



## INDOOR PLAY AREAS FOR CHILDREN OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR SOFT PLAY EQUIPMENT

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This document sets out guidance on how to open indoor play (including indoor soft play) areas safely while minimising the risk of spreading COVID-19. It gives practical considerations for how guidance can be applied in the workplace and at these locations. The following is included:

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### 1. Introduction

This document is to help employers, employees and the self-employed working in England understand how to work as safely as possible and protect their customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This takes into account broader applicable guidance, such as the recommended [social distancing](#) and [face coverings](#) guidance.



While this guidance applies to England, you should always consider whether there are local restrictions in place in your area. If you live, work or volunteer in an area that is experiencing a local COVID-19 outbreak and where local restrictions have been imposed, different guidance and legislation will apply. Please consult the [local restrictions pages](#) to see if any restrictions are in place in your area.

Each business will need to adapt this into the specific actions it needs to take, depending on the nature of their business, including the size of business, how it is organised, operated and managed. A site-by-site approach is essential and COVID-19 risk assessment for premises will be unique. Therefore, this guidance should be used to translate to whatever areas are relevant to your business and any measures that are taken should fit safely with any operational needs.

This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that as a business or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics. It contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, take into account agency workers, contractors and other people including guests, as well as your employees.

To help you decide which actions to take, you need to carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, at a business and site level, just as you would for other health and safety related hazards. This risk assessment must be done in consultation with unions or workers.

## **2. COVID-19 Risk Assessment and managing risk**

COVID-19 is a public health emergency. To reopen a premises, operators must undertake a risk assessment to identify, assess and manage the risks of COVID-19, and in particular businesses should consider the risks to their workers, volunteers and customers. As an employer, you also have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety. This means you need to think about the risks they face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising you cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.

You must make sure that the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of COVID-19, using this guidance to inform your decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace and making a record of the significant findings. However, if you have fewer than five workers, or are self-employed, you don't have to write anything down



as part of your risk assessment. Your risk assessment will help you decide whether you have done everything you need to. There are [interactive tools](#) available to support you from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Employers have a duty to consult their people on health and safety. In a small business, you might choose to consult your workers directly. Larger businesses may consult through a health and safety representative, chosen by your employees or selected by a trade union. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the work and how you will manage risks from COVID-19. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that you take their health and safety seriously. You must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn't one, a representative chosen by workers. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of your workers creates a culture where relationships between employers and workers are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, workers should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer.

Employers and workers should always come together to resolve issues. If concerns still cannot be resolved, see below for further steps you can take.

Where the enforcing authority, such as the HSE or your local authority, identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks and risks to employees, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. For example, this would cover employers not taking appropriate action to socially distance, where possible. The actions the HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

#### **How to raise a concern if you are an employee:**

- contact your employee representative, if your workplace has one
- contact your trade union if you have one
- contact HSE at:



## **HSE COVID-19 enquiries**

Telephone: 0300 790 6787 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 5pm)

Online: [working safely enquiry for](#)

### **2.1 Managing Risk**

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected. In the context of COVID-19, this means protecting the health and safety of your workers and customers by working through these steps in order:

1. In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning (including disinfection of high footfall areas or common touchpoints and toilet/restrooms).
2. Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to ensure their employees can work safely. From 1 August 2020, this may be working from home, or within the workplace if COVID-19 secure guidelines are followed closely.
3. When in the workplace, everyone should make every reasonable effort to comply with the Government's [social distancing](#) guidance (2m distancing where possible, or 1m with additional mitigations where 2m is not viable).
4. Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between individuals.
5. Further mitigating actions include:
  - keeping the activity time of any activity where social distancing cannot be maintained as short as possible
  - using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
  - reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)
  - Using fixed screens or barriers to separate people from each other.



6. Finally, if people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one should be forced to work in an unsafe work environment.
7. In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

The recommendations in the rest of this document are ones you must consider as you go through this process.

If you have not already done so, you should carry out an assessment of the risks posed by COVID-19 in your workplace as soon as possible. When a building or space is repurposed - for example when there is any change in use or type or use or other circumstance - there needs to be a fire risk assessment. More information can be found on the [Health and Safety Executive website](#).

