

Information for the public regarding the coronavirus outbreak

Update as at 23 March 2020

Child Contact Centres are safe places for children to see people that they no longer live with. In order to them to maintain the highest levels of safety it is particularly important that we stay on top of current events relating to the Coronavirus. In order to do this NACCC have been working with public bodies across the United Kingdom to ensure that we have the most up to date information for our members and the general public.

The Coronavirus is likely to be really frightening for children depending upon their levels of understanding. Bearing in mind the messages they will be hearing on the television, online and from their friends it is important that we feel confident to talk openly with them, but also in a way that is reassuring and developmentally appropriate. Childline has a range of information to support children and young people. <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/worries-about-the-world/coronavirus/>. There are more resources that you might find helpful when talking to children and some that they can safely access alone at the end of this information.

Child Contact Centres have been in the very difficult situation of having to make judgements about whether they are able to offer services that are safe and effective whilst also being equally concerned about not taking steps to cause unnecessary disruption to the attachments that children have and seek to maintain with people they care about but no longer live with.

It is with regret that for some centres the only way they have been able to guarantee the safety of children and their families has been to close services. NACCC support the decisions made by these centres and in many cases have been instrumental in supporting them to make appropriate decisions. Many supported centres are operational due to the good will of passionate and caring volunteers. However, many of these people are within the recognised 'at risk' categories as a result of their age or other health conditions and their health is important to us too.

NACCC have now had the opportunity to review the list of 'Key Workers' published by the government and we consider that Child Contact Centres are recognised as Key Services by the government and that we are covered within the following categories:

1. Health and social care

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain,

including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

2. Education and childcare

This includes childcare, support and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who must remain active during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

3. Key public services

This includes those essential to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

Many centres have been able to take steps to stay open and to continue offering their services. NACCC, Cafcass, Cafcass Cymru and other bodies as appropriate will continue to work pro-actively with these centres to ensure that there is a diverse range of services where this is safe and appropriate.

Whilst some of these will also have to close in the coming days and weeks, we will continue to do our best to keep on supporting the children and families that rely on Child Contact Centres.

A number of accredited Child Contact Centres are looking at alternative ways to ensure that child contact can continue to take place, some of the methods being explored and delivered include:

1. **Centres are working creatively with families** to see if there are other people that might be able to take up the role of the contact centre. This works well where there are family members or other trusted people that can step in, to support.
2. **Supervised** centres increasing their ranges of **supported services** to help families that have experienced a loss of service recently.
3. **Indirect Contact** is being achieved using technology like skype, WhatsApp video calling, facetime and so on. Some centres are finding ways to support this so that similar arrangements can be implemented inline with the services usually being offered.
4. **Other centres are reducing service sizes and availability.** This means that contact might be less regular for everyone, but no one is having contact cancelled.

At this point we would strongly urge members of the public to contact NACCC or your local contact centre to find out what services are available locally. Information

about how to find and contact your local centre can be found here: <https://naccc.org.uk/find-a-centre>.

Keeping everyone safe is our first priority. Therefore, we would ask you to continue to make yourself aware of any national and local information that is being offered about services and restrictions that might be applicable. The NHS website also has good quality information that is easy to understand in relation to keeping safe.

Should I attend a child contact centre?

Stay at home if you have either:

- a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

If you are unsure you should always check by accessing this helpful tool created by the NHS - <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/>

If anyone in your household has the above symptoms, please do not attend the Child Contact Centre for a period of 14 days. In this scenario please let the centre know at the nearest opportunity and consider informing any other professionals like Cafcass or Social Workers.

Additionally, please also consider not attending the centre if you feel that you or someone you live with, are in one of the 'at risk' groups. It also goes without saying that you should not attend the centre if you have had medical advice to be self-isolating for any reason.

To avoid catching the Coronavirus the NHS is currently recommending the following:

- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- Always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- Avoid close contact with people who have symptoms of coronavirus
- Only travel on public transport if you need to
- Work from home, if you can
- Avoid social activities, such as going to pubs, restaurants, theatres and cinemas
- Avoid events with large groups of people

- Use phone, [online services](#), or apps to contact your GP surgery or other NHS services
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Do not have visitors to your home, including friends and family