



Department  
for Education

# **Further education guidance for restricting attendance during the national lockdown**

**January 2021**

# Contents

Introduction	4
Changes to delivery	4
Minimising coronavirus (COVID-19) risks	6
Coronavirus (COVID-19) asymptomatic testing in colleges	6
Delivering exams	6
Risk assessment	7
System of controls	7
Prevention	8
Response to any infection	15
Education and training delivery	25
Transport	31
Safe behaviour off-site	33
Temporary staff and visitors	34
Educational visits	34
Workforce	35
Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable	35
Staff who are clinically vulnerable	35
Staff who are pregnant	35
Staff who may otherwise be at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)	36
Health and safety, and first aid	36
Recruitment	37
Teacher training	37
Supporting staff	37
Supporting vulnerable young people	38
Transition to FE	39
Supporting students with special education needs (SEND)	40
General FE settings	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Supporting students with SEND to attend college	40
Safeguarding young people	40

Mental health and wellbeing	41
Residential providers	43
Funding, assessment and accountability	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
16 to 19 tuition fund	45
16 to 19 funding arrangements (grant-funded providers)	45
In-year growth	45
Student prior attainment in English or maths GCSEs	46
Funding for remote delivery to 16 to 19 students	46
T Levels	48
T Level industry placements	48
Free meals in further education	49
Funding claims and reconciliation	49
Advanced learner loans	49
Adult education budget (AEB) funding (grant-funded providers)	49
Traineeship delivery from September 2020	50
Supported internships and Access to Work	51
Recording students in the school census and individualised learner record (ILR)	51
High needs funding	52
Examinations and assessments	52
Regulation, accountability and audit	53
Annex A: Health and safety risk assessment	55
Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific	55
Sharing your risk assessment	55
Monitoring and review of risk controls	56
Roles and responsibilities	56
Wider guidance on the risk assessment process	56
Consulting employees (general)	57
Resolving issues and raising concerns	58
Approach to risk estimation and management	58

## Introduction

During the period of national lockdown further education providers will remain open to vulnerable students and the children of critical workers.

All other students will learn remotely until February half term.

We know that receiving face-to-face education is best for young people's mental health and for their educational achievement. We will continue to review the restrictions on FE providers and will ensure that students return to face-to-face education as soon as possible.

This decision does not suggest that FE providers have become significantly less safe for students. Instead limiting attendance is about supporting the reduction of the overall number of social contacts in our communities.

We have resisted restricting attendance at FE providers until now, but in the face of the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, we now need to reduce all our social contacts wherever possible.

For vulnerable students and the children of critical workers, who can still attend on-site, as they did in March to July, and their teachers, the system of protective measures means that any risks are well managed and controlled.

This guidance sets out what further education (FE) and skills providers in England need to know so that students of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full. It explains the actions to take to stay as safe as possible as we continue to respond to the challenges of coronavirus (COVID-19). In light of the growth in infection rates we are seeing as a result of the newly identified strain of the virus the Government has announced that, for most students, FE providers will limit attendance from 5 January 2020 until February half term.

## Changes to delivery

You are now required to switch immediately to remote education for the majority of students, with the exception of vulnerable students and students with at least one parent or carer who is [listed as a critical worker](#).

High-quality [remote education](#) should be provided for all other students, who should not attend.

You should follow the system of controls, which sets out what to do to minimise the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your setting.

This guidance is for leaders and staff in:

- sixth form colleges
- general FE colleges
- independent training providers
- designated institutions
- adult community learning providers
- special post-16 institutions

It also covers expectations for students with education, health and care plans (EHCP) in mainstream FE settings, and special post-16 institutions. Special post-16 institutions should also read the [guidance for special schools and other specialist settings](#).

Apprenticeship providers should also read the guidance on [providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#).

Special post-16 settings should continue to allow students to attend as per their usual timetable.

We will keep this guidance under review and update, as necessary.

# Minimising coronavirus (COVID-19) risks

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) asymptomatic testing in colleges

The asymptomatic coronavirus (COVID-19) testing programme should be continued to enable weekly testing for staff and daily close contact testing for those staff and students attending colleges. This [programme also allows colleges to test students on return to face-to-face education](#).

## Delivering exams

Providers can continue with the vocational and technical exams that are due to take place in January, where they judge it right to do so. This may be particularly important for occupational competence VTQs which can only be fulfilled through practical assessment, such as an electrician.

It is the decision of the provider whether to put on the exam. If a student is unable to take their assessment this January, they may be able to take the assessment at a later date. In the event that is not possible we will put in place arrangements to ensure they are not disadvantaged. We are working with Ofqual on these arrangements and will provide updated guidance on this, and on VTQ assessments scheduled for February onwards, in due course.

Students have prepared for the assessments which are critical for them. It is right, given the importance, that those assessments be given priority alongside vulnerable students and children of key workers.

Exams and assessments can take place in a controlled environment where risk of transmission is low. Restricting attendance of all other students will reduce the numbers on site, social distancing within and around the exam site will be easier and will allow more space to deliver exams safely. Students due to take exams can also be prioritised for testing using the kits that have already been delivered to colleges. If a student tests positive they should return home to self-isolate.

In the circumstances, it is not possible for summer exams to go ahead fairly. We will be asking Ofqual to consult next week on alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly to the next stage of their lives.

[Our exam support service](#) provides support to help you manage the process of running exams. It also covers vocational and technical qualifications (VTQ) assessments that are in scope and are being held in spring 2021.

[Public health guidance to support exams](#) has also been published. This guidance sets out arrangements that you should implement when delivering exams to enable them to progress in a way which significantly reduces the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19).

## Risk assessment

You have various duties to protect people from harm, as employers, occupiers or due to other duties. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect staff, students and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) within your setting.

You should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

- effective
- working as planned
- updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice

More information on what is required of FE providers, and employers in relation to health and safety risk assessments and managing risk, is available in annex A.

## System of controls

This is the set of actions you must take. They are grouped into prevention and response to any infection.

### Prevention

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who are required to stay at home do not attend the setting.
2. Where recommended, or required by regulations, use face coverings.
3. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.
4. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
5. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents.
6. Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible.
7. Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Numbers 1 to 5 must be in place in all settings, all the time.

Number 6 must be properly considered, and settings must put in place measures to maintain social distancing where possible.

Number 7 applies in specific circumstances.

## Response to any infection

8. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.
9. Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19).
10. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

Numbers 8 to 10 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

## Prevention

You must put these actions in place to help prevent the risk of infection.

### 1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell

All settings must follow this process and ensure all staff are aware of it.

Ensuring that students, staff and other adults do not come into your site if they have [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms](#), or have tested positive in the last 10 days is essential to reduce the risk in education settings and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Make sure anyone developing those symptoms while on site is sent home. Individuals formally advised by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact should also self-isolate.

If anyone on your site becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home and advised to follow [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#). This sets out that they should arrange to have a PCR [test](#) for COVID-19 if they have not already had one.

If they have tested positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develop symptoms during the isolation period, they should restart the 10-day isolation period from the day they develop symptoms.

Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate in accordance with the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

In non-residential settings, students who start displaying coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at their setting should, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household. In exceptional circumstances, if this is not possible, and the setting needs to take responsibility for transporting them home, or if a symptomatic



student needs to be transported between residential settings, you should do one of the following:

- use a vehicle with a bulkhead or partition that separates the driver and passenger
- the driver and passenger should maintain a distance of 2 metres from each other
- the driver should use PPE, and the passenger should wear a face mask if they are old enough and able to do so

If a student is awaiting collection, they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age and needs of the person. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom must be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else.

PPE must be worn by staff caring for the individual while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a young person with complex needs).

Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms, while wearing PPE and all other members of staff or students who have been in close contact with that person with symptoms, if wearing a face covering, do not need to go home to self-isolate unless:

- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive
- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange to have a test)
- they are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the PHE advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated)

More information on PPE use can be found in the [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care](#) guidance.

As is the usual practice, in an emergency, call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Anyone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital except in an emergency.

