

COVID-19 Notice

Tuesday 07 April 2020



COVID-19 Notice - Unmet Need for Childcare among NIAS Trust Keyworkers

Childcare for key workers – including all NIAS staff - has become a huge challenge in the context of COVID-19. There are no easy answers but NIAS is acutely aware of the stress that this can cause. We are seeking to help staff where additional or unmet childcare needs have arisen as a direct result of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessing Need

In association with the Department of Health, NIAS needs to understand the demand for emergency childcare among keyworkers (defined below). In order to help with the regional response, we are asking you to complete the short survey below if you have childcare needs that are going unmet or are additional because of COVID-19:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QSKN7NT>

(*The above survey closes at 12:00 Thursday 9th April 2020)

If we centrally know the extent of unmet need, this will enable NIAS to liaise with Early Years Teams, Department of Health and Department of Education in trying to resolve this issue for as many people as possible.

The official advice is that children should be cared for at home if at all possible to stop the spread of coronavirus. It is important to underline that Daycare and Childminding settings remain safe places for children. But the fewer children making the journey to that setting and back, the lower the risk that the virus can spread.

However, it is also recognised that keeping children at home is not always possible and that in the current context traditional sources of childcare support like, for example, grandparents, may not be appropriate or available.

NIAS cannot guarantee that we will always find a solution, but we will do our best to help you in this time.

Supporting You

In liaison with the Department of Health, NIAS will support you in your search to find suitable childcare, but we ask for your patience in a fast changing environment.

- Up to date information on childcare for keyworkers can be found at familysupportni.gov.uk
- Here you can search for a childcare provider ([direct link here](#)), find information about costs and financial support, and, find useful information about the bespoke Approved Home Childcare Scheme (AHC) ([direct link here](#))

Early Years teams across all the Trusts are working hard to ensure that the website is kept up to date with childcare providers who can facilitate your needs and updating the AHC Scheme to make it more useful for providers and keyworkers. Changes can be made rapidly depending on circumstances and we strongly advise you revisit the site regularly.

In NIAS, Rachel Deane will help to support your search for appropriate childcare and will be the Trust's liaison with the Department of Health as this situation develops and changes.

If you require assistance, please contact OSU, or complete your contact details in the survey, and Rachel will then contact you directly.

Supporting Each Other

If you are aware of any daycare settings or childminders that may have vacancies at this time, please ask them to register on the website above as having vacancies for keyworkers.

(Definition of Key worker:

For the purposes of childcare in Northern Ireland, key workers are defined as:

Key workers are (in order of priority):

- i. Health and Social Care workers providing clinical care for those who have tested positive for COVID-19);
- ii. Health and Social Care workers social workers supporting life threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision; and safeguarding;
- iii. All other Health and Social Care workers, and wider public sector workers providing emergency/critical welfare services (e.g. PSNI/NIFRS/Prison Staff/Social Workers/ Teachers in schools remaining open).

This definition is more restrictive than for schools based childcare places are likely to be in shorter supply. It may be revised as the situation changes.)