



COVID-19 guidance for licensed early learning services at Alert Level 2

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Introduction

Public Health officials have advised that all early learning services and kōhangareo are safe to be open at Alert Level 2, if appropriate public health measures are put in place.

Our experience in New Zealand and overseas with COVID-19 over the last four months shows that it does not infect or affect children and teens in the same way it does adults. So children and teens have low infection rates, they don't become that unwell if they do get infected, and they don't tend to pass the virus on to adults.

At Alert Level 2 it's now okay to leave home, but we need to do so in a safe and conscientious way. The two key public health principles that support our approach at Alert Level 2 are first to minimise the risk that someone gets infected, and second to ensure we can identify and contact anyone who has been in close contact with a person, if someone in a service is infected.

In an early learning environment, it is not practical to have a physical distance between children and adults. Young children require a lot of physical support and it is not possible to explain or maintain a physical distance between young children. This means good hygiene practices are even more important.

It is important that parents fully support this approach by doing their bit - keeping children home if they are unwell and seeking medical advice about whether a child may need to be tested; and ensuring great hygiene practices at all times.

This guidance has been developed to support licensed early learning services to operate during Alert Level 2. It is an iterative document that will be updated as we learn and understand more about COVID-19 under Alert Level 2. We suggest you add the following links to your favourites and check them regularly:

- <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>
- <http://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/advice-for-early-learning-services/>
- <https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/how-the-ministry-works/early-learning-bulletin/>

When we move to Alert Level 2 some services will have been operating under Alert Level 3 restrictions and others will be opening for the first time. We recognise this and our aim is to help you plan and have procedures and policies in place to manage the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This guidance builds on the principles of your existing plans for dealing with emergencies and infectious illness and aligns to licensing standards and criteria wherever possible.

You must follow public health requirements. Under Alert Level 2, it is safe for all early learning services and kōhangareo to open. Safe and sensible practices for hygiene and contact tracing will be the norm, and all children will be able to return, so long as they remain well.

For children who are not able to attend an early learning service or kōhangareo, you will need to offer distance learning support throughout Alert Level 2.

Each service or kōhangareo has an obligation to eliminate health and safety risks where possible. Where this is not possible you must substitute or provide the highest level control possible. To that end, there is an expectation that you look to maintain, or create new practices that meet or exceed the public health measures.

We acknowledge this guidance does not reflect differences in philosophy and learning settings which exist across the sector, however, the public health measures **must** be met by all services and kōhangareo that are open under Alert Level 2.

As this guidance applies to all licensed early learning settings our language for referring to teachers, educators, kaiako, or adults required to meet ratio requirements has been standardised to staff, adults or educators, so think about how the guidance applies to your setting.

Certificated playgroups can operate under Alert Level 2. As they operate under separate regulations we have developed separate guidance to support certificated playgroups to open under Alert Level 2.

Although a number of early learning services opened at Alert Level 3, services will need to keep in contact with parents as they work through their plans to shift to Alert level 2.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact your regional Ministry office.

List of public health measures in early learning services and kōhangareo

Specific public health measures to be taken in early learning services and kōhangareo are listed below and are further explained in following sections of this guidance:

- Parents are asked to keep any sick children at home. If a sick child comes to the service, or shows symptoms, send them home.
- Indoor temperature needs to be set at a minimum of 18 degrees Celsius. This minimum must be met.
- Young children require a lot of physical support and it is not possible to explain or maintain a physical distance between young children given the age of the children and set up of centres. This means good hygiene practices are even more important. There does not need to be a measurable physical distance between children or children and staff.
- Indoor and outdoor space requirements return to standard licence requirements, ie 2.5 sqm indoors and 5 sqm outdoors.
- Ensure all children and adults regularly wash and dry their hands.
- Ensure hand sanitiser is available but staff/kaimahi supervise its location and use.
- Ensure that children have their own food containers and do not give and take food to and from each other. Food can be supplied in accordance with public health guidance.
- Outdoor play areas can be used, including sandpits.
- Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily.
- Contact tracing must be in place to record who is on site every day.
- PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health officials.
- Upon advice from the local medical officer of health, any educational facilities connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing, and then potentially for a further 14 days.