You should consider the security implications of any changes you intend to make to your operations and practices in response to COVID-19, as any revisions may present new or altered security risks or issues with accessibility which may need mitigations.

Whilst the risk to health from COVID-19 is at the forefront of everyone's minds, the threat of terrorism nonetheless remains substantial. It is essential that businesses and other organisations remain cognisant of these threats as they look to adjust their operations, ensuring that security measures are proactively adapted to support and complement other changes.

Failure to complete a risk assessment which takes account of COVID-19, or completing a risk assessment but failing to put in place sufficient measures to manage the risk of COVID-19, could constitute a breach of health and safety law. The actions the enforcing authority can take include the provision of specific advice to employers to support them to achieve the required standard, through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements. Serious breaches and failure to comply with enforcement notices can constitute a criminal offence, with serious fines and even imprisonment for up to two years. There is also a wider system of enforcement, which includes specific obligations and conditions for licensed premises.

Employers are expected to respond to any advice or notices issued by enforcing authorities rapidly and are required to do so within any timescales imposed by the enforcing authorities.



The vast majority of employers are responsible and will join with the UK's fight against COVID-19 by working with the government and their sector bodies to protect their workers and the public. However, inspectors are carrying out compliance checks nationwide to ensure that employers are taking the necessary steps.

## **2.2 Sharing the results of your risk assessment**

You must share the results of your risk assessment with your workforce. If possible, you should publish the results on your website (and we would expect all businesses with over 50 workers to do so).

We would expect all businesses to demonstrate to their workers and customers that they have properly assessed their risk and taken appropriate measures to mitigate this. You should do this by displaying a notification in a prominent place in your business and on your website, if you have one.

You should display the following notice in your workplace to show you have followed this guidance: **Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020**. There may also be other industry standards or marks that you can use to demonstrate to any visitors, guests and customers that you have thought carefully about risk.

## **3. Specific measures to take for soft play areas and frames**

Cleaning regimes should be reviewed before reopening. An enhanced cleaning routine must be established, documented, trialled and practiced to ensure all surfaces can be effectively cleaned before reopening the business.

For general hygiene precautions, centres should follow HSE guidance for [cleaning](#). For additional cleaning after a suspected case of coronavirus, centres should follow government guidance on [cleaning in non-healthcare settings outside the home](#)

### **3.1 Cleaning of Soft Play Areas and frames**

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Before opening you will need to identify where your **high contact surfaces** are. You should choose an appropriate cleaning method that is effective at removing the virus.



This method should consider which cleaning products should be used, in line with current guidelines, and the frequency at which high contact surfaces should be cleaned. As a minimum, these surfaces should be cleaned between booked sessions and/or at least every two hours, but your risk assessment may determine it needs to be more frequent. Particular attention must be paid to areas such as slides, monkey bars, enclosed crawl through 'tunnels' or tube slides and handholds.

2. Operators should select cleaning products that are effective and can be used in a way that does not expose people to additional risk. For example, only using certain chemicals when children are not around. Cleaning regimes should be implemented subject to a risk assessment. Refer to the [Cleaning in non-healthcare environments guidance](#) to ensure consistency.
3. Cleaning operators should ensure they follow the instructions for the products they use and pass this information onto the people who will be doing the cleaning. This should include application instructions, for example leaving chemicals applied for a period of time before wiping them off.
4. In addition to an enhanced cleaning routine, the soft play frame should be treated with a product as described below.  
There are several products on the market which provide ongoing protection keeping treated areas contamination free between cleaning cycles. These products form an antimicrobial coating on surfaces by forming an environment which makes it difficult for bacteria, viruses, fungi, spores and mould to reproduce.  
These products should conform with the relevant British standards such as EN1276, EN1650, EN14476.
5. Separate sensory rooms should be closed. These are areas which are predominantly - though not universally - for under 2s, and include several high-contact surfaces and may be hard to clean.
6. Ball pits must be closed or physically removed from frames before opening.
7. Roleplay props will also be considered as single-use items and a suitable system must be in place for the handling, cleaning and sanitisation of props to facilitate this. Role play rooms should be cleaned in line with other indoor area frequencies. Role play areas should be restricted to one booked group, to reduce the risk of items being shared between different groups of children.



