

Information: school closure and eligibility for child care

Schools are partially closed in an attempt to reduce the spread of COVID-19 virus. The government has given clear guidance on self-isolation, household isolation and social distancing. The scientific advice on how to further limit the spread of COVID-19 is clear:

If children can stay safely at home, they should, to limit the chance of the virus spreading. That is why the government has asked parents to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked *schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely need to attend*.

‘It is important to underline that schools, colleges and other educational establishments remain safe places for children. But the fewer children making the journey to school, and the fewer children in educational settings, the lower the risk that the virus can spread and infect vulnerable individuals in wider society.

Schools are, therefore, being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children - **children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.**’

Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, ‘looked after’ children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Parents whose work is **critical to the COVID-19** response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined below.

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.

Please, therefore, follow these key principles:

- 1. If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be**
2. If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them
3. Avoid relying, for childcare, upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.
4. Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus. They should observe the same social distancing principles as adults.
5. If your work is critical to the COVID-19 response, or you work in one of the critical sectors listed below, **and you cannot keep your child safe at home** then your children will be prioritised for education provision:

Health and social care:

This includes but is not limited to doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, care workers, and other frontline health and social care staff including volunteers; the support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK’s health and social care sector; those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment.

Education and childcare:

This includes nursery and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who *must remain active* during the COVID-19 response to deliver this approach.

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Key public services:

This includes those *essential* to the running of the justice system, religious staff, charities and workers delivering key frontline services, those responsible for the management of the deceased, and journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting.

Local and national government:

This *only includes* those administrative occupations *essential* to the effective delivery of the COVID19 response or delivering essential public services such as the payment of benefits, including in government agencies and arms-length bodies.

Food and other necessary goods:

This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution, sale and delivery as well as those *essential* to the provision of other key goods (for example hygienic and veterinary medicines).

Public safety and national security:

This includes police and support staff, Ministry of Defence civilians, contractor and armed forces personnel (*those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic*), fire and rescue service employees (including support staff), National Crime Agency staff, those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas.

Transport:

This includes those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes *operating during the COVID-19 response*, including those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass.

Utilities, communication and financial services:

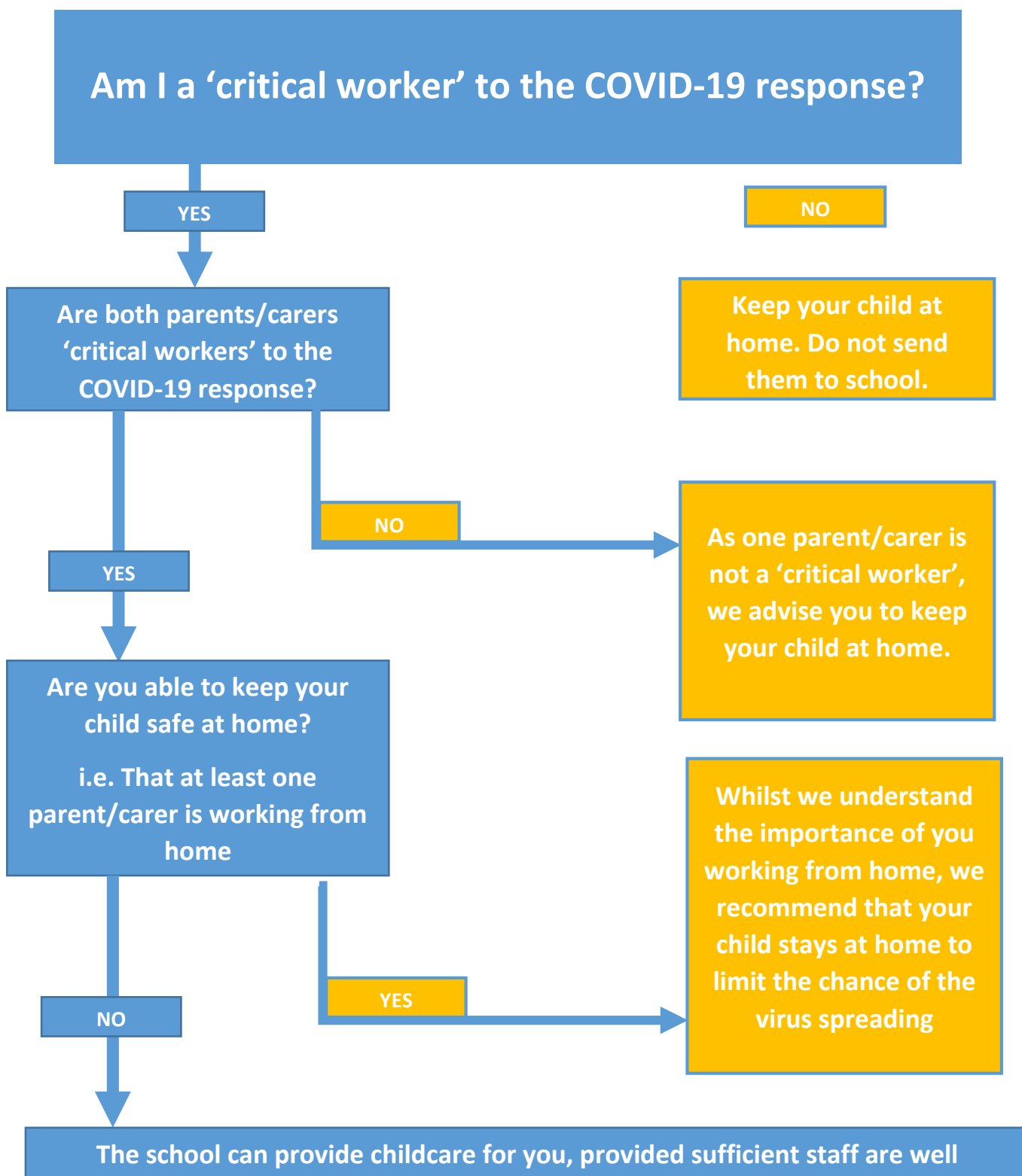
This includes staff needed for *essential* financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure), the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage), information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during the COVID-19 response, as well as key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services), postal services and delivery, payments providers and waste disposal sectors.

If workers think they fall within the critical categories above they should confirm with their employer that, based on their business continuity arrangements, their specific role is necessary for the continuation of this essential public service.

Looking at the list, it is clear that many parents could qualify under some sections. However, **the government have made it clear schools are closed and that school child care arrangements are only if absolutely essential 'And every child who can be safely cared for at home should be'**

Although children often have mild symptoms, by bringing children to school risks spreading the disease. Parents and school staff are at greater risk of more significant ill-health than children. We therefore need you to think really carefully whether you actually need to send your child to school. It is also important that you fully understand the change of stance from the Education Secretary that **schools are now moving to a care focus and will not be adhering to the national curriculum.**

This decision tree below may be helpful:



To remain open, we will be doing so because of the committed staff we have at Harting School. There may be occasions, however, when a teacher is not working with your child due to sickness. We will only be able to open as long as we have a minimum of three staff. Legally, at least one of the personnel has to be first aid trained and a safeguarding lead must be available. If we cannot manage this, due to ill-health or self-isolation requirements, we will have to close for the safety of everyone.

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If any child or family member has:

- a high temperature
- continuous cough or is breathless

the whole family should self-isolate, so they do not spread the virus further.

If in doubt, we will send a child (and any siblings) home if they display symptoms.

Whilst we understand that it is extremely difficult for some parents to work from home with children there, it is clearly prudent to avoid sending children to school unless absolutely necessary. We would love to have all the children at school and run as normal – we miss the children!

If your circumstances mean that your child is eligible to attend and you cannot keep your children safely at home, please contact the school on 01730 825388 . The answerphone will be checked, whilst staff are well and the school is open, Monday-Friday 9am-3pm. Alternatively email: office@harting.w-sussex.sch.uk or head@harting.w-sussex.sch.uk . These addresses will be manned whilst open and sufficient personnel are well.