General principles for Alert Level 2 that apply to early learning and kōhangareo settings

All early learning services and Kōhangareo are physically open. Distance learning is available for those unable to attend early learning (e.g. where there are people self-isolating).

Services and kōhangareo are able to operate to their full licence numbers providing they can continue to meet public health measures.

You should continue to support children who are unable to attend your service (e.g. those that are self-isolating) through distance learning.

Upon advice from the local medical officer or health, any educational facilities connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing, and then potentially for a further 14 days.

If there is a confirmed or probable case linked with early learning service or kōhangareo, you will be advised of that by the Medical Officer of Health or your local Public Health Authority. Health authorities will direct you of the next steps. Your service will continue to be funded if required to close for this reason.

Our regional Ministry of Education staff will work with you and local health authorities to agree a plan. That will happen quickly and support will be provided to assist you to communicate with and support your parent community and staff.

If the person or persons who are a confirmed or probable case have worked in or attended your service when they could have been infectious (which could start up to 2 days prior to having symptoms) your service will be closed for at least 72 hours to allow time for contact tracing and a clean of the service to align with Ministry of Health guidelines.

Close contacts will be required to self-isolate and will need to monitor for symptoms. In some situations health authorities could require closure for longer periods of time, up to 14 further days. This is likely to be because health authorities consider there could be risk of community transmission or there could be a large number of cases that mean a high proportion of children and staff could be considered close contacts and therefore need to self-isolate.

See [Managing confirmed or probable cases](#) section below for further information.

Early learning services able to operate with their full licence numbers.

Playcentres and certificated playgroups are able to operate. We have developed separate guidance for playgroups.

Home-based services can operate as normal. Visiting Teachers (VTs) will now resume visiting educators and the children receiving education and care in person.

Electronic methods to connect with educators used under Alert Level 3 no longer satisfy the visiting requirements under the Regulations. If VTs are in a high risk group then you must consider how to support the VTs to take additional precautions and ensure that homes are visited as required.

In all cases public health requirements about temperature, hygiene and cleanliness must be met.

The public health requirements are outlined below.

Staff at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. They may work, if they agree with their employer that they can do so safely.

It is important that people who are vulnerable to COVID-19 are supported to make the right choices for their situation.

Services and kōhangareo that are open must still meet first aid qualification and ratio requirements, including supervision by a Person Responsible at all times children are attending.

Higher risk groups are outlined here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public#risk>

Mass gatherings

Educational facilities are not considered mass gatherings because they operate in a controlled environment. This means there are no restrictions on numbers of people indoors or outside during the operating hours for early learning services and kōhangareo other than what other public health or health and safety measures require, and usual licensing and building requirements.

The exception is where people from outside the early learning service or kōhangareo may be attending the gathering then the indoor mass gathering rules will apply.

Where people from outside the early learning service are included, you need to consider the following as potential mass gatherings:

- Meetings, hui, events, excursions, and celebrations
- On-site training and professional development
- Use of site/premise by another group including hiring out in the evenings and during the weekend e.g. for birthday parties.

These gatherings, where people from outside the early learning service or kōhangareo may be attending, can continue but public health measures **must** be met.

Indoor events must be seated, be for less than 2 hours and apply physical distancing. Contact tracing processes must be used.

Outdoor events can be seated or standing, with physical distancing. Contact tracing processes must be used.

We recommend you review any up-coming gatherings. If the public health measures cannot be met the gathering must not proceed regardless of the size of the gathering.

Requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

To meet your requirements under the Health and Safety Act 2015 during Alert Level 2 you must manage risks and protect staff, children and young people. How you will do this needs to be detailed in your COVID-19 safety plan.

The expectation of the government, community, staff and regulators is that services will meet the highest possible standards and that management and individual staff actively manage adherence to the safety measures and expectations. It is expected that all involved ensure they are looking out for the health and safety of their colleagues and community, while at work. It is crucial that all managers are seen to be leaders in this work.

Workplaces are obliged to eliminate transmission risks where possible and where not, to substitute work practices or provide as high a level of control as possible. A simple example is where possible, propping or wedging a door open rather than focusing on wiping the handles regularly. It is expected that you maintain or create new practices that meet or exceed the public health requirements as they are updated.