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned after they have left to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See the guidance on [cleaning non-healthcare settings](#).

Public Health England is clear that routinely taking the temperature of students is not recommended as this is an unreliable method for identifying coronavirus (COVID-19).

## **2. Where recommended, or required by regulations, use of face coverings in FE settings**

There is additional guidance available about wearing [face coverings](#) in public spaces where social distancing is not always possible.

### **General approach to face coverings**

Under national lockdown, in settings where students are educated, face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.

You will need to communicate quickly and clearly to staff, parents and students that the new arrangements require the use of face coverings in certain circumstances.

### **Exemptions**

Some individuals are exempt from wearing [face coverings](#). For example, people who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

The same exemptions will apply in education settings, and we would expect teachers and other staff to be sensitive to those needs.

### **Access to face coverings**

It is reasonable to assume that staff and students will now have access to face coverings due to their increasing use in wider society. Public Health England has published guidance on [how to make a simple face covering](#).

However, you should have a small contingency supply available for people who:

- are struggling to access a face covering
- are unable to use their face covering as it's become soiled or unsafe
- have forgotten their face covering

No one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.

## Safe wearing and removal of face coverings

You should have a process for removing face coverings when those who use face coverings need to remove them. This process should be communicated clearly to students and staff.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

- cleaning of hands before and after touching, including to remove or put them on
- safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between uses

Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn and the face covering should be replaced carefully.

Students must be instructed to:

- not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing it
- dispose of temporary face coverings in a 'black bag' waste bin or, where appropriate a recycling bin (if safely bagged and left for 72 hours out of reach)
- place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them
- wash their hands

Guidance on [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care](#) provides more advice.

## 3. Clean hands thoroughly, more often than usual

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an easy virus to remove when it is on skin. This remains true for the new variant. This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser. You must ensure that students clean their hands regularly, including:

- when they arrive at your site
- when they return from breaks
- when they change rooms
- before and after eating

Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future.

Consider:

- whether your site has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser stations available so that all students and staff can clean their hands regularly

- supervision and help with hand sanitiser use given risks around ingestion for students with complex needs - skin-friendly skin cleaning wipes can be used as an alternative
- building these routines into your site culture, supported by behaviour expectations, and helping ensure younger students and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them

#### **4. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach**

The ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach continues to be very important, so education settings must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available to support students and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, you must ensure those with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all students understand that this is now part of how your site operates.

Some students with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers, for example, those who spit uncontrollably or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. This should be considered in risk assessments to support these students and the staff working with them and is not a reason to deny these students face-to-face education.

#### **5. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents**

Consider:

- putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes:
  - more frequent cleaning of rooms and shared areas that are used by different groups
  - frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
- that toilets will need to be cleaned regularly and students must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet, with different groups being allocated their own toilet blocks could be considered but is not a requirement if the site does not allow for it

Public Health England has published revised guidance for [cleaning non-healthcare settings](#). This contains advice on the general cleaning required in addition to the existing advice on cleaning those settings when there is a suspected case.

## 6. Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible

Minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is important in all contexts, and you must consider how to implement this. You must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing.

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the [number of contacts between students and staff](#). This can be achieved through keeping groups separate and through maintaining the distance between individuals. Any additional space available where there are lower numbers of pupils attending, should be used wherever possible to maximise the distance between students and between staff and other people. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the:

- age groups of students
- layout of the building
- feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad programme of learning

### How to group students

Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of students and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group.

Maintaining distinct groups or bubbles that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate and keep that number as small as possible.

You should explore how you can reduce contacts between individuals and groups, and how to maintain distance where possible. All settings are different, and some measures will be more appropriate for certain age groups, or more easily manageable in certain buildings.

Where class-sized groups are not possible in order to deliver the full programme of study, or to manage the practical logistics within and around the site, other measures from the system of controls become even more important. We strongly recommend that, as a minimum, you plan to keep your year groups or cohorts of students separate from each other during the day. You will need to think about whether you can group students into smaller groupings and still deliver a full programme of study. However, there is no set requirement to make cohorts smaller than normal class size. By limiting contact between different groups, this means that if one person in a group tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), you can be confident that they have only had close contact with some or all

of that group, rather than the whole year group. These are considerations you will need to make when reaching your decision.

Once groups are established, they should be kept apart and logistics such as start and finish times, lunch and break times, should be reviewed to ensure this.

Although passing briefly in the corridor or external areas is low risk, you should avoid creating very busy corridors or entrances and exits. You should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the canteens and restaurants between groups). Avoiding big gatherings is strongly recommended, such as meetings with more than one group you are otherwise trying to keep apart.

Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all or nothing' options and will still bring benefits even if implemented partially. You may keep students in their groups for most of the time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wrap-around care and transport. Siblings may also be in different groups. Endeavouring to keep these groups at least partially separate and minimising contacts between students will still offer public health benefits as it reduces the network of possible direct transmission.

We recognise that some staff will need to move between groups, for example, teachers delivering maths and English for students studying a broad range of vocational and academic subjects. You should take steps to minimise the movement of staff between groups where possible, but if they need to teach multiple groups, they should adhere to broader protective measures such as maintaining distance from students where possible.

## **7. Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)**

The majority of staff in education settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. PPE is only needed in a very small number of cases, including where a student:

- becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while at an educational setting, and only then if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained
- already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used

Read the guidance on [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care](#) for more information about preventing and controlling the infection. This includes when and how PPE should be used, what type of PPE to use, and how to source it.

Face coverings are not classified as [PPE \(personal protective equipment\)](#). PPE is used in a limited number of settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks, such as

surgical masks or respirators used in medical and industrial settings. A face covering is a covering of any type which covers your nose and mouth.

## Response to any infection

These are the steps you must take to respond to any infection. You must follow each step.

### 8. Individuals displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) must engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

You must ensure you understand the NHS Test and Trace process. You must ensure that staff members, students, parents and carers understand that they will need to be ready and willing to:

- [book a test](#) if they are displaying symptoms, staff and students must not come onto your site if they have symptoms and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them on your premises
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were to test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace
- [self-isolate](#) if they have been in close contact with someone who develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or to comply with overseas travel recommendations

### Asymptomatic testing

Colleges participating in the rapid asymptomatic testing programme should follow the [Mass asymptomatic testing: schools and colleges guidance](#).

### NHS COVID-19 app

The [NHS COVID-19 app](#) is available to anyone aged 16 or over to download if they choose. For some students, particularly some with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), parents will need to decide whether their use of the app is appropriate. This aligns with wider NHS services which are generally offered to those aged 16 or over as routine.

Most students in FE settings will be eligible to use the app. Staff members will also be able to use the app. The [use of the NHS COVID-19 app](#) guidance provides information to senior leaders in education settings about how the app works and guidance for its use within schools and FE providers in England.

## **Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) Testing kits**

In addition to the asymptomatic coronavirus (COVID-19) testing programme, the government will ensure that it is as easy as possible to get a PCR test through a wide range of other routes that are locally accessible, fast and convenient.

You have access to a small number of PCR home testing kits that you can give directly to students or a parent or carer of a student who has developed symptoms on-site, or staff who have developed symptoms on-site, where you think providing one will significantly increase the likelihood of them getting tested. Advice will be provided alongside these kits.

An online portal is now live for you to order additional coronavirus (COVID-19) test kits if they have run out, or are running out, of the initial 10 kits supplied for use in line with our guidance. You will be able to make a new order for PCR test kits 21 days after you receive a delivery confirmation email telling you that your previous supply of test kits has been sent. These kits are only for those who develop one of the symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and face significant barriers to accessing a test. They will help your symptomatic staff who test negative back to work as soon as they feel well enough, to ensure the continuity of education for students.

You will receive a unique organisation number via email from the Department of Health and Social Care which will be needed to place your order. Please call the Test and Trace helpdesk on 119 if you have not received your unique organisation number or if you have lost your record of it.

You should ask students and staff to inform you immediately of the results of a test.

If someone begins to self-isolate because they have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19) and they get a test which delivers a negative result, they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating. They could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu, in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better. Other members of their household can stop self-isolating.

