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News Update re Covid-19 Pandemic

Accurate at 09:00; 20 March 2020



Further to the guidance issued on 16 March, here is a new update to keep parents/carers at Park Families supported and informed about the Covid-19 pandemic and to make you aware of current developments.

The situation is rapidly evolving with Government now undertaking daily updates which we are following closely. Our website www.parkfamilies.co.uk will hold this communication and further updates will be added.

To help suppress the spread of Covid-19, the Government announced on Weds 18 March that all schools and nurseries in England are required to close at the end of this week, unless requested to remain open, to create a network of providers for the children of key workers and vulnerable children; emergency legislation covering this is due to go through Parliament.

The Government has just published a very important update that explains the approach being taken in the education sector and gives more detail for parents/carers as to the children who should be able to continue at our nurseries:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision>

Please note that it is parents whose work is critical to the Covid-19 response, i.e. those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors as set out in the statement. Many parents working in these sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.

Copies of this document are attached to this news update. Parents/carers with children that they consider matches the above criteria are requested to contact 02392 424980 as soon as possible to register their children for attendance from next week.

Park Families are therefore anticipating that we will have a number of children of key workers and vulnerable children requiring care from next week and we await more information from Government on how we should proceed. We appreciate the impact the general closure will have on our families, and that you will undoubtedly have questions, and we are working to update you on this matter in due course. There are many issues which need to be clarified and we are awaiting further advice from the relevant government departments as this unprecedented situation continues to unfold.

A number of our staff have had to self-isolate for a 14-day period due to household members displaying flu-like symptoms and we are currently assessing the number of staff who need to follow the 12-week social distancing rules regarding age, health conditions and dependent relatives. This combination has resulted in a reduction in staff numbers and our child care capacity.

We are therefore working on a new restricted service delivery to cater for the children of key workers and vulnerable children, utilising a staffing rota based on the staff we have potentially available. Early indications are that this service will operate from two of our current four locations.

At this stage, whilst we await further Government instructions, we cannot offer any definite child care places from next week, neither can we confirm our staffing structure, nor can we assess our financial viability in terms of costs versus income moving into the new financial year. This is an uncomfortable situation, but we appreciate the whole Covid-19 crisis is taking us into uncharted territory.

We expect further Government guidance and instruction in the very near future. We appreciate the impact the general closure will have on our families, and the uncertainty around the new restricted services we are looking to provide. We will make sure we keep this line of communication flowing as a priority.

As regards Park Families invoicing. Our terms and conditions require all invoices issued for March to be settled in full. Future billing from April will only be for child care requested from that date.

As stated above, our website www.parkfamilies.co.uk will hold this communication and further updates will be added.

Jon Stuart

**Chief Executive
Park Families**