

## **Frequently Asked Questions** **Advice and guidance for parents**

### **There have been cases of swine flu in my child's setting but it has remained open. Should I send my child in?**

While early years, childcare, play settings and Children's Centres remain open parents *should* continue to send their children — unless they have any symptoms of flu. The decision to close or to remain open will be made following advice by local health professionals with expert knowledge who will always have the interests and welfare of the children in mind. Parents will be advised if the early years, childcare, play setting or Children's Centre is to close and what to do then. We strongly urge parents not to withdraw their children unless given this advice. It would be for the local authorities to decide on any action against parents keeping healthy children away from these settings.

### **My child has a history of other medical problems and I believe he or she is at greater risk should they catch swine flu. Is it safe for my child to go to their early years, childcare, play setting or Children's Centre while there have been cases of swine flu there, and are there other precautions that I should take?**

Your child should continue to attend these settings unless they have any flu-like symptoms. If they display any symptoms you should keep them at home and, given their other medical conditions, you should contact your GP for advice and treatment as soon as possible.

### **Is it better for children to catch swine flu now in order to build up their resilience to potentially more harmful strains in the future?**

We are still learning about this strain of swine flu and who is most at risk of complications. The Health Protection Agency therefore strongly advise people to avoid intentionally infecting themselves, or their children, with the virus for their own safety and the safety of any vulnerable people they may unintentionally infect.

Even with mild flu, complications can occur, leading to more serious illness. With this in mind, it would be wrong not to take all necessary precautions against swine flu and limit its spread.

### **What could working parents do if their child's early years, childcare, play setting or Children's Centre was closed for an extended period? Would they have to stay off work?**

We appreciate that closures would present a challenge for working parents, but believe they would agree with a decision taken to reduce a significant threat to their children's wellbeing.

Parents would have to make other arrangements for looking after their children. Some might be able to work from home, work flexible hours, or use informal childcare arrangements with a relative or friend.

**Could employers with a significant proportion of parent workers establish their own childcare provision?**

Any advice to close group early years, childcare, play settings and/or Children's Centres would apply to such a newly established nursery as much as to any other establishment, so it would not be helpful for employers to do this. Also, any such new facility would have to be registered with Ofsted, which could not be completed at very short notice; they would have to check that relevant welfare requirements are met before confirming registration.

**Parent workers staying off work to look after children will have a severe impact on the economy and on essential services.**

We have drawn this issue to the attention of employers so that they can plan for this eventuality. It will have an impact on all sectors, but with good planning we believe that impact to be manageable.

More general advice and guidance for parents can be found on [/www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/index.htm)