If someone tests positive, they should follow the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) and must continue to self-isolate.

## **9. FE providers role in the management of confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19)**

You must take swift action when you become aware that someone who has attended your premises has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). You can contact the dedicated advice service introduced by Public Health England (PHE) and delivered by



the NHS Business Services Authority. This can be reached by calling the DfE helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 for advice on the action to take in response to a positive case. You will be put through to a team of advisers who will inform you what action is needed based on the latest public health advice.

The advice service will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate, unless you are participating in the [asymptomatic coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing programme](#), which offers an alternative to isolation. If, following triage, further expert advice is required the adviser will escalate your call to the PHE local health protection team.

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with you to guide you through the actions you need to take. Based on their advice, you must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 10 days from the day of contact with the individual who tested positive, unless you are participating in the [asymptomatic coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing programme](#), which offers an alternative to isolation.

Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face-to-face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face-to-face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin to skin)
- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will provide definitive advice to you on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we recommend you keep a record of students and staff in each group and include a check-in system for anyone using communal or shared areas such as libraries. This should be a proportionate recording process. You do not need to ask students to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.

A template letter will be provided to you, on the advice of the advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated), to send to parents and staff if needed. You must not share the names or details of people with coronavirus (COVID-19) unless essential to protect others.

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the student or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently

develops symptoms. If someone in a group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive, they should follow [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

They should get a test, and:

- if someone who is self-isolating because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) starts to feel unwell and gets a test for coronavirus themselves, and the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 10 days from the day the individual tested positive - this is because they could still develop coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and must isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends after the original 10 day isolation period), their household should self-isolate for at least 10 days from the day the individual tested positive, following [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#)

You should not request evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting students or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

The health protection team will also contact you directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended your setting, as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

Further guidance is available on [testing and tracing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

### **Reporting actual or suspected cases through the education setting status form (colleges and special post-16 institutions only)**

#### ***Monitoring attendance***

From today, colleges do not need to complete the educational setting status form. Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 4 January, we are updating the educational setting status form to reflect the new position. We will provide further instruction shortly on when educational settings should resume completing this form.

See guidance on how to submit the [educational settings status form](#) for more information.

## 10. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

If you have 2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, you may have an outbreak. You must:

- continue to work with your local health protection team who will be able to advise you if additional action is required
- if ongoing testing is in place at your setting, students and staff who are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 can return to school/college if they agree to be tested for 7 days following their last contact with a positive case

If you are implementing the system of controls, addressing the risks you have identified and therefore reducing transmission risks, whole site closure based on cases within your setting will not generally be necessary, and should not be considered except on the advice of health protection teams.

### Site safety, ventilation and estates

#### Site safety

You should take account of public health guidance on staying safe outside one's home and in public spaces and follow the national lockdown stay at home guidance. The public health guidance is to reduce social contact, maintain social distance, adopt good hand and respiratory hygiene measures, and self-isolate and get tested if you have symptoms. You can read guidance on [social distancing](#).

If you deliver higher education provision in your setting you should also read the [higher education reopening buildings and campuses](#) guidance.

#### Ventilation

You should ensure that all indoor and covered areas have good ventilation in addition to other methods of risk reduction. This can help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19) by aerosol transmission, so focus should be given to improving general ventilation.

Where possible, poorly ventilated spaces should be adapted to improve ventilation. This should at least meet current guidance on the ventilation rate for the setting as set out in [Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers \(CIBSE\)](#) guidance. If that is not possible, they should not be used as a teaching or learning location.

You should consider ways to maintain and increase the supply of outside air and prevent pockets of stagnant air in occupied spaces. Advice on this can be found in the HSE guidance on [air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](#).

To balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, the following measures should also be used as appropriate:

- opening high-level windows in preference to low level to reduce draughts
- increasing the ventilation while spaces are unoccupied (for example, between classes, during break and lunch, when a room is unused)
- providing flexibility to allow additional, suitable indoor clothing
- rearranging furniture where possible to avoid direct drafts

Heating should be used as necessary to ensure comfort levels are maintained particularly in occupied spaces.

## **Estates**

You should look to maximise the use of your site and any associated available space.

Following a risk assessment, you may determine that small adaptations to your site are required, such as additional wash basins. This will be at your discretion, based on your circumstances.

Additional advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the [CIBSE guidance on emerging from lockdown](#).

## **Off-site provision and work placements**

### **External work placements**

In light of the national lockdown providers should minimise work placements, where it is not possible to complete the work placement from home, and follow the stay at home guidance.

## **Teaching and learning environment measures within rooms and workshops**

Maintaining a distance between people whilst inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face to face contact lowers the risk of transmission. It is strong public health advice that staff maintain distance from their students, staying at the front of the room, and away from their colleagues where possible.

Ideally, staff should maintain a 2 metre distance from each other and from students wherever possible, or if not possible additional [social distancing](#) mitigations will be required. This should not prevent the delivery of a full curriculum offer.

Everyone should avoid close, direct face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of anyone. However, it will not be possible when working with many students who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These students' educational and care support should be provided as normal.

Students should also be supported to maintain distance and not touch staff and their peers where possible. This will not be possible for some students with complex needs and it is not feasible in some sites where space does not allow. Doing this where you can, and even doing this some of the time, will help.

When staff or students cannot maintain distancing, for example, when students are required to work in close proximity or where there is high use of items such as apparatus and machinery which cannot be washed down between uses, additional mitigation measures should be put in place.

### **Additional mitigation measures**

These include:

- increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- using screens or barriers to separate students from each other
- seating students side-by-side and facing forwards, rather than face-to-face or side on
- moving unnecessary furniture out of rooms to make more space

Some FE courses, such as vocational training, healthcare-related courses and the performing arts may pose particular risks of aerosol, droplet and surface transmission and may therefore warrant increased consideration, for example, face coverings, ventilation or cleaning in accordance with guidance issued for the [relevant professional working arrangements](#).

### **Measures elsewhere**

Avoid large gatherings such as meetings with more than one group.

When timetabling, groups should be kept apart and movement around the site kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or outdoor communal areas is low risk, you should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. You should also consider

staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the canteen or restaurant between groups).

You should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other. Use of staff rooms should be minimised although staff must still have a break of a reasonable length during the day.

If your institution operates commercial training environments such as hairdressing, barbering and beauty salons, sports and fitness facilities or restaurants, they must comply with relevant sector guidance in [working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) and the stay at home guidance.

Where institutions have kitchens on-site, these are able to operate as normal, but they must comply with the [guidance for food businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Restaurants and food service facilities can remain open for use by staff and students.

Other on-site facilities such as gyms, swimming pools, and 3G pitches can remain open for use by staff and students for the purposes of education and training.

## **Public facing facilities**

Public facing facilities must be closed to the public. There are exceptions which include:

- for education and training, including where education providers use sports, leisure and community facilities where that is part of their normal provision
- for childcare purposes and supervised activities for those children eligible to attend
- for use by elite sports persons to train and compete

A full list of exemptions can be found in the [national lockdown guidance](#).

## **Performing arts**

This section of the guidance is designed to help you understand how to minimise risk during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic for performing arts provision.

Studies have indicated that it is the cumulative aerosol transmission from both those performing in and attending events that is likely to create risk. This is particularly evident for singing and shouting, but with appropriate safety mitigation and consideration, singing, wind and brass teaching can still take place.

Activities should be undertaken in line with this guidance and the guidance for professionals and non-professionals on [working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the performing arts](#).

Performing arts courses, in normal circumstances, may involve a considerable amount of practical face-to-face teaching and assessment.

You should avoid delivering in-person teaching and assessment during the national lockdown where possible or consider new ways of delivering in-person teaching and assessment where this is required. This should adhere to guidelines on social distancing so that all students can receive a high-quality academic experience in a way that protects both students and staff.

## **Performances**

During the national lockdown, performances with an audience must not take place.

