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Guidance

Making a childcare bubble with another household

How you can get informal childcare for anyone under 14 from friends and family you do not live with.

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From:
Department of Health and Social Care (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care>)

Applies to:
England (see guidance for Wales (<https://gov.wales/visiting-people-private-homes>), Scotland (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/pages/protection-levels-by-area/>), and Northern Ireland (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-what-restrictions-mean-you>))

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If you live in a household with anyone aged under 14, you can form a 'childcare bubble'. This allows friends or family from one other household to provide informal childcare.

What a childcare bubble is

From 2 December, childcare bubbles are allowed in all tiers (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>).

A childcare bubble is where one household links with one other household to provide informal childcare to anyone under 14. All adults in both households must agree to this arrangement. 'Informal' childcare means it is unpaid and unregistered.

Members of either household can provide childcare in a home or public place. This includes overnight care.

You can only have one childcare bubble with one other household. This means no household should be part of more than one childcare bubble.

You can only use a childcare bubble for childcare. You cannot use a childcare bubble to mix with another household for other reasons.

If you form a childcare bubble, it's best if this is with a household who live locally. This will help prevent the virus spreading from an area where more people are infected.

How childcare bubbles relate to other types of bubble

A childcare bubble is different to a support bubble and a Christmas bubble. Being in a childcare bubble does not stop you from forming a support bubble or a Christmas bubble.

Support bubble

You might be able to form a support bubble to have close contact with another household. You have to meet certain eligibility rules to form a support bubble. Find out more about making a support bubble with another household (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>).

You must avoid seeing members of your childcare and support bubbles at the same time, unless otherwise permitted by gatherings limits in your tier.

Christmas bubble

You can form a Christmas bubble between 23 and 27 December. There is a 3-household limit on a Christmas bubble. Two households in a childcare bubble together count as 2 households towards the 3-household limit.

Changing a childcare bubble

From 2 December you may change your childcare bubble provided that:

- at least one person in the proposed new childcare bubble is under the age of 14
- neither household is part of a separate childcare bubble which they intend to remain a part of

If you decide to change your childcare bubble, you should treat your previous bubble as a separate household for 14 days before forming a new bubble. This means following the rules on meeting people from other households in the tier you are in. You should not provide childcare as if you are in a bubble during this period.

Find out the coronavirus restrictions in your local area (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>)

If someone in your previous childcare bubble develops symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus up to 48 hours after members of the bubble last met, all members of the bubble must self-isolate for 14 days (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>). You must not form a new bubble until you have completed your self-isolation.

Children turning 14

The childcare bubble only continues while there is anyone aged under 14 within that bubble.

Once everyone in a household is aged 14 or above, the childcare bubble arrangement must stop.

If your child lives in more than one location

You can mix indoors where necessary with the other parent to allow your child to move between homes.

A child moving between 2 parents who live separately is not counted as a childcare bubble. This means both you and the other parent can also form a childcare bubble with one other household.

If someone in your childcare bubble develops coronavirus symptoms or tests positive

If anyone in your childcare bubble develops symptoms (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>) or tests positive for coronavirus, follow the stay at home guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>).

If you share custody of your child, and you and your child's other parent are in separate childcare bubbles, members of both bubbles should stay at home if someone in either household develops symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus.

This is critical to controlling the virus, as it will help to stop it spreading across multiple households.

If NHS Test and Trace (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>) contacts you or someone in your childcare bubble, you must follow their guidance.

If you're clinically extremely vulnerable

If you're clinically extremely vulnerable (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>), you should reduce social contacts as much as possible. You will minimise your risk of infection if you limit all your contacts, particularly with people that you do not live with.

However, if you feel it is essential, you can maintain an existing childcare bubble, or form a new one as per the guidance on changing your bubble. This is a personal choice and should be balanced against the increased risk of infection.

Those defined, on medical grounds, as clinically extremely vulnerable to coronavirus are people with specific serious health conditions.

Other forms of childcare support

In addition to childcare bubbles, the following people can provide childcare support (including in private homes and gardens):

- registered childcare providers
- providers of other supervised activities for children, including wraparound care and children's groups
- paid in-home childcare providers
- people in your support bubble (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household>)

Guidance on working safely in other people's homes (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>) is available.

Early years settings and childminders remain open, and you can continue to use these settings as normal. Nannies are able to work in your home or any other setting.

You can also get informal help with childcare from people who do not live with you, and are not part of your support or childcare bubble, so long as you follow the rules on meeting other people which apply in your area.

For example, in an area which is in Tier 1, people from different households can gather indoors and outdoors in a group of up to 6 people. This will allow for some informal childcare to take place.

Find out what the rules are in your area (<https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>).

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1. 8 December 2020

Updated with clarification of how childcare bubbles work for those in more than one type of bubble, and simplified guidance on travelling to form a childcare bubble.

2. 2 December 2020

Added guidance on how to switch your childcare bubble.

3. 6 November 2020

First published.

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23 days to go

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(<https://www.gov.uk/transition>)

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- Guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection who do not live with the person (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person>)
- Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures>)
- COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>)

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