8. In addition to the applicable of the measures above, operators should take extra measures to sanitise the frames, specifically:
- Remove difficult to clean items making it easier to clean the soft play area. For example, this would cover items such as soft punch bags, plastic balls and other easily removable items.
  - Any loose soft play items should either be removed or identified in a way that allows them to be included in the enhanced cleaning schedule. The risk of unidentified and mobile items is that they are missed or not included in an enhanced cleaning schedule. Identifying marks could be used, alongside a check sheet to record that each item has been cleaned. Pay particular attention to the withdrawal of unnecessary play items that children will put in their mouths or around their faces which are a high transmission hazard.

### **3.2 Soft Play Frame Operations**

#### Steps that will usually be needed:

1. The process for managing soft play frame areas will be a written document and form part of the business COVID-secure opening protocols. Employees will be trained in this process; records of such training will be kept and available to inspectors.
2. Before anyone is permitted to enter the soft play frame they will need to apply hand sanitiser at the point of entry to the play area. These sanitisation points should be adjacent to each separate play area (not just at the entrance to the building), supervised and the application of sanitiser made mandatory.
3. Operators should have a zero-tolerance policy, with a written policy for dealing with non-compliance. Staff should be trained in the handling of non-compliant persons.
4. Where customers are required to queue, clear social distancing floor markings to stop clumping are required. These should be in the form of boxes, hatching and floor graphics, so that visitors clearly understand what they are required to do.
5. The capacity of the soft play frame must be calculated to allow for the current guidance on social distancing - this will allow households to socially distance. On the basis of





normal play frame capacity calculations which is based on active floor area, capacity/occupancy will be reduced to **maximum 40%**, this will be based on the total number of users including parents or guardian supervising. Operators will be required to demonstrate calculation methods and justification for their capacity numbers. This will need to be monitored when in use as part of the ongoing risk assessment process, to ensure that capacities deliver social distance requirements. Evidence would need to be available for an inspecting officer.

6. The play frame will be subject to its own capacity, this will be calculated, as above to allow for social distancing in the frame area. Capacity management and social distancing will be controlled using management processes and each centre will adopt the process that is suitable for their setting, such as:
  - Separate entrance and exit points, which will be staffed, to monitor/regulate numbers to no more than the maximum persons allowed to enter the play structure at any one time. Staff should use tally counters to help monitor this.
  - Control via groups i.e. coloured wrist bands, all-in all-out systems.
  - Signage displayed at the entrance to the frame;
  - Encouraging parents to accompany children through the frame;
  - The natural one-way flow already built into structures (i.e. hard to climb slides);
  - Total centre capacity will not exceed the total number of persons allowed within the soft play frame.
7. The capacity for smaller play areas will be calculated as above. Where there isn't sufficient space to facilitate social distancing only one household per area will be permitted at any one time.
8. To aid social distancing and avoid pinch points the following examples may be used:
  - Direction arrows or minor alterations to establish a flow system. For example log ramps to be up only and deck climbs and slides to be down only. Floor pads are typically 1.2m square so additional signage can be erected to remind customers to remain two square floor pads apart from others while playing in the structure unless they are from one family group or bubble.
  - Risk assessments of pinch points within the frame. Control measures such as temporary closure of confined spaces or areas that encourage users to congregate may be necessary.
  - Staggered start times for people entering the play frame.



## 4. Customer face coverings

From 8 August 2020, it is now mandatory for visitors to indoor settings to wear face coverings. The Government has produced [guidance on when to wear a face covering and how to make your own](#). Children under the age of 11 and those who have health, age, equality or disability reasons may be exempt from wearing face coverings.

- Adult customers and children aged 11 and over will be required to wear a face covering before entering and keep it on until they leave, except when eating or drinking at your table, or when entering/whilst in the play frame.
- Operators will not routinely need to ask for written evidence of exemptions but will be required to take reasonable steps to promote compliance with the law. Therefore, operators should have policies in place to demonstrate this, examples of actions which could be taken for non-compliance could be refused entry or being asked to leave the premises.
- Wearing of face coverings is not mandatory for those working within indoor settings, employees will continue to follow guidance from their employer based on workplace occupational health and safety risk assessments.