## **Music teaching in colleges including singing and playing wind and brass instruments in groups**

Students and staff can engage in singing and playing wind and brass instruments in line with this guidance and guidance on [working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the performing arts](#) [and suggested principles for safer singing guidance](#) but routine 2 metre social distancing should be maintained.

You should observe strict social distancing between each singer or player and between singers or players and any other people such as conductors, other musicians, or accompanists. Current guidance advises that if the activity is face-to-face and without mitigating actions, 2 metre distance is appropriate. You should use seating where appropriate to maintain social distancing.

Further measures that you can take include:

- playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible
- if indoors, use a room with as much space as possible, for example, larger rooms, rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission
- if playing indoors, limiting the numbers to account for ventilation of the space and the ability to social distance - it is important to ensure good ventilation, advice on this can be found in the HSE guidance on [air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](#) students should be positioned back-to-back or side-to-side when playing or singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- position wind and brass players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player
- use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly

## **Physical activity and sports**

Sport and physical activity play a hugely important role in our lives, however, to uphold wider public health objectives, limits have been placed on some activities and settings in order to limit social contact and reduce transmission.

Organised indoor sport is permitted where it is part of education or training provision for students eligible to attend but see [national lockdown guidance](#). Further information for [public and sport providers](#) is available.

At all times participants should comply with coronavirus (COVID-19) secure measures including the system of controls for their setting and limit social interaction outside the sporting activity. Eligible students should be kept in consistent groups and sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups.

You should refer to advice:

- on the [phased return of sport and recreation](#) and guidance from [Sport England](#) for grassroot sport
- from organisations such as the [Association for Physical Education](#) and the [Youth Sport Trust](#)
- from Swim England on [school swimming and water safety lessons](#)

## **Students who are clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable**

During the national lockdown clinically extremely vulnerable students are advised to not attend their FE provision, because the risk of exposure to the virus is now very high. You should make appropriate arrangements for students to be able to continue their education at home.

Students who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves should still attend their educational setting if eligible for face-to-face education.

Further guidance for the [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) is available.

## **Moving between settings**

Consider whether you need any additional processes in place for students who regularly:

- attend more than one site or different providers
- move between a training provider and workplace as part of an apprenticeship

Where possible, apprenticeship training and assessment should be delivered remotely.



However, where it is essential for workers to attend their workplace, on-the-job and off-the-job training and assessment can continue in the workplace for apprentices.

See guidance on [providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#).

## **Ensuring access to on-site education for students who need it**

During this period of restriction to on-site delivery, it will be important to preserve provision on-site for all students who need it. This includes supporting:

- vulnerable students (as defined within the [critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or educational settings guidance](#))
- the children of key workers who need it

The definition of vulnerable students includes those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices, connectivity or quiet space to study).

In circumstances where a student who is eligible to attend on-site has to self isolate and does not have access to a suitable device or internet connection (and you are unable to remedy this), you should, where possible, deliver remote education by other means. This could include providing hard copy resources and communications via telephone.

## **Education and training delivery**

### **Delivery of remote education**

The FE sector responded impressively during the first national lockdown and since to deliver substantial remote education to students, continually improving their provision in line with expectations and emerging best practice. This reflects excellent leadership and governance, and the huge strides teachers have made to adapt their delivery.

Following the announcement of a further national lockdown commencing 5 January 2021, you are expected to build on your existing remote education provision, ensuring a strong offer is in place for all students who need to study from home.

Our Get Help With Remote Education page on gov.uk provides a one-stop-shop for teachers and leaders, signposting the support package available. This includes helping schools and FE providers to access technology that supports remote education, as well as peer-to-peer training and guidance on how to use technology effectively. It also includes practical tools, a good practice guide and provider-led webinars to support effective delivery of the curriculum.

Information is also available on the £96m 16 to 19 tuition fund to mitigate the disruption to learning arising from coronavirus. This fund is ring-fenced for 16 to 19 small group tuition in English, maths, and other courses where learning has been disrupted.

In developing your remote education, we expect you to:

- teach planned and well sequenced remote education and training programmes to give students the best chance to build their knowledge and skills
- have systems in place to check, at least weekly, for persistent non-attendance or lack of engagement with remote education and to quickly agree ways in which attendance and participation can be improved
- provide clarity to students and teachers on the arrangements for how remote education will be delivered, including the use of digital platforms (sometimes referred to as virtual learning environments) that allow interaction, assessment and feedback
- ensure both staff and students are trained and confident in their use of digital platforms
- give particular consideration on how best to support vulnerable and disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs who may not be able to access remote education without support
- identify a named senior leader with overarching responsibility for the quality and delivery of remote education, including that provision meets expectations for remote education set out in this guidance
- publish information for students (and parents) setting out your remote education offer on your website by 18 January

When teaching students remotely, we expect you to:

- set clear expectations of students concerning their participation in remote education, so they know when and how they are expected to engage and demonstrate their learning
- use your best endeavours to deliver as much of students' planned hours as possible - we recognise for some students this may not be possible for example where a student is undertaking a course involving practical teaching and training which necessitates the use of specialist equipment and supervision or with respect to work experience and placements
- as far as possible provide students live online teaching in lieu of face to face delivery, given Ofsted and many providers found during the first lockdown that learners generally prefer interactive 'live' online lessons and that it results in

greater engagement. Where students are unable to attend 'live' lessons they may benefit from recorded lessons

- confirm with students the different ways in which they will receive assessment and feedback and provide students with individual assessment and feedback to support progress in their learning. The nature and frequency of assessment and feedback should reflect the individual need and the courses they are enrolled on and should be at least once every week for academic study programmes and at least fortnightly if undertaking technical or applied general study programmes
- consider how to transfer into remote education what we already know about effective face to face teaching, for example:
  - provide frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher or through high-quality curriculum resources
  - provide opportunities for interactivity and intentional dialogue, including questioning, eliciting and reflective discussion
  - enable students to receive timely and frequent feedback on how to progress, using digitally facilitated or whole-class feedback where appropriate
  - use assessment to ensure teaching is responsive to students' needs

## **Publication of remote education offers**

So that students (and parents of students aged 19 and below) know what to expect of you if they need to self-isolate or national lockdown requires them to remain at home, you should publish your remote education offer on your website by 18 January.

The information you should publish could include:

- what remote education will be made available for different learner cohorts (14 to 16, 16 to 19, apprentices, adult learners)
- delivery arrangements, such as timetabling, virtual learning environments and assessment arrangements
- expectations of students
- arrangements for students studying courses that require specialist equipment or facilities
- support for students without devices, connectivity or a suitable environment for learning
- support for students with SEND

## Support for young people who are unable to access remote digital education

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific financial barriers to participation so that they can remain in education. This may include the provision of devices and connectivity support. As set out in [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#) guidance, you should decide what support a student needs on the basis of individual assessment, in line with bursary fund rules that all support must be based on individual circumstances and needs.

We announced in December that the Get Help with Technology scheme will be extended to provide support with devices and connectivity for 16 to 19 year olds. This forms part of a £300 million investment to help children and young people continue their education at home and access online social care services.

Schools with sixth forms, colleges and other FE institutions will be invited to order laptops and tablets during the spring term to further support disadvantaged learners to access remote education. 16 to 19 providers will also be able to access support for connectivity for students where this is needed. Laptops and tablets provided under this scheme will be owned by providers who can lend these to children and young people who need them the most. Further information about how to access this scheme will be released shortly.

For adults aged 19 and over we introduced a change to the ESFA Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding rules for the 2020 to 2021 academic year to enable you to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices and/or internet access for disadvantaged students to help them meet technology costs, where these costs are a barrier to accessing or continuing in their training. The introduction of this additional flexibility into the funding rules will be accommodated within your existing AEB for 2020 to 2021. See the [AEB funding rules 2020 to 2021](#) for full details. This flexibility is only for providers funded by ESFA. In areas where the AEB budget is devolved, contact the relevant mayoral combined authority concerning adult student support arrangements

Where providers are unable to secure suitable access to devices and connectivity for their students, they should consider:

- distributing any available provider-owned laptops accompanied by a user agreement or contract
- defining these students as vulnerable and expecting them to attend on-site provision

## Support for high-quality remote and blended education

This section of the guidance sets out support available to:

- make effective use of digital technology such as virtual learning environments, video conferencing, digital resources and storage
- help teachers to develop their skills and confidence in using technology and planning and teaching online

### **EdTech demonstrator programme**

You can apply for support from other schools and colleges with a proven track record in using education technology through the national [EdTech demonstrator programme](#). The programme offers a wide range of support including webinars and training on:

- the effective use of online learning platforms
- digital safety
- supporting the needs of pupils with SEND
- promoting student and teacher wellbeing during remote teaching

### **Developing EdTech and online teaching skills**

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) offers support for teachers to develop their online teaching skills.

