



Health and safety in licensed early learning services and kōhanga reo for COVID-19

GUIDANCE FOR ALERT LEVELS 1 – 4

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Purpose of this document

This document summarises the public health measures and recommendations, to support health and safety at COVID-19 alert levels 1 – 4.

Additional public health measures help to prevent the spread of disease and to support contact tracing.

You will already have a plan for managing health and safety; this guidance will assist you to review and update that plan to reflect the public health measures at each alert level. Work with your staff to do this, including your elected health and safety representatives.

Detailed Guidance

More detailed guidance for Alert Levels 1 – 3 is available in the below links.

Guidance document	Link
	COVID-19 guidance for early learning services at Alert Level 3
	COVID-19 guidance for licensed early learning services and kōhanga reo at Alert Level 2
	COVID-19 guidance for licensed early learning services and kōhanga reo at Alert Level 1

Alert Level system

New Zealand's [4-Level Alert System](#) specifies measures to be taken against COVID-19 at each level. The system helps people understand the current level of risk and the restrictions that must be followed.

The measures may be updated on the basis of:

- new scientific knowledge about COVID-19, and
- information about the effectiveness of intervention measures in New Zealand and elsewhere.

It is therefore possible that the information in this document might need to change. If this occurs, we will quickly advise you of this and update the content and disseminate.

The Alert Levels may be applied at a town, city, territorial local authority, regional or national level.

Specific public health measures may be agreed for early learning services and kōhanga reo which can differ from the measures applied to other organisations, businesses and individuals.

These measures will reflect the context of an early learning service environment, including the lower levels of risk for children and the controlled nature of the environment.

Further information on the alert system can be found on the uniteforrecovery.govt.nz website.

Health and Safety at Work Act

To meet your requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 you must manage risks and protect staff and children/tamariki.

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This means that your leadership, staff and parent community need to understand what the risks are and what they and you need to do to manage them at each of the Alert Levels.

How you will do this needs to be planned, thought out and discussed. Your plans should then be detailed in your health and safety plan.

The expectation is that services will actively manage adherence to the public health measures for each Alert Level through your health and safety plan.

It's important that you discuss your approach to operating safely at each Alert Level with staff or their representatives.

WorkSafe recommend you talk with your staff about which controls you'll use at each level and how this may differ from other levels.

This means your staff will understand how you intend to manage work safely and what they need to do to help.

WorkSafe also recommend you document your approach at each Alert Level so it can be shared with others, including parents and whānau. This will also make it easier to regularly review and update your approach.

Please also refer to the WorkSafe website for further information and advice regarding COVID-19:

[Covid-19 – WorkSafe](#)

[Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 - New Zealand Legislation](#)

Public health measures and recommendations

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert level 4
Overarching description / implication for education	The disease is contained in New Zealand (but not overseas). Schools, early learning services and kōhanga reo, tertiary education providers and workplaces are open, and must operate safely.	The disease is contained, but the risk of community transmission remains. It is safe to send your children to schools, early learning services and kōhanga reo and tertiary education. There will be appropriate measures in place.	High risk the disease is not contained. Schools between years 1 to 10 and Early Childhood Education centres can safely open and as long as they meet specified health measures, and will have limited capacity. Home-based early learning services can operate. Children should learn at home if possible. Playcentres and playgroups will remain closed.	Lockdown in place. Likely that disease is not contained. All educational facilities closed on-site – but open for distance learning

Public health measures at all alert levels:

If people are sick, they should stay home (phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms)

Wash and dry hands, cough into elbow, don't touch your face

Early learning services connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days (but open for distance learning) – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health

Stringent self-isolation of those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, or have been overseas in the last 14 days – [Ministry of Health information for self-isolation](#)

PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service

Early Learning services are required to display QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App by 19 August 2020.