Implementing or maintaining infectious disease controls remains vital for the health and safety of workers and other people.

Early learning services who are resuming for the first time need to think about how to work differently to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

For early learning services who are already operating, now is a good time to revisit the approach you already have in place.

The key controls for work and workplaces are:

- ensure people who are sick or who have COVID-19 symptoms stay away from your service
- maintain physical distancing (in early learning services this means staff maintaining a physical distance so that they are not breathing on or touching each other)
- enable good hygiene practices
- keep track of all people that enter your service

As you're thinking about what working at Alert Level 2 means for how you operate, you need to consider how you'll implement these infection controls.

It's important that you discuss your approach to operating safely at Alert Level 2 with staff or their representatives. WorkSafe recommend you talk with your staff about which controls you'll use at this level and how this may differ from what you did at Alert Level 3. This means your staff will understand how you intend to manage work safely and what they need to do to help.

WorkSafe also recommend you document your Alert Level 2 approach so it can be shared with others, including parents, caregivers and wider community. This will also make it easier to regularly review and update your approach.

To ensure you are minimising the risk of COVID-19 appropriately, and that your early learning service can continue to operate safely, you need to consider the following questions.

- How will you manage the risks of restarting part or all of your operations at Alert Level 2?
- How will you ensure all staff are able to keep themselves safe from exposure to COVID-19?
- How will you gather information on your staff's wellness to ensure they are safe and well to work?
- How will you operate your service in a way that keeps staff, children, young people and other people coming on-site safe from exposure to COVID-19?
- How will you manage an exposure or suspected exposure to COVID-19?
- How will you check to see if your work processes and risk controls are effective?
- How do any changes impact on the risks of the work you do?

This guidance has been designed to support you in this process.

Public health measures for all licensed early learning services and kōhangareo at Alert Level 2

Some measures are absolute requirements and are indicated with a '**must**' in the text below. We have also included recommendations and best practice that you should consider when determining how your service will operate safely under Alert Level 2.

Specific public health measures to be taken in early learning centres are:

Indoor temperature which is currently a minimum of 16 degrees Celsius needs to be increased to 18 degrees Celsius. This minimum must be met

- You **must** maintain a minimum temperature of 18 degrees during operating hours at Alert Level 2. This is above the standard licensing requirement of 16 degrees.
- You should ensure rooms, particularly those where children are sleeping, are well ventilated to keep the temperature at a comfortable level.

Young children require a lot of physical support and it is not possible to explain or maintain a physical distance between young children given the age of the children and set up of services. This means good hygiene practices are even more important. There does not need to be a measurable physical distance between children or children and staff. However adults should where practicable use 1m as a guide between themselves and other adults.

- At Alert Level 2, there does not need to be a measurable physical distance between children or children and staff. In addition, bubbles are no longer required. However, good hygiene practices remain very important, services must be managing where and who is present and processes must be in place to support contact tracing.
- Adults should, where practicable, use 1m as a guide between themselves and other adults. For example in the staff room, you should consider how you deploy staff to maintain physical distance where possible.

The minimum licensed indoor space for children will revert back to the licence requirements of 2.5 sqm per child. Outdoor requirement of 5 sqm is also as per the licensing criteria.

- You will be able to operate at your normal enrolment levels as long as you can meet public health measures and regulated licensing requirements, including adult:child ratios.

Parents are asked to keep any sick children at home. If a sick child comes to the centre, send them home.

- You need to communicate clearly with parents that children **must** not attend the service if they are sick. If parents or caregivers are sick, they **must** not bring their child to the service. You could consider including this information as part of an addendum to the existing enrolment agreement that parents or caregivers agree to and sign. This could be one page setting out the terms of enrolment under Alert Level 2. Any agreements with parents under Alert Level 3 will need to be revised for Alert Level 2.
- Any child that becomes unwell while at the service **must** be immediately isolated and arrangements made for them to be collected by their parents or caregivers. Parents/caregivers should seek medical advice about whether a child may need to be tested.
- If anyone at your service has symptoms of a respiratory illness, you should call Healthline ([0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453)) for advice. A test for COVID-19 may be suggested as part of efforts to quickly detect and eliminate the virus in the community.
- There is no requirement to notify your community that either a child or staff member is unwell or has been tested for COVID-19, as the proportion of those tested returning a positive result is very low. There are also privacy concerns to take into account. If you are notified of a positive test result, Public Health and the Ministry will support you with messaging to your community.