For practitioners who are just starting out with the use of educational technology (EdTech) a good place to start is the [your 60-minute starter pack for EdTech training](#). It comprises of 12 free-to-access, bite-size training modules selected from the [Enhance Digital Teaching Platform](#) that will give you a good overview of the basics. Each module is only 5 minutes long so if you do them all it will take you 60 minutes.

For the full suite of training modules, visit the [Enhance Digital Teaching Platform](#) to find materials on a wide range of topics including:

- motivating and engaging students in virtual learning environments
- adapting content quickly to deliver online
- different pedagogical approaches to online delivery

For teachers lacking confidence or skills in using the internet and devices, [ETF's essential digital skills professional development programme](#) can help teachers develop their digital skills. The online learning modules include topics on:

- using devices
- handling information
- staying safe online

ETF have also developed a guide for FE staff on [EdTech and essential digital skills training to support remote working](#). The guide identifies and provides links to EdTech and essential digital skills training modules on the Enhance Digital Teaching Platform as well as other useful resources which can contribute to developing the knowledge, skills and understanding required for teaching and learning online.

The FutureLearn platform includes free courses to develop skills to effectively deliver remote learning. These include:

- [how to teach online](#)
- [blended learning essentials](#)
- [use of technology in evidence-based teaching](#)

[Microsoft](#)) [Google](#) and [Apple](#) also provide free training to help teachers use their platforms to build interactive lessons. Certification is subject to a fee.

### **Digital curriculum content and resources**

[Jisc provides curriculum content](#) mapped against qualifications and national standards for 5 vocational subject areas:

- construction
- digital and IT
- education and childcare
- health and social care
- hairdressing

They also provide a wide range of [e-books for FE relating to vocational and academic subjects and qualifications](#).

The [Blended Learning Consortium](#) has FE-specific resources across a range of subjects and levels. There is a fee to access these resources.

WorldSkills UK is developing a set of digital resources. This includes:

- a [careers advice toolkit](#), which provides resources to support students to think about their future
- [Teach Tom](#) and [skill with me](#), which provide short video masterclasses and tutorials

Through the College Collaboration Fund, DfE has funded seven college partnerships to produce a range of high quality digital content and resources for the FE sector. The content consists of free, Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) compliant

resources for use across the FE curriculum. The first tranche of new content is now published and can be accessed via the [Remote Education Service](#).

## Support from provider associations

Visit your provider association's website for resources and support on remote and blended learning:

- [Association of Colleges](#)
- [Sixth Form Colleges Association](#)
- [Association of Employment and Learning Providers](#)
- [Holex](#)
- [Natspec](#)

## Transport

During the lockdown period, there are likely to be reduced pressures on transport given the reductions in numbers of students travelling, however, the following guidance continues to apply for students who are eligible to continue learning onsite.

Social distancing has significantly reduced available public transport capacity. This section sets out how you can support students getting to and from FE and skills providers.

The guidance on [transport for schools and other places of education](#) provides information about the steps local authorities are taking to ensure that students can travel to college. It also includes information on the measures you should take where you provide dedicated transport for students.

You are advised to work with your local transport authority to identify when it might be necessary to take steps to manage demand on public transport or to arrange additional transport. Local transport authorities have received additional [funding for school and college dedicated transport](#) to support children and students in their region.

Funding has been allocated to reflect the number of children and young people in the area and how far they travel. Local authorities (through their local transport authorities) have been asked to work with local education providers to help plan and manage transport locally.

## Dedicated FE and skills provider transport

Students on dedicated transport services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and student groups will tend to be consistent under return to college measures. Therefore, wider transmission risks are likely to be lower.

Local authorities will not be required to uniformly apply the social distancing guidelines for public transport on dedicated college transport. However, social distancing should still be put in place within vehicles wherever possible. This will help both to minimise disease transmission risks and maintain consistent reinforcement of public health messaging to students and staff, particularly at the point where they are leaving college and heading back into the community each day.

Dedicated provider transport services can take different forms and may include:

- coaches regularly picking up the same students each day
- minibuses
- services that are used by different students on different days
- services for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

The precise approach that you take will need to reflect the range of measures that are reasonable in the different circumstances.

Speak to your transport provider to confirm the approach they are adopting. Check it follows the system of controls. It is important, wherever possible, that:

- social distancing is maximised within vehicles
- students are grouped together on transport
- organised queuing and boarding is put in place
- students should clean their hands before boarding transport and again on disembarking
- additional cleaning of vehicles is put in place
- ventilation of fresh air (from outside the vehicle) is maximised, particularly through opening windows and ceiling vents

In accordance with advice from PHE, young people aged 11 and over must wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated college transport. This does not apply to those who are exempt from wearing a face covering on public transport. A [face covering](#) is a covering of any type which covers your nose and mouth.



## Wider public transport

In many areas, students make extensive use of the wider public transport system, particularly public buses, to travel to education. Public transport capacity will continue to be constrained. Its use, particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum.

Where possible, consider staggered start times to enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours.

Encourage staff and students to walk or cycle where possible.

Refer students and staff using public transport to the [safer travel guidance for passengers](#). Remind them that it is the law that they wear a face covering when travelling in England on a public bus, coach, train, tram, or other forms of public transport unless they are [exempt from wearing face coverings](#). See guidance on [face coverings](#) for more information.

Where you have concerns regarding students' ability to access public transport routes, speak to your local authority to consider what alternative safe transport arrangements could be put in place.

Work with your local authority to consider the transport needs of students with SEND and those with an EHC plan.

## Safe behaviour off-site

You should consider how to reinforce public health messaging to students and staff, particularly at the point where they are entering and leaving college and heading into the community each day.

Communication strategies are a critical part of minimising transmission risks associated with FE.

Guidance on how to behave is more likely to be adhered to if people understand the reasons they are asked to take certain actions, and if it is co-produced with the staff and students who will be affected by it. Guidance to promote safe behaviour in the wider community should be developed with local community leaders as well as staff and students. Student organisations should be encouraged to lead in promoting coronavirus (COVID-19) safety.

## Temporary staff and visitors

Consider how to minimise the number of visitors to your setting where possible. Supply staff and visitors such as sports coaches must follow your arrangements for managing and minimising risk.

To help you minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering your premises, consider:

- using longer assignments with supply staff
- agreeing to a minimum number of hours across the academic year

## Educational visits

We continue to advise against domestic (UK) overnight and overseas educational visits. This advice remains under review.

In February 2021, we will review our advice on overnight residential education visits with the possibility that they will resume from Easter 2021 if the scientific evidence supports this.

## **Workforce**

We expect that most staff will be able to attend work.

All staff working on-site should follow the system of controls to minimise the risks of transmission. Following the system of controls will reduce the risks to all staff significantly. Some roles, such as some administrative roles, may be conducive to home working, and you should consider what is feasible and appropriate.

Explain to staff the measures you are putting in place to reduce risks.

Discuss any concerns individuals may have around their circumstances with them. We encourage you to be flexible and try to accommodate additional measures if appropriate.

### **Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable**

During the period of national lockdown, individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to work from home and where this is not possible, they are advised not to go into work. Individuals in this group will have been identified through a letter from the NHS or from their GP and may have been advised to shield in the past.

Staff should talk to their employers about how they will be supported, including to work from home where possible. You should continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms. Those living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable can still attend work where home-working is not possible.

