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7 September 2021

## He Pānui Kōhungahunga

the Early Learning Bulletin



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### Message from the Secretary for Education

Kia ora anō,

As you are aware, New Zealand, beyond the northern and southern boundaries of Auckland is moving to Alert Level 2 commencing from 11:59pm tonight, Tuesday 7 September, while Auckland remains in Alert Level 4 until at least 11:59pm Tuesday 14 September.

Early learning services outside of Auckland can open from tomorrow, Wednesday 8 September, under Alert Level 2 guidelines. I appreciate that some services may need to use Wednesday to prepare for their services to reopen on Thursday 9 September and this will be funded if you need to do so. I would like to acknowledge early learning services in Auckland, still at Level 4, and thank you for your compliance with Level 4 requirements, ultimately enabling the rest of the country to return to less restrictive settings.

For those that have been open under Alert Level 3, you should continue to provide that service to your Alert Level 3 families

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tomorrow. You can open up to your remaining whānau under Alert Level 2 guidelines from tomorrow as well, if your service is ready.

The Ministry has completed a review of the Alert Level 2 Public Health Response Order to ensure all aspects of the order are reflected in our guidance. This Bulletin provides you with links to all those guidance documents.

The Government has maintained a precautionary approach to COVID-19 throughout their response and moving most of New Zealand to Alert Level 2 is possible because there are no cases in the community outside of Auckland. High volumes of testing for COVID-19 in the community remains very important to support decisions on Alert Levels, so please do get tested, no matter where in the country you are if you have any symptoms.

Ngā mihi  
Iona

#### **Recently updated advice for early learning services:**

- [Funding support if children are not attending at Alert Levels 2 to 4](#)

In today's bulletin:

- Alert Level 2 guidance material
- Face coverings in early learning environments
- Funding arrangements for early learning services at Alert Level 2
- Supporting staff at Alert Level 2

#### **Alert Level 2 guidance material**

The Ministry has completed a review of the Alert Level 2 Public Health Response Order and updated all of our guidance material, which is now available online.

At Alert Level 2 there is low risk of community transmission and early learning services are open for all tamariki.

There are no significant changes to the [Alert Level 2 requirements](#) you will already be familiar with, and which have been in place previously at Alert Level 2.

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The table linked below summarises the Alert Level 2 requirements and recommendations for early learning services.

[Alert Level 2 requirements summary table \[DOCX, 19KB\]](#)

We have also provided an Alert Level 2 checklist for licensed services and playgroups and prepared up to date Alert Level 2 guidance material:

[Alert Level 2 checklist for licensed services \[DOCX, 793KB\]](#)

[Alert Level 2 checklist for playgroups \[DOCX, 787KB\]](#)

[COVID-19 guidance for licensed services at Alert Level 2 \[DOCX, 86KB\]](#)

[COVID-19 guidance for playgroups at Alert Level 2 \[DOCX, 69KB\]](#)

Finally, you may like to use this [letter template](#) as a way to communicate to your families about Alert Level 2.

### **Face coverings in early learning environments**

We appreciate that there continue to be a lot of questions about the use of face coverings in early learning environments. Public health recommend that the focus for children under six is on getting children to cough and sneeze into their elbow, and wash and dry hands / hand hygiene.

Face coverings are not required in early learning services and early learning services are not expected to provide face coverings for children or staff. It remains an option for those individuals, staff and whānau.

### **Funding arrangements for early learning services at Alert Level 2**

We recognise that you will be working with your parents, whānau and community to support safe participation in your service. We also recognise that after a move from Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 2 that some children will be slow to return.

For permanently enrolled children who do not attend services under Alert Level 2 you can use the EC12 exemption until 30 September 2021. The Frequent Absence rule period will also be re-set from 1 October 2021. Funding cannot be claimed for children who are no longer enrolled. The Ministry will continue to assess these settings as Alert Levels change.

Services do not need to complete an EC12 form for all children

but will need to follow the process outlined in your Student Management System (SMS) to apply this exemption.

We will continue to monitor the situation and will provide further advice as the alert levels are updated.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact us at [ECE.Funding@education.govt.nz](mailto:ECE.Funding@education.govt.nz) for further advice or support.

### **Supporting staff at Alert Level 2**

At Alert Level 2, early learning services are open for all children and staff, but must ensure additional public health control measures are in place to prevent the spread of disease and to support contact tracing.

Generally, all employees are able to return to work onsite and are asked to do so in a safe and conscientious way.

Employees who work for more than one centre are able to return to work for all of their employers as usual. People moving between facilities should be careful to practice good hygiene practices.

Everyone must continue to follow public health advice, meaning staff should stay at home if they are self-isolating or are caring for a dependant who is self-isolating.

People who are at greater health risk from COVID-19 can work, but should take additional precautions when leaving home. If a person cannot work onsite as normal due to an underlying health concern, they should provide you with appropriate medical evidence to support this and your usual leave policies should apply.

### **Disclosure of vaccination status**

You can ask a staff member whether or not they have been vaccinated if you have a legitimate reason to do so, however they do not have to disclose their vaccination status. Justifiable reasons to ask for this can include health and safety concerns. If they choose not to disclose their vaccination status you may assume they are unvaccinated, but you should inform the staff member of this assumption.

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If you do ask about vaccination status, you must take reasonable steps to ensure the information is collected lawfully, including that staff members are aware of how this information will be used, and why it is being collected. Personal information about vaccine status must be protected and cannot be shared without the staff member's consent.

Where a person cannot work onsite because they are higher risk of severe illness due to COVID-19 and not yet fully vaccinated, they should provide you with appropriate medical evidence to support this. Staff should work with their GP or specialist if they need help understanding their own level of risk and how best to stay healthy.

Further guidance about vaccines and the workplace is available on the Employment NZ website.

[Vaccines and the workplace - Employment New Zealand website](#)

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