Ensure all children regularly wash and dry their hands.

- You should actively encourage staff/kaimahi and children/tamariki to regularly wash their hands, including on arrival to the service, and before and after meals. The Ministry of Health advise handwashing for at least 20 seconds, and drying hands thoroughly afterwards. Regular routines such as washing hands after blowing noses, toileting or changing nappies should continue to be emphasised.

- Staff/kaimahi and educators should direct and supervise hand washing at a minimum of before and after eating food and going to the toilet, either through washing hands with soap and water, or use of hand sanitiser according to need. Children who are too young to wash their own hands will need to have this done for them regularly, including after having their nappy changed.

Ensure hand sanitiser is available but teachers/staff supervise its location and use.

- Where soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitiser should be provided in every occupied room and staff and children actively encouraged to use this.
- Staff/kaimahi should know where the hand sanitiser is available in the service, and should supervise its use by children. You must not leave hand sanitiser within reach of children.

Encourage good sneezing and coughing etiquette.

- Encourage everyone to cough and sneeze into their elbow to catch the droplets and stop them getting onto hands.
- <https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19/how-were-uniting/cough-or-sneeze-into-your-elbow/>

Ensure that children have their own food containers and do not give and take food to and from each other. Food can be supplied in accordance with public health guidance.

- You **must** ensure there is no sharing of food and drink between children. This includes birthday parties at the service, and candles should not be used.
- You **must** ensure drink bottles, baby bottles, crockery and cutlery are not shared between children.
- If continuing to provide food prepared on the premises, food handlers **must** adhere to standard good hygiene practices. See this link for advice for food handlers:
- Adults **must** follow the same principles and ensure they are not sharing food, crockery or cutlery while having meal breaks.

All toys and resources can be used

- Toys that had been put away under Alert Level 3 because they cannot be easily wiped down or cleaned frequently can be used again if all children are regularly washing their hands and are staying home if unwell.
- This includes soft toys and dress-ups, playdough and finger paint.
- You should consider your procedure for ensuring children wash their hands or use hand sanitiser regularly.
- Toys should be wiped down at the end of each day. Dress ups and other fabric items should be regularly laundered. Any item that has been in children's mouths should be removed from the playspace and thoroughly cleaned.

Outdoor play areas and equipment including sandpits can be used but children must wash their hands after use.

- You should consider your procedure for ensuring children wash their hands or use hand sanitiser after playing outside.

Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily.

- You **must** ensure you have appropriate cleaning supplies and these are stored safely out of reach of children.
- You **must** ensure thorough cleaning of all surfaces takes place at the end of each operating day as a minimum. In addition sleep furniture needs to be wiped down daily.
- Make sure the specific instructions are followed for the disinfectant being used (e.g. spray and leave on surfaces for 30 seconds before wiping down).
- Ensure the availability of appropriate cleaning supplies (e.g. disinfectant and cloths) for cleaning of high-touch surfaces. It is recommended that cleaning cloths are disposable.
- You should develop a routine to disinfect and clean high touch surfaces (e.g. play gyms, tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, sinks) regularly throughout the day. In a space with crawling infants, this will include table legs and items a child uses to pull themselves up to a standing position.

Contact tracing registers must be in place to record who is on site each day, who visits e.g. parents.

- You **must** record the date, time, name of any person on-site (staff, child, parent/caregiver or any visitor) and ensure their phone contact details and physical addresses are included. Your attendance sheets and visitor books could be used for this purpose.

Examples of visitors:

- Parents/caregivers if they enter the premises.
- Tradespeople completing repairs in the premises.
- Education support workers working with children with learning support needs.
- You **must** ensure any person (staff, child, parent/caregiver or any visitor) who has flu-like symptoms do not enter the premises. The Director-General of Health has indicated these are symptoms such as sore throat, cough, sneezing, blocked ears, head cold, fever or body aches.
- You should consider limiting visitors inside the premises where possible to facilitate physical distancing between adults.

PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational setting by the Public Health Service.

- The risk of infection increases the closer you are to someone who is infectious and the longer duration of time that you spend close to that person.

- In early learning services, all children and staff with any symptoms must stay at home.
- Standard hygiene measures remain important including:
 - hand hygiene – that is, washing hands regularly with soap and water and drying well, or using hand sanitiser when soap and water aren't available
 - coughing or sneezing into tissues or your elbow and then performing hand hygiene
 - cleaning surfaces regularly.

Public Health officials have advised that if these measures are in place, then personal protective equipment is not needed.

Operating your service orkōhangareoat Alert Level 2

Site preparation

A summary of key site requirements for operating under Alert Level 2 is available here:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Covid-19/Early-Learning-services-checklist-for-Alert-Level-2.docx>

Staffing

- All staff can return to work.
- **Staff at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19** (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. Unless required to self-isolate on public health advice it is expected that all employees are able to return to work on site, but are asked to do so safely.
- Staff **must** stay at home if they are sick with COVID-19, or unwell generally.
- They **must** stay home if they need to self-isolate, as per Ministry of Health guidelines, due to recent travel or close contact with someone confirmed to have COVID-19.
- They **must** stay home if they are caring for dependents who need to self-isolate, as per Ministry of Health guidelines.

The health and safety of staff and children attending your early learning service should continue to be your main priority at Alert Level 2.

Staff who become unwell at the service **must** be sent home. You should have a process for managing this in terms of continued compliance with ratio requirements.

We recommend taking a health and safety risk-based approach to understand and investigate staff concerns in good faith, refer to the WorkSafe website for further information.

[Workers - Managing Health and Safety - WorkSafe website](#)

Services that are not able to operate safely within the parameters set by the public health measures should remain closed. Please contact the Ministry of Education if this applies to your service so that we can assist you where possible.

You will already have started to think about how your service can safely operate under Alert Level 2 within the public health measures. If you opened under Alert Level 3 you will be able to revise your plan.

WorkSafe has developed guidance and a template that you could use to develop your plan. You do not need to use the template but it is a useful tool for things you should consider and include in your plan.

[Your COVID-19 safety plan - what you need to think about - WorkSafe website](#)

You should involve staff/kaimahi in the development of the plan to help you assess risks and identify solutions. All staff should be familiar with the plan before you open.

Staff/kaimahi who are over 70 or who have existing conditions which makes them more at risk

At Alert Level 2, people who are at risk of getting a severe illness from COVID-19 can go back to work, if appropriate public health control measures can be put in place.

Staff and employers should discuss and agree whether additional public health control measures can be put in place, whether these workers can work from home, or if not, what leave and pay arrangements will apply.

Staff/kaimahi who are pregnant

People who are in their last trimester of pregnancy have been identified as 'at risk' from COVID-19 and are listed on the COVID-19 website <https://covid19.govt.nz/individuals-and-households/health-and-wellbeing/vulnerable-people/>.

Health experts do not yet know if people who are pregnant are impacted by COVID-19 in the same way as other people. However, people who are pregnant experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk from some infections, particularly in the third trimester.

At Alert Level 2, people who are at risk of getting a severe illness from COVID-19 can go back to work, if appropriate public health control measures can be put in place.

Staff and employers should discuss and agree whether additional public health control measures can be put in place, whether these workers can work from home, or if not, what leave and pay arrangements will apply.

Cleaning

If you didn't open under Alert Level 3 you will want to undertake a thorough clean prior to re-opening. There is no specific action you need to take for COVID-19 in regard to cleaning prior to re-opening. Once staff/kaimahi and then children are on site, regular (at least daily) cleaning of surfaces is recommended alongside your usual cleaning schedule.

Regular (at least daily) cleaning of surfaces is recommended alongside your usual cleaning schedule.

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Review your cleaning policies and practices and consider increased cleaning for high touch surfaces (door handles, table tops in common spaces etc.) and bathrooms.

There is some information about cleaning surfaces on the [COVID-govt.nz](https://www.covid.govt.nz) website.

Accessing hand sanitiser

We have streamlined access to government contracts to support you to purchase sanitiser, cleaning products and hygiene supplies from [NXP](#) or [Office Max](#) at preferential prices. Both suppliers have stock of sanitiser and cleaning products and have national distribution networks.