## 5. NHS Test and Trace

The opening up of the economy following the COVID-19 outbreak is being supported by NHS Test and Trace. **You should assist this service by keeping a temporary record of your customers and visitors for 21 days**, in a way that is manageable for your business, and assist NHS Test and Trace with requests for that data if needed. This could help contain clusters or outbreaks.

Many businesses that take bookings already have systems for recording their customers and visitors – including restaurants, hotels, and hair salons. If you do not already do this, you should do so to help fight the virus. We have worked with industry and relevant bodies to design this system in line with data protection legislation, and further guidance can be found [here](#).

## 6. Social Distancing

You should maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible. Social distancing applies to all parts of a premises where business is conducted, not just the place where people



spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, staging sites and store rooms, canteens and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing.

Operators will have to reduce capacity before reopening to enable social distancing whilst within our facilities. Steps that will usually be needed include:

1. Centres should review and set lower occupancy within a facilities to suit the individual buildings and equipment design capacity, in line with best social distancing practice. At first start with a lower manageable capacity to monitor if your new procedures are effective and constantly review this as demand comes back into the sector.
2. Boxes, hatches and floor graphics should be used on the floor in queue lines, to show social distancing points, or physically modify queue lines to virtual queues using technology.
3. Before reopening, think about your staff shift patterns, split morning briefs into smaller groups, look at issuing briefs using staff notice boards or technology to circulate information to all staff members.
4. Your venue should be a pre-bookable only experience with set time sessions. Centres should ensure areas are fully cleaned between sessions. Adopt policies to encourage guests to print out tickets at home or use technology for guests to gain entry to our attractions without long wait times at reception desks.
5. As part of the booking process, you should not intentionally facilitate gatherings between a greater number of households than is permitted in their local areas. You should have due regard to the government guidance on [social distancing](#) and [meeting people from outside your household](#). You should take steps to ensure customer compliance with the limits on gatherings. These could include:
  - Informing customers of guidance through signage or notices at the point of booking or on arrival.
  - Ensuring staff are familiar with the guidance, and if any local restrictions are in place.
  - Asking customers for verbal confirmation of the number of households in their party at the point of arrival.



6. Once inside a centre, customers should remain with their group, and maintain appropriate social distance to individuals and groups outside their own.
7. Outdoor gatherings are limited to members of any two households or support bubbles, or a group of at most six people from any number of households.
8. Ways centres can achieve social distancing include
  - Utilisation fixed capacity operate with a fixed capacity allowing social distancing
  - Timed play sessions
  - Pre-booking and ticketed sessions
9. By developing techniques and practices to pre book time slots FEC's can manage demand across the day and avoid large groups congregating at key points. This will also help collect data for NHS Test and Trace in a more streamlined and efficient way.
10. Capacity will vary from centre to centre and is mainly dictated by the capacity of your play frames, H&S restrictions of your unit, fire limits, seating capacity and optimal design capacity.
11. Standards and Guidelines already in place for fully enclosed play equipment are BS EN 1176-10-2008 and BS 8409:2009 (the Facility) – capacity of play areas is calculated using table 1 of EN 1176-10-2008, your manufacturer should be able to provide you with this number.
12. Assess restaurant capacities and control measures to comply with social distancing, possibly removing every other table to increase social distancing for family groups. These should only be open in line with the Government guidance on [Restaurants, Pubs or Takeaway service](#).
13. Removal of some furnishings in lounge areas or the spreading out of furnishings such as benches and even picnic tables if you have outside space.
14. Risk assess arcades that have lots of human touch areas such as plastic guns, fruit machines, grab-toy machines etc. If remaining open then ensure social distancing and increased cleaning of machine buttons and other touch points.



15. Refrain from having staff socials for the foreseeable future.

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff. These include:

- Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning, (including disinfecting of heavy footfall and frequent touch points);
- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible;
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible;
- Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others);
- Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other;
- Introduction of hygiene screens in areas such reception till areas, shops and food pick up areas where social distancing cannot be achieved (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable, is acceptable).

## **7. Who should go to work?**

In order to keep the virus under control, it is important that people work safely. Working from home remains one way to do this. However, the risk of transmission can be substantially reduced if COVID-19 secure guidelines are followed closely.