Public health measures and recommendations which vary by level ¹ :				
Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
Children at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled)	There are no restrictions on personal movement – all children/tamariki can safely attend early learning services.	Children/tamariki at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. Distance learning can continue to be available to those who choose to remain at home.	Children/tamariki at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are encouraged to stay home wherever possible.	N/A
Staff at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled)	There are no restrictions on personal movement – all staff are able to safely attend work.	Staff at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home. Unless required to self-isolate on public health advice it is expected that all employees are able to return to work on site, but are asked to do so safely).	Staff who are have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 should stay at home. If they want to come to their early learning service or kōhanga reo you may agree to the request only if it can be assured that it is safe for them to do so.	N/A

¹ NB there are no specific public health requirements for schools and early learning services at Alert Level 1. These are recommendations only and align with the [Golden Rules for Alert Level 1](#).

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
Washing and drying hands	Wash frequently with soap and water, and dry hands afterwards. Cough and sneeze into elbow.	Wash frequently with soap and water, and dry hands afterwards. Cough and sneeze into elbow.	Wash frequently with soap and water, and dry hands afterwards. Cough and sneeze into elbow.	N/A
Attendance on-site	If children/tamariki or staff are sick, they must stay home (phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms).	If children/tamariki or staff are sick, they must stay home (phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms).	If children/tamariki or staff are sick, they must stay home (phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms).	N/A
Services connected to a confirmed or probable case	Services connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days (but open for distance learning) – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health.	Services connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days (but open for distance learning) – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health.	Services connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days (but open for distance learning) – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health.	N/A

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
Self-isolation	Stringent self-isolation of those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, or have been overseas in the last 14 days – Ministry of Health information for self-isolation.	Stringent self-isolation of those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, or have been overseas in the last 14 days – Ministry of Health information for self-isolation.	Stringent self-isolation of those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, or have been overseas in the last 14 days – Ministry of Health information for self-isolation.	N/A
Hand sanitiser	Hand sanitiser is not required. If available, teachers/staff must supervise its location and use.	Hand sanitiser is not required. If available, teachers/staff must supervise its location and use.	Hand sanitiser is required. Teachers/staff must supervise its location and use.	N/A
Food	Shared platters can be used and food can be supplied in accordance with public health guidance.	Ensure that children/tamariki have separate food containers and do not give and take food to and from each other. Food can be supplied in accordance with public health guidance.	Ensure that children/tamariki have separate food containers and do not give and take food to and from each other. Food can be supplied in accordance with public health guidance.	N/A
Meal breaks	Staggering meal breaks not required.	Staggering meal breaks not required.	Meal breaks must be staggered. If you have multiple groups of children/tamariki in different rooms, you must avoid mixing the groups during meal breaks.	N/A

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
Licensing requirements	Standard licence requirements apply to licence numbers and physical space requirements.	Early learning services, kōhanga reo, playgroups and Playcentres are able to operate to their full licence numbers providing they can continue to meet public health measures. Physical space requirements return to standard licence requirements.	Services and kōhanga reo must increase physical space allowance to 3 sqm per child inside and 5 sqm outside.	N/A
Indoor temperature	Indoor minimum temperature returns to 16 degrees Celsius although 18 degrees is recommended where practical.	Indoor temperature needs to be increased to 18 degrees Celsius.	Indoor temperature needs to be increased to 18 degrees Celsius.	N/A
Physical distancing	No physical distancing requirements for children/tamariki or staff.	There does not need to be a measurable physical distance between children/tamariki or children/tamariki and staff. However adults should where practicable use 1m as a guide between themselves and other adults.	Number of children/tamariki in the same room or physical space to be limited to bubbles of no more than 10 children/tamariki initially (growing to 20). Adults should where practicable use 1m as a guide between themselves and other adults. Adults cannot mix between bubbles.	N/A
Relievers	Relievers can work across multiple services.	Relievers can work across multiple services.	Relievers can only work at one early learning service, with one bubble of children/tamariki.	N/A