If you already order through one of these companies, you can continue to order through your normal channels and your pricing will be adjusted to the lower preferential pricing (this will happen within 24 hours).

Early learning services who do not currently purchase from one of these two suppliers can call either of the suppliers and place an order over the phone – NXP on **0800 726 484**, or OfficeMax on **0800 426 473**.

Learning Support

At Alert Level 2 learning support staff and independent early intervention providers are able to provide direct support to children and families/whānau across multiple sites and for those learning from home. Centre-based early intervention services will be open at Alert Level 2, while also providing remote support.

Education Support Workers (ESWs) are able to support children attending a service during this time. They can work across multiple early learning services during Alert Level 2. Early learning services and kōhangareowill need to work through the allocation of these resources across their sites in order to provide the required support to all the children with learning needs they have attending.

Offering transport to and from service

If you transport children to and from your service think about how you can best manage this. The vehicle will need to be included as part of your daily cleaning routine during Alert Level 2. Physical distancing of 1m is encouraged between the driver and parents and whānau.

Excursions

Excursions are possible during Alert Level 2 providing you can meet the physical distancing requirements under Alert Level 2, that children and staff must maintain a 2m distance from others outside the service.

Children that are enrolled at multiple services

Under Alert Level 2 children can resume their previous attendance at multiple services.

Parents need to ensure that enrolment agreements are up to date.

Information to support parents

The Ministry's parent website has Alert Level 2 information [here](#) and a parents' checklist [here](#). You may wish to share these links with your parents and caregivers. The checklist reminds parents what they need to do to assist you with your planning. It also includes information to assist parents prepare their child if they need to return to school.

Ongoing compliance with ECE Regulations and Licensing Criteria at Alert Level 2

The ECE Regulations and Licensing Criteria set minimum standards and requirements to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children attending licensed early learning services.

At Alert Level 2, we expect services/kōhangareo to comply with all regulatory requirements. The health, safety and well-being of children and staff should remain your primary consideration.

If you have any concerns regarding compliance with either the Alert Level 2 health measures or ECE licensing requirements please contact your local Ministry of Education office here.

<http://education.govt.nz/our-work/contact-us/regional-ministry-contacts/>

Managing confirmed or probable cases

If there was a confirmed or probable case linked with your early learning service, you will be advised of that by the Medical Officer of Health.

Our regional Ministry of Education staff will work with you and local health authorities to agree a plan. That will happen quickly and **support will be provided to assist you to communicate with and support your parent community and staff.**

If the person or persons who are a confirmed or probable case have worked in or attended your service when they could have been infectious (which could start 2 – 3 days prior to having symptoms) your service will be closed for at least 72 hours to allow time for contact tracing and a clean of the service to align with Ministry of Health guidelines.

Close contacts at your service would be anyone who had:

- face-to-face contact in any setting within two metres of a case for 15 minutes or more
- having been in a closed environment (e.g. hospital waiting room) within 2 m of a case for 15 minutes or more

Close contacts will be required to self-isolate and will need to monitor for symptoms.

There is information about [self-isolation](#) and [Factsheets for contacts](#) on the COVID19.govt.nz and Ministry of Health websites. The Ministry has more information about what to do if you have a confirmed or probable case [here](#).

Further closure for up to 14 days

In addition to closure for 72 hours for contact tracing health authorities could require closure for longer periods of time, up to 14 further days. This is likely to be because health authorities consider there could be risk of community transmission or there could be a large number of cases within an early learning service that mean a high proportion of children and staff could be considered close contacts and therefore need to self-isolate.

Support is available for you

A reminder that Healthline continues to be available to support anyone who might be experiencing symptoms or who has been asked to self-isolate - call for free on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453).

If you become aware of a case associated with your early learning service and haven't received that notification from health authorities, please contact your local public health unit or your local Ministry of Education contact for information and support:

- [Public health unit contacts](#)
- [Local Ministry of Education contacts](#)

General cleaning information following a suspected, probable or confirmed case

See this link for general cleaning principles:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/general-cleaning-information-following-suspected-probable-or-confirmed-case-covid-19>

Transitions back into early learning/kōhangareo – into, within and beyond

Some children may be more ready than others to integrate back into previous routines while others may need additional support to transition back.

