

How to support key workers with childcare responsibilities which would otherwise impact key frontline services?

School closures would cause key workers with children to have to stay away from work to provide care.

Issues

- How do we define key workers? Based on sector of employment, or more specific jobs, crucial to society? The example of 'key workers' given in the rationale for the clauses in the Bill being drafted are essential workers (e.g. NHS workers – doctors and nurses, probably would include social workers and others where there would be an impact on key services if they weren't able to work due to childcare issues).
- How would childcare arrangements be administered/delivered locally, including staffing arrangements?
- How is eligibility determined/limited? Key workers without a viable alternative, which would not include childcare by family members (e.g. grandparents) who might be vulnerable if exposed to the virus.
- Assumption that pre-school age childcare for key workers is out of scope here (being considered by childcare division?).

Likely option

1. Keep schools open for the children of key workers (as childcare facilities, not for education) – enables more careful control of environment and social distancing. Provision is being sought in the Coronavirus Bill to issue temporary continuity direction to schools to require them to open to allow specified persons to attend that institution for the purpose of, among other things, childcare provided by or on behalf of that institution.

Other options (likely to be less viable?)

2. Provide funding to local authorities (or appropriate umbrella organisation?) to establish childcare arrangements.
3. Provide funding to specific employers (e.g. health boards) to make childcare arrangements for their workers.