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
Attendance at more than one service	Children/tamariki can attend multiple early learning services over the course of a day or week.	Children/tamariki can attend multiple early learning services over the course of a day or week.	Children/tamariki can only attend one early learning service.	N/A
Toys and resources	All toys and resources can be used.	All toys and resources can be used.	Books to be used by one bubble only each day Toys that cannot easily be wiped clean to be put away.	N/A
Outdoor equipment	All outdoor equipment can be used as normal.	No restriction on the use of outdoor play equipment, including sandpits. Hand washing required after use of the latter.	Outdoor space can only be used by one bubble at a time, and must be cleaned before use by another bubble. Sandpits cannot be used.	N/A
Cleaning	Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily.	Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily.	Disinfect and clean all surfaces daily.	N/A
Contact tracing	Contact tracing registers are not required at Alert Level 1. As is usual practice you will need to continue to record child attendance and visitors coming on-site. There is no requirement to include parents and caregivers undertaking drop offs and pick-ups in your visitor register. Services should help parents and whānau to keep track of where they have been by displaying their NZ COVID-19 QR code poster.	Contact tracing registers must be in place and identify which children/tamariki are on-site, record when and who they have contact with during the day if that changes. This includes recording who the adults are in contact with as well as recording any visitors to the site, including parents. Early Learning services are required to display QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App by 19 August 2020.	Contact tracing registers must be in place and identify which children/tamariki are on-site, record when and who they have contact with during the day if that changes. This includes recording who the adults are in contact with as well as recording any visitors to the site, including parents. Early Learning services are required to display QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App by 19 August 2020.	N/A

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
PPE	PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service.	PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service.	PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service.	N/A
Visiting teachers (home-based)	Visiting teachers home visits resume as normal.	Visiting teachers resume home visits with appropriate public health measures in place.	Visiting teachers to provide phone or digital support.	N/A
Excursions	Excursions can resume as normal.	Excursions can resume as normal as long as 2m physical distancing requirements are met.	Most excursions will not be possible during Alert Level 3, only walks in your local area while maintaining 2m physical distancing.	N/A
Vans	Vans can be used as normal but should be regularly cleaned.	Vans can be used to transport all children/tamariki, the van should be cleaned daily. Physical distancing of 1m between all adults involved in the pick-up/drop off is encouraged.	Van should be used to transport one bubble at a time, and be cleaned in between use by bubbles. Physical distancing of 1m between all adults and children involved in the pick-up/drop off is required.	N/A
Sleep furniture	Sleep furniture should be cleaned regularly.	Sleep furniture must be cleaned daily.	Sleep furniture must be cleaned after use by each child. Different early learning bubbles should not use the same sleep space at the same time.	N/A

General guidance

Good hygiene practices

Good hygiene practices will continue to be a priority at all levels as the best way to minimise potential spread of COVID-19. The uniteforrecovery.govt.nz and [Ministry of Health](https://www.health.govt.nz) websites are a good source of information including:

- [Hand washing](#)
- [Cough and sneeze etiquette](#)
- [Cleaning surfaces](#)

There are [posters](#) available online to support you to convey key messages about hygiene.

Following basic hygiene measures are the best defence against COVID-19 including:

- cough or sneeze into your elbow or by covering your mouth and nose with tissues
- put used tissues in the bin or a bag immediately
- wash your hands with soap and water often (for at least 20 seconds)
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- clean surfaces regularly.

The risk of infection increases the closer you are to someone who is infectious and the longer duration of time that you spend close to that person.

All staff and children with any COVID-like symptoms are being asked to stay at home, and we are asking services to send anyone home who has or develops any symptoms of illness.

Public Health officials have advised that if these measures are in place, then personal protective equipment is not needed.

Staying home if sick

The vast majority of children and young people with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will not have COVID-19.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include new onset or worsening of one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- Temporary loss of smell

These symptoms are similar to a range of other illnesses, like influenza. Having them doesn't mean a person has COVID-19, but you should remain vigilant.

