools to continue to look after critical workers' children and vulnerable children throughout the Easter holidays and consider whether weekend provision can be facilitated. This will be kept under review.

Q69: What arrangements are in place for families who cannot access provision in education settings for vulnerable children and those of key/critical workers?

A: The Department of Health has confirmed that it is intending to keep registered day-care and childminding going to meet the childcare needs of key workers and vulnerable children. While registered day-care settings remain open, the number of

children attending each setting must comply with the recent guidance issued by the Department of Health.

The Department of Health guidance for day care settings and information for parents is available on the NI Family Support Website
<https://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/Support/91/covid19-latest-advice-for-childcare-providers>.

The Department of Health is currently considering a help line for parents who have queries about childcare, information will also be updated routinely and available on the Family Support Website.

Q70: How will schools cater for children of key/critical workers where the child presents significant behaviour challenges?

A: If a school leader concludes that the school cannot deliver a safe and sustainable solution for children with behavioural or other issues, either because there will not be sufficient staff, or too many children are seeking to attend, the school should not offer educational provision. Principals should make contact with neighbouring settings to identify whether they have capacity to arrange suitable provision.