Employers should consult with their employees to determine who can come into the workplace safely taking account of a person's journey, childcare responsibilities, protected characteristics, and other individual circumstances. Extra consideration should be given to those people at higher risk.

Businesses should consider the impact of workplace reopening on local transport, and take appropriate mitigating actions (e.g. staggered start and finish times for staff). When it is decided that workers should come into their place of work then this will need to be reflected in the COVID-19 risk assessment and actions taken to manage the risks of transmission in line with



this guidance. It is vital employers engage with workers to ensure they feel safe returning to work, and they should not force anyone into an unsafe workplace. Steps that will usually be needed include:

1. Consider the maximum number of people who can be safely accommodated on site.
2. Planning for a phased return to work for people safely and effectively.
3. Monitoring the wellbeing of people who are working from home and helping them stay connected to the rest of the workforce, especially if the majority of their colleagues are on-site.
4. Providing equipment for people to work at home safely and effectively, for example, remote access to work systems.

## **8. Protecting people who are at higher risk**

[Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals](#) may be advised not to work outside the home if the prevalence of disease in the community is very high.

[Clinically vulnerable individuals](#), who are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions), have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing and should be helped to work from home, either in their current role or in an alternative role.

If clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) individuals cannot work from home, they should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to stay at the [recommended distance](#) away from others. If they have to spend time within this distance of others, you should carefully assess whether the activity should continue. If so, further mitigating actions should be taken to reduce the risk of transmission between individuals.

As for any workplace risk you must take into account specific duties to those with protected characteristics, including, for example, expectant mothers who are, as always, entitled to suspension on full pay if suitable roles cannot be found. Particular attention should also be paid to people who live with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals. Steps that will usually be needed include:



1. Provide support for workers around mental health and wellbeing. This could include advice or telephone support.
2. See current guidance for advice on who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable groups.

## **9. People who need to self-isolate**

If you have symptoms of COVID-19—a high temperature, new and persistent cough or anosmia, however mild, you should self-isolate for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started OR if you are not experiencing symptoms but have tested positive for COVID-19 you should self-isolate for at least 10 days starting from the day the test was taken.

If you have tested positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develop symptoms during the isolation period, you should restart the 10 day isolation period from the day you develop symptoms.

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Enabling workers to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate.
2. See current guidance for [employees](#) and [employers](#) relating to statutory sick pay due to COVID-19.
3. See [current guidance](#) for people who have symptoms and those who live with others who have symptoms.

## **10. Equality in the workplace**

In applying this guidance, employers should be mindful of the particular needs of different groups of workers or individuals. For instance, employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled people in the workplace.

**It is breaking the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic such as age, ethnicity, sex or disability.**



Employers also have particular responsibilities towards disabled workers and those who are new or expectant mothers.

Steps that will usually be needed include:

1. Understanding and taking into account the particular circumstances of those with protected characteristics.
2. Involving and communicating appropriately with workers whose protected characteristics might either expose them to a different degree of risk, or might make any steps you are thinking about inappropriate or challenging for them.
3. Considering whether you need to put in place any particular measures or adjustments to take account of your duties under the equalities legislation, such as those who are hearing or visually impaired.
4. Making reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled workers being put at a disadvantage, and assessing the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.
5. Understanding and responding to the concerns of those who consider themselves at increased risk.
6. Making sure that the steps you take do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others, for example, those with caring responsibilities or those with religious commitments.

## **11. Protective equipment for employees**

The Government advises that when managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE (beyond what you usually wear) is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE. Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. The Government advises that unless you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, your risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited.





## **12. Ventilation**

Ventilation is an important part of mitigating against the transmission of COVID-19. Ventilation into the building should be optimised to ensure a fresh air supply is provided to all areas of the facility and increased wherever possible. Particular attention should be given to areas where high intensity exercise activity takes place.

To achieve this, specific measures should be implemented:

- The maximum occupancy of each indoor facility should be limited by providing a minimum of 100sqft per person. For this figure, the area is the net usable indoor facility space available to members to use, including changing rooms, toilet and wash facilities. Reducing capacity in this way whilst sustaining ventilation flows, will increase the typical current 10l/s/p flow rate of ventilation to at least 20l/s/p, as fewer people are being served by the ventilation system.
- Ventilation systems should provide 100% fresh air and not recirculate air from one space to another.