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Shortness of breath can indicate pneumonia, and requires urgent medical attention.

Children with asthma, hayfever, allergies, ear infections or other acute or chronic conditions may have similar symptoms.

Before a child is sent home, they should be feeling unwell and there should always be a conversation with the caregiver to determine whether there is another explanation for their child's symptoms that may mean that they do not pose a risk to others and do not need to go home.

Cleaning

When staff and children are on site regular cleaning of surfaces is recommended alongside your usual cleaning schedule.

Review your cleaning policies and practices and consider increased cleaning for high touch surfaces (door handles, table tops in common spaces etc.) and bathrooms. Make sure your cleaners have appropriate information, training and equipment.

Make sure the specific instructions are followed for the disinfectant being used (eg spray and leave on surfaces for 30 seconds before wiping down).

Ensure the availability of appropriate cleaning supplies (eg disinfectant and cloths) for cleaning of high-touch surfaces.

There is information about [cleaning surfaces](#) and further information about [minimising the spread of infectious diseases](#) on the Ministry of Health website.

Managing confirmed or probable cases

If there is a confirmed or probable case linked with your early learning service or kōhanga reo, you will be advised of this by the Medical Officer of Health.

Our regional Ministry of Education staff will work with you and local health authorities to agree a plan.

That will happen quickly and support will be provided to assist you to communicate with and support your parent community and staff.

If the person or persons who are a confirmed or probable case have worked in or attended your service when they could have been infectious (which could start 2 – 3 days prior to having symptoms) your service will be closed for at least 72 hours to allow time for contact tracing and a clean of the service to align with Ministry of Health guidelines.

Close contacts at your service would be anyone who had:

- face-to-face contact in any setting within two metres of a case for 15 minutes or more
- having been in a closed environment (e.g. hospital waiting room) within 2m of a case for 15 minutes or more

Close contacts will be required to self-isolate and will need to monitor for symptoms.

There is information about self-isolation and Factsheets for contacts on the Unite for the Recovery and Ministry of Health websites.

The Ministry has further information about what to do if you have a confirmed or probable case below:

[Fact sheet: If you have a probable or confirmed case](#)

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[Self-isolation – Unite for the Recovery](#)

[Fact sheets for contacts – Ministry of Health](#)

Further closure for up to 14 days

In addition to closure for 72 hours for contact tracing, health authorities could require closure for longer periods of time, up to 14 further days.

This is likely to be because health authorities consider there could be risk of community transmission or there could be a large number of cases within an early learning service that mean a high proportion of children/tamariki and staff could be considered close contacts and therefore need to self-isolate.

Support is available to you

Healthline is available to support anyone who might be experiencing symptoms or who has been asked to self-isolate - call for free on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453).

If you become aware of a case associated with your early learning service and you haven't received that notification from health authorities, please contact your local public health unit or your local Ministry of Education contact for information and support:

[Public health unit contacts](#)

[Local Ministry of Education contacts](#)

General cleaning information following a suspected, probable or confirmed case

See this link for general cleaning principles:

[Cleaning following a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 – Ministry of Health](#)

Support contact tracing efforts

Keep displaying QR codes for the NZ COVID Tracer App.

Keep visitor registers and parent contact details up to date should they be required for contact tracing.

[About the NZ COVID Trace app – Ministry of Health](#)

Links

- Worksafe information for COVID-19 – [WorkSafe website](#)
- Alert Levels information – [COVID-19 website](#)
- Ministry of Education - [COVID-specific information](#)
- You can keep in touch with your local District Health Board website and stay informed by updated Ministry of Health information on their website - [Public Health Units – Ministry of Health](#)
- For anyone with COVID-like symptoms, they should contact Healthline (for free) on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) or phone their doctor immediately
- Please contact your regional ministry contact if you have any questions – [Local Ministry offices](#)



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kia **rangatira** ai, kia **mana taurite** ai ōna **huanga**