

# 'I wasn't sure of the kids' safety': How parents felt about Norway's kindergarten opening <sup>[1]</sup>

There were understandably strong emotions when readers in Norway dropped off their children at kindergartens on Monday and Tuesday this week. But most seemed impressed by the way the authorities handled it.

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

The Local on Monday asked readers about their experiences dropping their children off at kindergartens, or barnehage, after a month at home due to the coronavirus lockdown.

Most of those who responded seemed to think the whole process went well.

"We are feeling awesome," said Muhammad Zeeshan, who describes himself as "proudly Norwegian" about dropping off his five-year-old son Muhammad. "My son want to stay even longer at the barnehage, and he kept asking us if he can go tomorrow as well."

"I was not sure of the kids' safety but we found out it was well prepared," said one mum, who preferred to remain anonymous. "We were happy both of us, and she was happy to be in the kindergarten again."

"Our twins are happy to be back," agreed the actor and stage combat instructor Huw William Hægeland Reynolds. "The atmosphere is good."

Pastry chef Lourdes Lobel, from Argentina, said she had been impressed with her barnehage's communication.

"The previous week, they sent an email explaining the measures," she said. "They seem very well organised. There is sanitiser alcohol at the entrance to be used when delivering the kids."

Staff at her barnhage had even constructed a sort of home-made traffic light system parents could use when delivering their children.

"Once you get in front of the door to the area where the kid belongs, there is a two sided box, red on one side and green on the other," she said. "To avoid crowding while delivering the kids, we follow the colours: green go, red busy."

Parents at Reynolds' twins' barnehage, like most in Norway, weren't allowed into the building, with staff picking up children after they were dropped off at the gate.

Both kindergartens had stopped catering for the children, meaning the parents had to make pack lunches.

"I they're not preparing food it's one less link of transmission," Reynolds explained. "Also, they have such a high adult to child ratio, they don't have an additional adult available to make all the meals."

According to Reynolds, his children had been spending more time than normal outside in the kindergarten's playground. "The children are in groups of three to one adult and they have been doing a lot of outdoor activities."

Lobel, likewise, said that her children were doing "a lot of activities in the forest", and had been prevented from bringing their own water bottles (as used to be the case), as they tend to share with one another.

Most of the parents said there had not much chat with Norwegian parents, as most people in the country still seemed concentrated on following social distancing guidelines and minimising interaction with other adults.

"The atmosphere was not very sociable and of course we all wanted to follow the guidelines given out by Helsenorge," Zeeshan explained, although the anonymous mother said that she had at least said 'hello' to other parents and exchanged smiles.

Zeeshan said that the experience had strengthened his support for the decision to open kindergartens.

"I think it's a good decision, now is the time to get ready or prepare ourselves to live together with Covid-19," he said.

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