### **Staff who are clinically vulnerable**

Clinically vulnerable staff can attend work. While in the workplace, they should follow the system of controls to minimise the risks of transmission.

People who live with those who are clinically vulnerable can attend the workplace.

If clinically vulnerable staff have concerns around their individual circumstances, you should discuss those concerns and be flexible in seeking to address them.

### **Staff who are pregnant**

Pregnant women are considered 'clinically vulnerable' or in some cases 'clinically extremely vulnerable' to coronavirus (COVID-19) and therefore require special consideration as contained in government guides for different industries.

Employers should carry out a risk assessment to follow the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW) or the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000. This may involve obtaining advice from the occupational health department. See the [workplace risk assessment guidance for healthcare workers](#) and for [vulnerable people working in other industries](#). Information contained in the [RCOG/RCM guidance on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) in pregnancy should be used as the basis for a risk assessment.

Pregnant women of any gestation should not be required to continue working if this is not supported by the risk assessment.

Women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond, or are pregnant and have an underlying health condition that puts them at a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19 at any gestation, should take a more precautionary approach. Employers should ensure pregnant women are able to adhere to any active national guidance on social distancing and/or advice for pregnant women considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable (this group may previously have been advised to shield).

More advice is available at [advice for pregnant employees](#).

We recommend that it is good practice to follow the same principles for pregnant students, in line with wider health and safety obligations.

## **Staff who may otherwise be at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Some people with particular characteristics may be at [comparatively increased risk](#) from coronavirus (COVID-19). Where it is not possible to work from home, these staff can attend as long as the system of controls set out in this guidance are in place. The reasons for the disparities are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future.

People who live with those who have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace.

## **Health and safety, and first aid**

Employers have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others from harm and should continue to assess health and safety risks (alongside coronavirus (COVID-19) risks) in the usual way. Following the steps in this guidance will mitigate the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to students and staff and help you to meet your legal duties to protect employees and others from harm.

The Health and Safety Executive published [guidance on first aid during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) which will support local risk assessments and provides guidance for first aiders. It is clear that treating any casualty properly should be the first concern. Where it is necessary for first aid provision to be administered in close proximity, those administering it should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.

You should continue to ensure that you comply with legal obligations, including duties of care towards staff, students and visitors, including under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Equality Act 2010.

## Recruitment

You can continue recruiting members of staff.

You can still [register for the Taking Teaching Further programme](#). This programme supports the recruitment of industry professionals to teaching roles in the FE sector.

If you are recruiting English, maths or SEND teachers, you can apply for [in-service initial teacher education \(ITE\) grants](#) of £18,200.

## Teacher training

You should continue delivering initial teacher education (ITE), including in-person teacher training placements, where possible. However, in exceptional circumstances, there may be a need to complete some placements remotely or in a modified way using appropriate technology.

Consider the advice issued by the [Education and Training Foundation on ITE practice placements](#) which is intended to support a consistent approach across all programmes whilst maintaining quality.

## Supporting staff

All employers have a duty of care to their employees, and this extends to their mental health.

Because some staff may be particularly anxious about attending, you may need extra systems in place to support staff wellbeing. Read about the [extra mental health support for pupils and teachers](#).

## Supporting vulnerable young people

Vulnerable young people are those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an EHC plan
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services) - this includes:
  - young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services
  - adopted children
  - those at risk of becoming 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET)
  - those living in temporary accommodation
  - those who are young carers
  - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
  - others at the provider and local authority's discretion, including students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

During the period of national lockdown, you will remain open to vulnerable students, including vulnerable adult students such as adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. You are expected to offer an on-site place to allow vulnerable students to attend. Vulnerable students are strongly encouraged to attend on-site provision.

If vulnerable students do not attend, you should:

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent or carer to explore the reason for absence, discussing their concerns using supporting guidance considering the student's circumstances and their best interests
- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) and other relevant partners to encourage the student to attend educational provision, particularly where the social worker agrees that the student's attendance would be appropriate

If the vulnerable student wishes to be absent during the period of national lockdown, they should let their setting know.

Where you have had to close, you should inform the local authority to discuss alternative arrangements for vulnerable children and students and work towards reopening as soon as possible, where feasible to do so.

All FE providers are encouraged to work collaboratively with other schools and education providers and other local partners (including the local authority, social workers, police, youth services, key workers etc) to maximise opportunities for face-to-face provision for vulnerable children.

## Transition to FE

You should continue to work with schools and local authorities to support transitions. This includes sharing any relevant welfare and child protection information. [Keeping children safe in education](#) sets out responsibilities for sharing information.

Some young people might need additional mental health and wellbeing support. Use external support where necessary and possible. See the mental health and wellbeing section for more information.

You should assess where students are in their learning and agree on a plan to support catch up. This is supported through the [16 to 19 tuition fund](#). For looked-after children and care leavers, this may mean working with the virtual school head or personal adviser to review personal education and pathway plans.

Consider extra support for students at high risk of being NEET. A trusted adviser can help young people to sustain engagement, overcome barriers and achieve their goals.

# Supporting students with special education needs (SEND)

## Special post-16 settings

We want students in special post-16 institutions to continue to receive high-quality teaching and specialist professional support. This is because we know that students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and their families, can be disproportionately impacted by being out of education.

Special post-16 settings should continue to welcome and encourage students to attend full-time (or as per their usual timetable) where the student wishes to attend.

On occasion special post-16 settings will encounter circumstances where they cannot provide their usual interventions and provision at adequate staffing ratios, or with staff with vital specialist training. In these circumstances they should seek to resume as close as possible to the student's specified provision as soon as possible. Student level risk assessments, which were used last spring, should not be used to filter young people in or out of attendance, but could be helpful to prioritise the provision a young person can get if full provision for all is not possible.

## Supporting students with SEND to attend college

Many students will have found restrictions exceptionally difficult socially and emotionally.

Speak to the student or their parents, to find out if any challenging behaviours, or social or emotional challenges are a response to restrictions. If they are, you should offer additional support, as a reasonable adjustment to support a disabled young person to access education successfully.

## Safeguarding young people

Your staff should be particularly vigilant about new and additional safeguarding concerns. You should make staff and volunteers aware of what they should do if they have any concerns about a student. It is important that they act immediately on any safeguarding concerns.

Check that the safeguarding and welfare information you hold on all students is accurate. Ask parents and carers to tell you about any changes in welfare, health and wellbeing.

Continue to work with and support:

- young people's social workers



- the local authority virtual school head for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- personal advisers for care leavers
- any other relevant safeguarding and welfare partners

You have a statutory duty with regards to 16 and 17 year olds to provide information to local authority services to enable them to track and maintain contact with these young people. This will help local authorities to identify those not participating so that they can provide those students with the support they need to reach their potential.

Continue following statutory guidance on inter-agency working, set out in [working together to safeguard children](#). You should also refer to [keeping children safe in education](#).

External resources that can support the safeguarding of young people include:

- [SafeCall](#), which offers support to victims of exploitation – young people can contact SafeCall directly or can be referred to SafeCall by professionals
- the [See, Hear, Respond service](#) provided by Barnardo's to help young people in England who are experiencing harm and increased adversity during lockdown
- a [protocol for teachers delivering live lessons online](#) and engaging in one to one activity with under 18s, developed by Kirklees College and the National Association for Managers of Student Services (NAMSS)

## Mental health and wellbeing

Many students and staff members will be feeling uncertain and anxious at this time. It is important to support positive mental health and wellbeing, which is necessary for young people to engage in learning.

You should identify young people and members of staff who may need additional support and ensure they have appropriate mental health and wellbeing support in place. Vulnerable young people are particularly likely to need additional support with their mental health and wellbeing. The guidance on [mental health and behaviour in schools](#) might be helpful with this.

Work with local authorities and voluntary sector mental health organisations to ensure that support is in place. Contact your local authority to see if they have a list of services in your area that provide support for young people.

Support can be given over the phone for any students self-isolating from specialist staff or support services.

