Risk assessment for COVID-19

The following information will support the review of your health and safety plans and practices, specifically in regard to COVID-19. Further information to support your wider health and safety planning and review can be found on our website.

[Health and safety requirements for school and early learning service leaders](https://www.education.govt.nz/school/health-safety-and-wellbeing/health-and-safety-requirements/)

[Implementing the Health and Safety at Work Act — a guide for early learning services – Education in New Zealand](https://www.education.govt.nz/school/health-safety-and-wellbeing/health-and-safety-requirements/implementing-the-health-and-safety-at-work-act-a-guide-for-early-learning-services/)

It’s important that you consult with staff, or their representatives about your approach to operating safely.

WorkSafe also recommend you document your approach so it can be shared with others, including your service’s community. They have developed a safety plan template for COVID-19 that may be helpful.

[Safety plan template [DOCX, 43KB]](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/dmsdocument/27986-covid-19-safety-plan-template-word-version/latest)

Please connect with your local Ministry [Te Mahau/ office](https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/contact-us/regional-ministry-contacts/) to talk through any staffing or other challenges that might arise, as part of this process.

Risk profile for your early learning service community

Each early childhood service has a unique community and context that will be taken into account when planning for and responding to COVID-19 cases in the community.

When considering your own community, you may determine there is a greater level of risk for some or many of your community.

Any risk assessment will need to reflect your own context including:

* Volume of cases in your region / community
* Trends in case numbers (upwards or downwards)
* Level of immunity and vaccination in your community
* Knowing which individuals may be at higher risk from COVID-19

For example you are in an area with lower vaccination rates, you have a high proportion of staff over 60 years of age, or your community has a high proportion of the population who are at higher risk from COVID-19 such as having an underlying health condition.

If you are considering policies that go beyond the recommended health measures – for example, you may be thinking about requiring visitors to wear face masks– you will need to explain why the additional mitigations are proportionate to the situation and level of risk. Any additional measures should not infringe on human rights, privacy or other legislative protections.

The Unite Against COVID-19 website has a map showing vaccination rates around New Zealand, to help inform your planning.

[Map of COVID-19 vaccination rates in New Zealand - COVID-19 website](https://covid19.govt.nz/news-and-data/covid-19-vaccination-rates-around-new-zealand/)

This data is also published in spreadsheet form by the Ministry of Health each week. Open the first spreadsheet “COVID-19 vaccination data through xx xxx 2022”. Go to the tabs ‘TLA’ and ‘SA2 All Ethnicities’ or ‘SA2 Māori and Pacific Peoples’.

[COVID-19: Vaccine data | Ministry of Health NZ](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/covid-19-vaccine-data#download)

Potential risks and considerations

| Potential risk  | Considerations |
| --- | --- |
| Children with higher levels of disadvantage | * Consider prioritising their attendance in situations where you may need to manage attendance
 |
| Children with additional learning needs | * Consider prioritising their attendance in situations where you may need to manage attendance
* Do they have access to appropriate resources and supports at home?
 |
| Children[[1]](#footnote-1) at higher risk of severe illness  | * Consider further health measures that might be introduced to support onsite attendance
* Encourage whānau to seek medical advice regarding attendance onsite
* Plan in advance, for you could support children’s learning from home if needed
 |
| Staff [[2]](#footnote-2)at higher risk of severe illness | * Encourage staff to get their booster vaccination as soon as they become eligible
* Consider further health measures that might be introduced to support onsite attendance
* Encourage staff member to seek medical advice regarding attendance onsite
 |
| Vaccination rate in local community is less than 90% boosted | * Continue to encourage vaccinations in your community
 |
| Community very cautious about sending children to the early learning service when there is community transmission | * Maintain communications and reassurances about the health measures you have in place to reduce risk
* Prepare to support some form of learning from home, wherever possible
* How can you keep connected with these children?
* Encourage vaccination in your community and reassure about having high levels of vaccination in your community where appropriate
 |
| Very high proportion of staff and child absence eg. confirmed cases | * Implement your plan to support children at home (if appropriate)
* Prioritise attendance for most vulnerable children and those who don’t have an appropriate care option at home
* Ensure there are sufficient staff to provide key functions (eg, adult:child ratios, first-aid, emergency response, cleaning)
 |

Health measures – summary

There are a range of public health measures you can implement to reduce the risk of infectious illnesses, including COVID-19.

The measures used are likely to vary depending on the level of risk for your community. For example, increased levels of COVID-19 cases coupled with winter illnesses may see your mask policy change to require visitors to wear masks.

The following table can be used to review your existing measures for managing infectious illness, including COVID-19, and consider whether further measures may need to be added where infection risk is high.

| Health measures  | Notes / Actions needed |
| --- | --- |
| Good hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette |  |
| Monitor closely for symptoms and stay home if sick |  |
| Good ventilation – ensure all windows and doors designed to open do |  |
| Face masks required for visitors including parents when indoors  |  |
| Vaccination including boosters encouraged  |  |
| Case management / contact tracing # | eg. you may inform your community when there is a case. |
| Face masks for some staff  | eg. if staff work at more than one service |
| Children with complex medical needs – parents to seek medical advice to support attendance |  |
| Events  | eg. are there times when events should be limited |
| Choose to display QR codes[[3]](#footnote-3) |  |
| Minimise non-essential visitors | eg. are there times when you limit non-essential visitors |
| Minimise staff working across services as much as possible |  |
| If attendance needs to be managed, prioritise for those who need to attend |  |
| Encourage pick-up and drop-off outside |  |
| [Other measure] |  |
| [Other measure] |  |
| [Other measure] |  |
| [Other measure] |  |

# Contact tracing is not required. Many early learning services will continue to notify their community if there have been active cases in the service.

Checklist – key functions

Do you have sufficient staffing to ensure key functions can continue to operate?

If ‘no’, you will need to take action. In the worst-case scenario, this may require the service closing onsite and moving to learning from home where possible.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Critical functions | ✓ / 🗶 | Notes / Actions needed  |
| Can meet PR requirements (1:50) |  |  |
| Can meet adult:child ratios |  |  |
| Can meet the first-aid requirements of 1:25 |  |  |
| Can meet emergency management requirements |  |  |
| Can maintain cleaning schedule to meet minimum health and safety requirements  |  |  |
| Can support children with additional learning needs |  |  |
| Communications when cases appear in your service (if you choose to/agree with your community to) |  |  |
| *[add other critical functions identified in your business continuity plan]* |  |  |
| *[add other critical functions identified in your business continuity plan]* |  |  |
| *[add other critical functions identified in your business continuity plan]* |  |  |

Further information

There are a number of tools available to support your COVID-19 planning and response on our Te Mahau website.

[COVID-19 - Te Mahau website](https://temahau.govt.nz/covid-19).

1. Broadly, children at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are infants under the age of 1 month, children under the age of 2 who were born premature (less than 37 weeks), and children with multiple chronic conditions. https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/people-at-higher-risk-of-severe-illness-from-covid-19/#who-is-at-higher-risk-of-covid-19 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. By staff we broadly mean those adults, teachers, educators or kaiako employed, contracted or volunteering at a service. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. It is no longer required to display QR codes [↑](#footnote-ref-3)