You should also consider:

- Increasing the existing ventilation rate by fully opening dampers and running fans on full speed.
- Operating the ventilation system 24 hours a day.
- Increase the frequency of filter changes.
- In the absence of known ventilation rates, a carbon dioxide sensor shall be used as a surrogate indicator to switch on additional mechanical ventilation or open windows.

Further guidance is provided in the [CIBSE COVID-19 Ventilation guidance](#).

## **13. Guest Communication**

Guest communications and resulting guest behaviours will play a large part in the relaunch of our centres. The use and operating culture of centres will need to be reviewed and assessed in line with the new social distancing protocols we now live with.



Changes in use and operation of the soft play centre should be communicated to visitors prior to planning a visit, at the main point of entry, and throughout your facility in key points. This should include information on:

- Social distancing requirements – both on the play frame and in the rest of the centre
- Cleaning and hygiene requirements
- Face covering requirements for those over 11
- How the centre will comply with NHS Test and Trace
- What to do if you think you are ill in the play centre

Furthermore communication throughout the entire guest journey will assist with the day to day operation and compliance with new centre procedures and customer guidance. When communicating safety messages owners/operators should ensure they are able to reach those with hearing or vision impairments. Consideration should also be given on how to assist those with disabilities with complying with the changes

### **Guest Pre-visit communications**

Steps that will usually be needed:

1. Utilise website and social media channels giving guests pre-visit information on what the centre has in place to control risks and support social distancing.
2. Pre-booking information on suitability of your facility and recommendations for guests from greater risk groups or medically vulnerable people not to attend.
3. Use pre-booking online question fields within the online journey to help guests establish if a trip to an FEC is suitable for them at this time.
4. Customers should be advised that if they are feeling ill, showing signs of the virus or live in the same household as someone with the virus, they should not be visiting the centre.

### **Information on arrival and throughout the centre**

Steps that will usually be needed:



1. Information should be displayed at main entrance points/reception areas about social distancing protocols in place in the facility, and the need to provide details for NHS Test and Trace.
2. Signage at hygiene stations, which may include hand sanitising products or traditional soap and water facilities along with directional signage around the facility to the nearest locations.
3. Signage in toilets about how to clean your hands correctly – use child-friendly signage as well as messages for adults.
4. Information throughout the facility about how to maintain social distancing while using the play equipment. Use of floor markings, such as boxes, hatches and floor graphics, in any areas where traffic can be high to help guests respect social distancing.
5. Information around the facility highlighting the increased cleaning schedules in place and this may involve some areas being closed off periodically to fully sanitise the tables and play kit.
6. Utilise public safety announcements and digital screens to repeat practices being applied throughout the facility.
7. Information requiring children to wash hands prior to attending the party room and time should be allocated for this. Regular announcements to remind guests about handwashing.
8. Information to remind adults and children not to put their mouths on equipment or their hands in their mouths
9. Display information about what a guest should do if they start to feel ill whilst on site – and a protocol put in place, where customers are taken to an area to minimise contact with staff and other guests, whilst assistance is sought. Try and promote your site as a contactless payment preferred venue – cashless and pre booked tickets online and food ordering.

Additional measures that can reduce the risk COVID-19 transmission in playgrounds and outdoor gyms focus on promoting responsible behaviour by children, parents, carers and guardians.



For example, owners and operators should consider putting up signs to make clear to users, parents, guardians and carers that:

- consumption of food or drink on play equipment or in the playground area is banned
- parents, guardians or carers should dispose of all litter including any used protective wear such as face coverings or gloves properly in litter bins, taking it home where a bin is not provided. People should dispose of face coverings and PPE in a 'black bag' waste bin or litter bin. Face coverings should not be put in a recycling bin.

Owners and operators should provide clear information to parents to set clear expectations about how children should behave when using playgrounds during COVID-19. This may be through one or more of: signs adjacent to the playground, online (e.g. operator websites or community message boards), or through leafleting.