NHS children and young people's mental health services may be able to provide support remotely. Professionals involved with children and young people, including teachers, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCO) social workers, youth workers and educational psychologists should continue referring young people to their local NHS children and young people's mental health services where needed. Self-referral options are commonly available and many services offer single points of access. Young people or their parents or carers can also contact their GP or refer to NHS 111 online.

NHS trusts have also established 24-hour urgent mental health helplines in most parts of England for people of all ages. If you have urgent concerns about a young person, find your local helpline to discuss your concerns with a mental health professional. You should also ensure that students are aware of this service. Public Health England has published guidance on [supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing](#).

Wellbeing for Education Return is intended to help local areas to support schools and colleges promote wellbeing and good mental health, responding to the impacts of Covid-19. The £8m initiative comprises training materials and funding for local experts to support delivery of training and resources into all schools and colleges in each local area, and ongoing support, until the end of March 2021.

In recognition of the significant pressures on your staff, local areas are tailoring their support, and offering interactive training sessions and follow up support on key themes to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff and pupils in response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

The training will give staff increased confidence to support their colleagues, young people, and local knowledge so that they know how and where to access appropriate specialist support where needed.

The Department for Education, Public Health England and NHS England also hosted a [webinar for school and FE providers staff](#) on 9 July 2020 to set out how to support returning pupils and students. You can find resources to promote and support mental wellbeing in the list of [online resources to help young people to learn at home](#).

Other resources include:

- [MindEd](#), which includes e-learning modules about young people's mental health
- the [Every Mind Matters](#) platform, which has specific advice for adults and young people on maintaining good mental wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- the Association of College's (AoC) [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resource hub](#), which includes advice for students and staff

- the Education and Training Foundation's [mental health and emotional wellbeing advice](#) for FE staff
- Education Support's [mental health and wellbeing support services for all education staff](#)
- free apps available on the [NHS App Store](#) for mental health and wellbeing support
- [Digital Wellbeing of Students guide from Jisc](#), which curates a number of resources and guides
- the [Samaritans' website](#) provides guidance on how to prepare for and respond to a suspected suicide in FE colleges

Mental health is also covered in [keeping children safe in education](#) and these principles continue to apply.

Consider supporting students with their mental health and wellbeing through:

- remote one to one counselling
- encouraging young people to identify their own self-care strategies during this uncertain time, online resources can help with this
- completing welfare checks at the start of each lesson to ensure that all students are engaged and supported
- personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) lessons focused on topics including mental health awareness, healthy living and online safety
- encouraging participation in sport, [AOC Sport](#) promotes and supports sports in further education

## Residential providers

Vulnerable students and the children of critical workers who have already travelled to their residential college should continue to receive face to face education. Where other students have already travelled, in anticipation of college starting next week, they can continue to receive remote education in their educational accommodation.

Vulnerable students and the children of critical workers who have not yet done so can return to their college to receive face to face education. Where other students have not yet returned to their college, they should not travel and should receive remote education at home.

If a student in a residential setting develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19):

- a test should be booked immediately to confirm whether they have coronavirus (COVID-19)
- you should make sure they and their residential group self-isolate

Where you provide residential provision, you are under a legal duty to ensure that your students are safe and well looked after during a period of restriction or their self-isolation period.

You will need to put in place arrangements to bring meals and other essential commodities to the areas where students are self-isolating.

If a student with symptoms gets a test and the result is positive:

- the setting should contact the PHE dedicated advice service immediately and follow their advice, this can be reached via the DfE coronavirus helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1
- staff should wear PPE for activities requiring close contact

In the case of any localised outbreaks, we expect you to keep your residential provision open where necessary. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

You will need to remain open to those who:

- have particular needs that cannot be accommodated safely at home
- do not have suitable alternative accommodation

Where vulnerable students normally travel between their FE education setting and home during term time for the purpose of education this can continue but students should minimise travel wherever possible.

Where non-residential staff need to leave and enter the residential facility, the manager of the accommodation should operate a staff rota that minimises the risk of transmission by keeping the same staff together with the same students as far as that is possible.

## **Defining who should self-isolate in your residential setting**

Residential FE providers are considered as educational accommodation and will have residential groups similar to class groups/bubbles that can be used to determine who should self-isolate if a positive case is identified.

Your approach to deciding what constitutes a residential group and who should self-isolate because they are part of this group will depend on the physical layout of the residential educational setting.

Consider who shares a kitchen, bathroom, dormitories, and staffing arrangements.

## Funding, assessment and accountability

We have issued the [funding rules and guidance for 2020 to 2021](#). Given the unprecedented circumstances, we will continue to review the guidance and will notify you of changes.

### 16 to 19 tuition fund

We have provided extra funding for one year for 2020 to 2021. This is to mitigate the disruption to learning arising from coronavirus (COVID-19). Opt in to the fund is now closed.

### 16 to 19 funding arrangements (grant-funded providers)

Where appropriate, we will use alternative data sources to calculate allocations for 2021 to 2022. This should reduce the impact on funding due to the lack of data for the 2019 to 2020 academic year because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

### Retention factor

We will calculate 16 to 19 funding allocations for 2021 to 2022 using an average retention factor for each provider.

We will calculate this by establishing the 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021 allocated retention factors, which are based on 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019 data, and then combining the factors to create an average retention factor based upon these 2 years.

This is intended to provide a retention factor for 2019 to 2020 that represents the expected end-year data had the academic year not been affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

### In-year growth

The government is clear that no student should be turned away from 16 to 19 education due to funding concerns.

Exceptional in-year growth is a data-driven exercise based on the individualised learner record (ILR) R04 and autumn school census data returns. We do not have a business cases process, it is solely data-driven. All exceptional in-year growth is however subject to affordability. At this stage, we cannot confirm any of the details of the process or what is affordable. If we award exceptional in-year growth, based on data returns, we will inform providers in February 2021.

If provider solvency is at risk, emergency funding exists as a last resort to ensure that students are protected.

## **Student prior attainment in English or maths GCSEs**

The 16 to 19 funding formula uses students' prior attainment in English or maths in calculations for:

- the condition of funding
- disadvantage funding – block 2
- level 3 programme maths and English payment

We will calculate these elements using the 16 to 19 funding formula and the grades awarded to students in the absence of GCSE exams this summer.

This means that you will still be allocated additional funding for young people with low prior attainment in GCSE English or maths.

## **Funding for remote delivery to 16 to 19 students**

The 16 to 19 funding regulations set out the principles that need to be met to count towards planned hours. 16 to 19 funding is allocated based on planned hours regardless of how those hours are delivered. If you are planning to combine time in the classroom or workshop with remote delivery, this will not affect the funding you receive.

As set out in the funding regulations, you must make sure virtual or distance learning elements of the study programme are planned, timetabled and organised. This could include lessons delivered online within your normal working pattern. The planned hours have to be realistic and deliverable for each individual student. You must be able to give evidence of this to funding auditors.

## **Examples of eligible provision**

As with classroom-based delivery, to attract funding, you should plan, develop and oversee remote or online delivery as part of the timetable you have developed and are overseeing. This could include lessons delivered online within your normal working pattern.

If students are unable to attend timetabled remote delivery for a good reason, such as caring responsibilities or not having access to a device or connectivity, you can pre-record timetabled lessons and allow them to study outside the normal working pattern.

You must get evidence of participation and make sure you support and supervise time-shifted delivery appropriately.

As is currently the case for on-site delivery, you can also include set work in planned hours subject to organising and supervising it. For example, you could set tasks or coursework for a student, either by email or a digital learning platform or virtual learning environment. You must make sure students can access support and receive regular feedback on their progress as they study.

Tasks or coursework may use or incorporate externally sourced educational resources if this has been planned by the teacher as part of a student's study programme and is supervised. Other types of remote delivery will be eligible if they meet the principles set out in the funding regulations.

The number of hours a student may study during a week should not be greater than 40 hours per week. The planned hours and planned dates will need to reflect this.

## **Ineligible provision**

You cannot record students' private study (homework) as planned hours. For example, it would not be acceptable to provide a student with course materials or access to external online content with minimal or no support from a teacher. The funding regulations allow for marking time to be included in planned hour calculations if this is both reasonable and a small proportion of overall planned hours.

