



### **Childcare closures hitting key workers and the wider community**

As foreshadowed by the sector, COVID-19 is now leading to the closure of early learning and childcare (ELC) settings, impacting key workers and the wider community.

CEO of the Scottish Private Nursery Association, Sharon Fairley, described the situation as “unfortunate, disappointing, and utterly predictable.”

“Several weeks ago, we warned that this could be the situation. We said then that if measures weren’t put in place, and there wasn’t clear advice to the ELC sector, then nurseries would face having to close. Sadly, this is exactly what has happened.”

“When nurseries have to close or reduce their services, the impacts are not only on the children, but equally on their parents. We have key workers, teachers, people who work with the extremely vulnerable in the community, even parents who are starting university, who now have to try and find other care for their children or miss out on work or study.”

“The frustrating thing is that we saw this coming, and we warned the Government.”

The SPNA has heard from nurseries around the country who have been dealing with staff issues and have had to close their doors temporarily.

“The sector was already experiencing a severe shortage of staff,” Sharon said. “There just isn’t capacity to replace staff who have been pinged and are forced to isolate even if they have a negative test result. Once again, we’re calling for ELC staff to be counted as key workers.”

Sharon said that the lack of clear, consistent advice means some owners are closing their settings to be on the safe side.

“We’re hearing from the sector that some owners are being told to wait for advice, for example from Test and Trace – advice which sometimes never arrives or might be inconsistent with other Government advice. And as we talk to owners from around the country, we’re being told that different advice is being provided by different Local Authorities,” Sharon explained. “When advice does come, it often makes little to no sense. For example, even when parents test positive, their 3-year-old is still allowed to come to nursery – although no one can explain how the child is meant to get there.”

“The Care Inspectorate – the Government agency tasked with setting and upholding standards for childcare centres – was our central point of contact and source of advice during the early days of the pandemic. We can’t see why that shouldn’t be the case again.”

ENDS

Contact: Mark Egelstaff – 07340 99 73 76

Sharon Fairley will be available for comment and can be available at the closed setting in Livingston.

SPNA: For nursery owners, by nursery owners.

[www.scottishpna.org/home](http://www.scottishpna.org/home)

Scottish Private Nursery Association Ltd (Company Limited by Guarantee SC703969)