Moving into a new and different environment is a time of change and adaptation for children, their families/whānau and staff. Responding to and managing the current pandemic environment is a time of change. Support for children and their families/whānau as they transition between home and other early learning settings will be important at this time. Remember individuals respond to change differently. Some may be excited, some take it in their stride, while others experience anxiety.

A child does not adapt to and cope with change in isolation. Everyone in the child's world plays an important part in facilitating the process of change with children. Early childhood teachers are important in these transitions as they support and role-model for children and their families/whānau to navigate their pathway to a new place.

Making time to listen carefully to the voices and perspectives of all children and their families/whānau during this time will be critical.

Theme	Further Details
Transitioning children back into your service	<p>Click on the link here for some helpful resources:</p> <p>Sparklers has a range of calming activities for young children you could try https://sparklers.org.nz/ (external link).</p> <p>There are some great online apps for this as well. Get children or young people to explore these. For example Headspace https://www.headspace.com/ (external link) has a range of things that help people keep calm and activities that help with sleep.</p>

Funding at Alert Level 2

The Ministry of Education funded the early learning sector on March 2 with advance funding covering the period up to 30 June.

We are currently confirming the funding approach for Alert Level 2 which we will communicate to you shortly. We have received questions from the sector regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the upcoming 01 July advance funding payment and will provide detailed responses soon.

Submitting attendance information weekly starting from week ending 15 May 2020

We previously needed you to report daily on the physical attendance of children. Thank you to everyone for your support with this. We ask that you continue to do this until 15 May 2020 so we have a full picture of attendance information for the week.

It is important that we continue to gather attendance information for both early learning services and schools more regularly. This information will continue to be used to:

1. report, at an aggregated level, to the National Crisis Monitoring Centre on levels of attendance at early learning services/kōhangareo and schools during Alert Levels 3, 2, and 1;
2. report, at an aggregated level to the Government, levels of attendance at early learning services/kōhangareo and schools during Alert Levels 3, 2, and 1;
3. Inform and support Ministry planning for learners, early learning services and schools returning to normal operation; and
4. evaluate and report on the effectiveness of initiatives implemented by the Ministry to respond and manage its response to COVID-19.

Starting from the week ending 15 May 2020, you can now submit attendance information directly through your Student Management System (SMS) or ELI Web. You just need to enter attendance information in your SMS or ELI Web as you usually would and this information will automatically flow through to us. We ask that you complete entering attendance information by the end of each week.

If you need to make any changes to previously entered information, you can still do this. Note the standard process of confirming attendance information on a monthly basis remains the same.

If you have questions about entering attendance information in your SMS, please contact your SMS provider.

Ministry licensing activity at Alert Level 2

During Alert Level 2, Ministry licensing activity will resume, but in accordance with public health requirements. Where compliance with conditions on a provisional, probationary or suspended licence can be assessed through documentation, we will continue to do this. Please contact your local Ministry office if you have any questions or concerns about your particular circumstances in respect of your licence.

Education Advisers will be able to undertake assessments of premises for new probationary licences, however these visits and our ability to progress these applications may be subject to some delay. It is important that we prioritise support for existing services to operate safely within the public health measures at this time.

Ministry staff will respond in person to serious incidents or complaints, particularly regarding implementation of the public health measures in early learning services.

Secretary for Education powers at Alert Level 2

The Secretary for Education has been given new powers, in response to COVID-19, to issue binding directions to all education providers, including all schools/kura, early learning services/kōhangareo, and tertiary institutions, whether public, private or integrated. These are contained in a new Part 34 of the Education Act 1989.

These powers include the ability to direct providers to open or close, vary their hours and how they operate, and how they are controlled or managed. The powers include the ability to direct education providers to provide education in specified ways, such as through distance or online learning.

As soon as practicable after a direction is given, the Secretary must ensure that it is published in the *Gazette* and on the Ministry's website.

The Secretary's directions override specific legislative requirements, in the case of early learning these relate to things such as indoor space and group size. The wider legislative framework (i.e. the Regulations and the licensing criteria) still applies.

