

Ofsted's regulatory work during national lockdown

05 November 2020

On 3 November 2020, following the government announcement of the national lockdown arrangements, we updated our [COVID-19 rolling update](#) guidance to add new details of how we will carry out our work during this time, starting from 5 November.

Most importantly, we will be sensitive to the impact of COVID-19 on providers and our priority will be the safety of children, childcare providers and our inspector workforce. We will continue to work within Public Health England guidance.

It is vital that we continue with our work to safeguard children and provide reassurance to parents about the safety of children and quality of childcare in the sector. If we have urgent safeguarding concerns, we may have to go on site to conduct our regulatory work, as we did during the initial lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will continue to conduct [registration](#) visits, early years [interim visits](#), and [childcare register inspections](#). When completing this work, we will carefully risk assess on a case-by-case basis whether we do this virtually, or on-site or a combination of the two. We will also continue to carry out other regulatory enforcement work both on and off-site, once we have risk assessed which is the most appropriate way to do this.

We know that providers are apprehensive of the impact of COVID-19 and we understand that visiting during this time may create additional anxiety or concern. We understand that [guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) advises to minimise visitors to settings as much as possible, and we understand that settings have put measures in place to do so. We will be sensitive to the additional pressures that a visit may place on a provider, and we will consider this in our risk assessment of whether to complete an on-site visit. Ofsted inspectors are permitted to enter premises registered with Ofsted that provide childcare. Inspectors will discuss with providers how to do this safely if we think it is necessary that we do. On-site visits will be important in some cases as we continue to do what is right for safeguarding children.

We know that we have previously said we are considering returning to EIF inspections in [January 2021](#), but that this date will be kept under review. Over recent months, we have been preparing for the return to more routine inspection work, when this is possible. As you may expect in the current circumstances, we are thinking carefully about when it is right to return to this work and considering what, if any adaptations we may need to make once they do take place again. We will continue to engage with stakeholder representative groups about our thinking.

I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for what you are doing in helping young children to learn, play and develop while keeping them safe in these difficult times.

Lisa Pascoe
Deputy Director, Regulation and Social Care