Owners and operators may wish to consider reminding parents of the owner/operator's legal obligations towards the playground users such as signs stating that allowing children to use playground equipment is done at their own risk where appropriate.

## **14. Staff Communication and staff competence**

### **Staff communication**

It is vital to ensure staff information, instruction and training is reviewed, updated and refreshed at this time of reopening. The team may have been out of the business for some time and only seeing any centre updates via social media. Retraining your staff on your new protocols and listening to any concerns or inputs they have; they will be the front line in your operations. Staff may have a lot of questions when returning to work and may be nervous about crowds. Ensure that your staff are fully prepared and have all the skills, knowledge and necessary information.

Time should be allocated prior to opening to reintroduce operating protocols to provide safe places of work for them to be able to return to and perform their role in providing a safe place for our customers.

Devise a system to allow you to establish staff who may have illnesses, any health concerns regarding Covid-19, and any team members who may have been in contact with someone with



Covid-19 prior to their work. More information on protecting clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals can be found in the [Visitor Economy guidance](#).

## **Staff Competence**

Staff in all departments of our businesses may have had extended time away from their job roles resulting in a loss of competence. Centres should apply policies and procedures on relaunch as at any other time. If amendments are to be made to current policy and procedure, then approach this on a risk assessed basis. Each department will have different complexity of tasks and the staff members completing the most complex of tasks should at minimum be reassessed. Suggestions on training and assessment:

- Use someone who is most relevant or competent in COVID-19 control measures to complete training and assessment. It's not always the managers that know how the equipment and processes work the best.
- Review your own training policies.
- If you do not have competent people at the initial stages of re-opening in some areas or on certain areas then do not operate them until training can be completed, the public will understand through an open and honest approach.

## **15. Considering children with additional needs**

Owners/operators must take into account the requirements of children with additional needs.

Issues that are likely to be specific to this group include:

- an understanding that many need frequent reminders about rules of behaviour in playground settings
- changes to familiar environments are likely to require longer periods of adjustment children with physical and sensory disabilities may need assistance with moving from one place to the next
- some children with additional needs such as autism find it difficult to adjust to particular clothing requirements, and therefore may be less willing to use face coverings or similar if requested
- some additional needs are not evident, such as hearing loss, and may therefore account for non-responsiveness to verbal instruction



- queuing for apparatus or toilets can be a source of frustration, and the cause of agitation at higher risk of being involved in bullying incidents.

## **16. Food and Beverage**

Prior to re-opening all normal protocols need to be carried out for food and beverage areas in accordance with Environment Health standards. Facilities should only be opened in line with government regulations.

Centres should follow Government guidance on [Restaurants, Pubs and Takeaways](#). Centres should review protocols to best deliver the safest food service operations to our guests, whilst also ensuring social distancing measures. This may include a reduced service or re-structuring how the traditional cafe servery operates and is laid out.

## **17. Toilets**

Public toilets, portable toilets and toilets inside the premises should be kept open and carefully managed to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Steps that will usually be needed:

- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency and to avoid touching your face, and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.
- Consider the use of social distancing marking in areas where queues normally form, and the adoption of a limited entry approach, with one in, one out (whilst avoiding the creation of additional bottlenecks).
- To enable good hand hygiene consider making hand sanitiser available on entry to toilets where safe and practical, and ensure suitable handwashing facilities including running water and liquid soap and suitable options for drying (either paper towels or hand driers) are available.
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets, with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage. Use normal cleaning products, paying attention to frequently hand touched surfaces, and consider use of disposable cloths or paper roll to clean all hard surfaces.
- Keep the facilities well ventilated, for example by fixing doors open where appropriate.



- Special care should be taken for cleaning of portable toilets and larger toilet blocks.
- Putting up a visible cleaning schedule can keep it up to date and visible.
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.

## **18. Maintenance**

Many attractions within our facilities may have been sitting for lengthy periods with little or no operation. These attractions will need to have a detailed assessment before being put back into public use. There is an array of issues that could occur during an extended closed period including corrosion, change in characteristics of lubricants, rodents, excess dust to name just a few. Many planned preventative checks would have been missed during this period including daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly checks etc. It will be essential that your maintenance program is reviewed and missed checks either completed or risk assessed.