Changes to the Regulations to respond to states of emergency and epidemics

The Education (Early Childhood Services) Amendment Regulations 2020 came into effect from 22 April 2020. This amendment gives the Secretary for Education power to act to mitigate some practical effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on situations where there may be difficulties complying with regulatory requirements because of the restrictions in place over this time. The powers can be activated when there is a state of emergency or epidemic notice in effect and can apply beyond the notice.

[Education \(Early Childhood Services\) Amendment Regulations 2020](#)

Expired First Aid certificates

An example of where the Secretary has used these powers is her decision that a recently expired first aid certificate may be considered current/valid for the purposes of first aid requirements in the licensing criteria (HS25 for centre-based services and kōhangareo; HS 22 for home-based services). This applies for first aid certificates that expired on or after 1 February 2020 and is in force for three months (until 24 July 2020).

Service providers do not need to contact the Ministry for approval to access this exemption, however they must attest in writing to the current first aid knowledge of these staff and retain this documentation. There is a template services can use to record the required information.

[First Aid Qualification Condition Clause \(HS22\) - Template \[DOCX, 24.1KB\]](#)

For home-based services there is already leeway of 4 months for new educators to gain a first aid qualification, if access to first aid training is limited due to circumstances beyond the service provider's control. The service provider must also ensure that staff have knowledge of first aid and keep a record of the actions taken by the service provider, using the template linked above.

Providing information and advice for your community

Use your usual channels of communication and methods for translating information and advice for your community. Translated information and advice about COVID-19 and Alert Level 2 is available here: <https://covid19.govt.nz/communities/translations/>

Appendix A. Key public health requirements at Alert Level 2 and Level 3

The table below provides further information to support your implementation of the public health measures and identifies the key difference between measures at Alert Level 3 compared with Alert Level 2.

Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3
Children at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. Distance learning can continue to be available to those who choose to remain at home.	Children at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are encouraged to stay home wherever possible.
Staff at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. They may work, if they agree with their employer that they can do so safely.	Staff who are have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should stay at home. If they want to come to their early learning service you may agree to the request only if it can be assured that it is safe for them to do so.
Wash and dry hands regularly, cough and sneeze into elbow.	No change
If children or staff are sick, they must stay home (phone Healthline or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms).	No change
Services connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days (but open for distance learning) – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health.	No change
Stringent self-isolation of those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, or have been overseas in the last 14 days – Ministry of Health information for self-isolation .	No change

Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3
Ensure hand sanitiser is available but teachers/staff supervise its location and use	No change
Ensure that children have their own food containers and do not give and take food to and from each other. Food can be supplied in accordance with public health guidance.	No change
Not required	Meal breaks must be staggered. If you have multiple groups of children in different rooms, you must avoid mixing the groups during meal breaks.
Early learning services, kōhangareo, playgroups and Playcentres are able to operate to their full licence numbers providing they can continue to meet public health measures. Physical space requirements return to standard licence requirements.	Services and kōhangareo must increase physical space allowance to 3 sqm per person inside and 5 sqm outside
Indoor temperature needs to be increased to 18 degrees Celsius.	No change
There does not need to be a measurable physical distance between children or children and staff. However adults should where practicable use 1m as a guide between themselves and other adults.	Number of children in the same room or physical space to be limited to bubbles of no more than 10 children initially (growing to 20). Adults should where practicable use 1m as a guide between themselves and other adults. Adults cannot not mix between bubbles.
All toys and resources can be used.	Books to be used by one bubble only each day Toys that cannot easily be wiped clean to be put away.
No restriction on the use of outdoor play equipment, including sandpits. Hand washing required after use of the later.	Outdoor space can only be used by one bubble at a time, and must be cleaned before use by another bubble. Sandpits cannot be used.
Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily	No change
Contact tracing registers must be in place and identify which children are on-site, record when and who they have contact with during the day if that changes. This includes recording who the adults are in contact with as well as recording	No change

Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3
any visitors to the site, including parents.	
PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service	No change
Teachers are able to interact with all children	Teachers stay with the same bubble of children throughout
Visiting teachers resume home visits with appropriate public health measures in place	Visiting teachers to provide phone or digital support