

66. The relationship with colleagues in the UK Government, Scotland and Northern Ireland was always constructive and the approach taken was extremely useful in ensuring that information and approaches to emerging challenges were shared, and communication messaging, both to the public and to childcare and education settings, was managed effectively to ensure that they understood the NPIs in place in each nation, what it meant for them and where they may have differed in various parts of the UK.
67. In general, the decisions and approaches adopted in Wales were broadly similar to those taken by the other UK administrations. Where there were differences however, we have tried to outline them in the paragraphs below.

Childcare

68. In the main, the approach to childcare and play provision in Wales aligned to that of the UK Government, with action taken within similar time frames and advice to settings and parents broadly aligning.
69. There was a slight divergence initially, as childcare in Wales re-opened on the 22 June 2020 in comparison to the 1 June in England. This reflected wider decision timescales across both countries. There was also slightly differing guidance on group sizes. In Wales guidance outlined that children in childcare and play provision should be cared for in groups of no more than 8 children, and this applied to children aged up to 12. We understand England advised settings to work to the EYFS staff: child ratios for pre-school aged children. However, the lifting of restrictions on group sizes in childcare settings occurred in England and Wales at the same time, in July 2020.
70. It is important to see this in the context of the two systems, which have different registration and regulation arrangements. In Wales, a setting caring for children aged up to 12 has to register with Care Inspectorate Wales, but the arrangements and age ranges are different in England. We had to provide guidance that covered a broader range of registered settings, including those caring for school age children, and provide clarity to all settings on that basis. Some phrasing in the respective guidance would also have differed given that context as we were referring to different regimes.
71. There were also slight variations in the lifting of other restrictions pertaining to play. Outdoor playgrounds opened in England on 4 July 2020 and in Wales on 20 July 2020. Again, this reflected wider decision timescales. Indoor play provision was able