Date

Dear

I am writing to you to share my urgent concerns regarding the safety of the Early Years sector.

The PM informed the nation on Monday 4th January that a national lockdown was required in order to tackle the public health crisis due to COVID 19.

All schools were advised to close their doors to all but critical worker children and vulnerable children, to reduce the possibility of virus transmission, therefore protecting teachers, support staff and the wider school community.

Early years providers were simultaneously instructed to open to all children and continue to offer EY education at full occupancy levels. In reality this can be up to 70 children in a room with up to 12 adults for 12 hrs a day. Staff are actively encouraged not to wear PPE by the Dfe and social distancing is both impossible and inappropriate when working with children aged 0-5 . It could be deemed neglectful to do so.

The above completely devalues the “stay at home message” and encourages people to leave their homes for non essential purposes and increases the risk of transmission in the community greatly.

The PM and chief medical advisors addressed the nation last night (5th January) and outlined the severity of the situation describing the situation as “an emergency“ with data suggesting that 1 in 50 people across England are currently infected with the virus and in some areas this is as high as 1 in 30 people. Figures were released yesterday showing that teachers infection rates were well above the average therefore highlighting that schools are not safe working environments and that the decision to close schools is correct and was too far late.

Meanwhile early years provisions remain open to all children.

As a manager of an early years organisation ……….

The government crudely withdrew its ongoing COVID financial support to the EY sector in December. During the Autumn term settings were funded at the 2019 rates to address the fact that uptake of early years places have plummeted throughout the pandemic because parents are anxious about infection.

Matt Hancock and Michael Gove both referred to early years being open to save businesses. This is both negligent and unlawful. Public health must be the priority. I am therefore looking at how legal action can be taken against the government  on behalf of the EY sector.

I am therefore asking my local councillors, MPs to help and support the EY workforce as a matter of urgency.

**The government and / or local authorities must:-**

* Communicate the data and science that underpins the governments reasoning to keep Early Years Settings open to All
* Prioritise the EY frontline workforce for the Covid 19 vaccine
* Update the guidance for EY settings with regards to PPE requirements and social distancing.
* Put a robust financial support package in place to protect the sectors long term sustainability
* Acknowledge the diversity of the Early Years sectors provision by providing financial support to nurseries that take children from 0-2 and rely upon fee payers to stay afloat. Without this , some nursery owners are having to choose between financial stability and staff safety.

**We are now well aware that the new variant of Covid 19 :-**

* Is more than 30% more transmissible
* Has a higher mortality rate

**We are also aware that to date that :-**

* 18 nursery workers have now died of Covid 19
* 0-4 year olds are the only age group with rising infection rates . Week of the 4.1.2021 - 1267 children in this age group infected compared with week of the 2.11.2020 - 537 children infected.
* 31k nursery workers have been infected since December 1st 2020
* 1 in 10 nursery workers are now expected to be infected
* 591,000 children were attending Early Years settings 18.1.2021
* A total of 2086 0-5 year olds have been hospitalised with Covid 19

We keep hearing that Nurseries and schools are safe, they pose no risk to the workforce or community transmission. However the above facts do not suggest this to be the absolute truth. So therefore please raise these issues as a matter of urgency to protect Worker Rights but more importantly Human Rights.

I hope that you will respond in a timely fashion as we are now in an emergency situation and the sector needs to be protected now not tomorrow.

Yours sincerely,