Planned hours timetabled outside your normal working pattern cannot be recorded as planned hours. For example, asking all students on a course to watch a video in advance of their next timetabled class could not count towards planned hours.

## **Evidence**

During a funding audit, we want you to be able to provide evidence that:

- students have been engaged in structured learning
- you have been delivering classes and other teacher-led activity to a regular timetable
- you can deliver provision remotely
- students are meeting their learning aims

Make sure you have evidence that the planned hours you record on data returns are timetabled and exist. This could include timetables and learning agreements. For remote delivery, we also expect to see evidence of engagement and participation. This could include:

- records showing that both students and tutors have been logged on when learning is being delivered
- meeting invites for students to join online learning sessions
- evidence of the length of the session that supports the planned delivery details on the timetable
- communications between students and tutors such as feedback or reflections on sessions

If students are accessing pre-recorded material, we expect evidence that recordings have been accessed. Retain any evidence of meaningful engagement with remote learning, such as the results of tests to check a student's understanding of the material covered.

## T Levels

Allocations have been made to providers that will be delivering the first wave of T Levels in 2020 to 2021 based on planned T Level student numbers. We have published the approach for applying a tolerance if the number of students enrolled on T Levels is below the planned number.

Read more about the tolerance and [how T Levels will be funded in 2020 to 2021](#).

We will monitor this approach and communicate any revision for 2021 to 2022.

## T Level industry placements

We are closely monitoring the situation regarding the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on industry placements.

We are working with providers and delivery partners to establish whether further support is needed.

See the [industry placements delivery guidance](#) for information about delivering high-quality industry placements.

We are committed to ensuring all T level students spend time in the workplace on an industry placement because we know from international evidence and feedback from employers and students that such placements add real value.

We have structured the roll-out of T Levels so that the first cohort is relatively small, and the majority of these students will not undertake their placements until the 2021 to 2022 academic year. We continue to monitor the challenges that coronavirus (COVID-19) is



causing to identify what additional guidance and support providers and employers might need in order to ensure every placement is delivered in a physical workplace and to a high standard.

## **Free meals in further education**

You should continue to support students who are eligible for, and usually receive, free meals. This includes students in further education, who are newly eligible.

You should provide support even if students are studying remotely due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

Read further guidance on [free meals in further education funded institutions for 2020](#).

Local authorities will receive funding through the [COVID Winter Grant Scheme](#) to provide support to vulnerable children and families (with a focus on food and utilities). This includes young people up to the age of 19.

The funding will be ring-fenced, with at least 80% earmarked to support with food and essential utility costs, and will cover the period to the end of March 2021. Local authorities will receive the funding in the coming month.

It will allow local authorities to directly help the hardest-hit families and individuals over the winter period.

## **Funding claims and reconciliation**

Information for education and skills training providers on [submitting funding claims](#) to ESFA.

## **Advanced learner loans**

The Student Loans Company (SLC) will continue to make scheduled fee payments to all providers with an advanced learner loan facility.

Contact SLC if a student's circumstances change.

## **Adult education budget (AEB) funding (grant-funded providers)**

Currently, approximately 50% of the AEB is devolved to 7 mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) (Greater London Authority, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Tees Valley,

North of Tyne, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, West Midlands, East of England. Sheffield and West Yorkshire get their powers on 1 August 2021) and to the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA). These authorities are now responsible for providing AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocating the AEB to providers.

ESFA will continue to be responsible for the remaining AEB in non-devolved areas.

In recognition that 2019 to 2020 was a challenging year, we introduced an end of year reconciliation process for ESFA AEB grant funded providers which lowered the threshold for reconciliation to be in line with providers' average delivery (68%) and operated a business case process for providers which delivered below 68% and where they considered there were extenuating circumstances related to their under-delivery. This achieved a balance between maintaining provider stability whilst ensuring the proper use of public funds through an approach that was fair, open and transparent. Full details were given in [2019 to 2020 funding claim guidance](#).

In view of the ongoing impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), including the transfer to remote education and the reduced attendance on-site with effect from 5 January, we are currently reviewing the end of year reconciliation position for 2020 to 2021. Any changes to the published arrangements will be communicated in the ESFA's Weekly Update publication by no later than the end of January 2021.

In areas where the AEB has been devolved MCAs/GLA are responsible for considering any provider flexibilities in their areas.

## **Traineeship delivery from September 2020**

As part of the Summer Economic update in July 2020, the Chancellor announced a significant expansion of traineeships as part of his [Plan for Jobs](#) to help an increased number of young people to prepare for and find work. Alongside the expansion of traineeships, we have also reformed them to support more young people into employment, including apprenticeships. These reforms are set out in the new [traineeships framework](#) for delivery and they apply to all traineeships delivered from 1 September 2020.

Whilst these reforms enable providers to deliver a more flexible and tailored programme during the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19), following the announcement on 4 January, training and assessment should now happen remotely wherever possible. Face-to-face training and assessment can continue – either in colleges and training providers' premises, or in employers' covid-secure settings for work experience placements – for vulnerable trainees.

## Supported internships and Access to Work

Supported internships are structured study programmes based primarily at an employer. Following the PM's announcement on 4 January, placements should now happen remotely wherever possible, but young people can continue to attend covid-secure settings for work placements where the young person, the learning provider and the employer all agree this is necessary.

[Access to Work](#) funds workplace support for young people who are completing a government-funded supported internship, where they need support or adaptations beyond the reasonable adjustments.

Students taking part in a supported internship who are unable to attend their work placements due to coronavirus (COVID-19) can claim Access to Work payment for work-related activities where:

- a job coach leads the activity
- the activities develop employability skills

Access to Work can be claimed whether those activities are delivered face-to-face or via digital methods.

Access to Work is not available to support academic learning activities such as English and maths.

This agreement is in place until the end of January 2021. This remains under review.

Supported interns who were not able to meet the core aim of their internship in the 2019 to 2020 academic year and have continued their internship into the 2020 to 2021 academic year can claim up to an additional 39 weeks of Access to Work support.

Contact the Access to Work helpline on 0800 121 7479 for more information.

## Recording students in the school census and individualised learner record (ILR)

You must continue to record your school census and ILR data. ESFA will take into consideration in-year growth calculations and any adjustments in the normal way.

Supported interns who were not able to meet the core aim of their internship in the 2019 to 2020 academic year may have continued their internship into the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

Record these supported internship students in the ILR or school census as completed at the end of the academic year 2019 to 2020. You must then set them up with a new programme covering the additional planned activity in the continuing year with start and planned end dates in the academic year 2020 to 2021. This will ensure that students continue to be funded in the unplanned funding year. Students must be on their new programme for the minimum qualifying period to count as a funded student.

You must only use this recording flexibility for supported internships at the boundary of academic years 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021. Do not use it for any other students or academic years.

## High needs funding

Discuss any requirement for high needs funding with your local authority. Students who have high needs will occupy places funded at £6,000 per place (£10,000 per place in special schools) in the normal way. See the [high needs operational guide](#) for funding for students occupying unfunded places.

Local authorities should follow the [established ESFA process](#) if students need to remain on roll to complete their supported internship in the new academic year.

Local authorities will continue to receive their high needs budgets and should continue to pay top-up and other high needs funding so that the employment and payment of staff supporting young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can continue. High needs funding will therefore continue to be paid, whether from local or central government.

Funding should not be reduced because some or all young people are not in attendance (either because of self-isolation, or where the institution has temporarily closed, or is temporarily only able to staff part time provision due to staff absences). Where you need to make temporary changes to the education and support of young people with education, health and care (EHCP) plans due to staff absence, they should both let the local authority know and keep these changes as short as possible.

## Examinations and assessments

In light of the evolving public health measures, you can continue with the vocational and technical exams that are due to take place in January, where you judge it right to do so.

We understand this is a difficult time, but we want to ensure those students who have worked hard to prepare for assessments and exams have the opportunity to take them, if they want to.

We do not think it is possible for summer exams to go ahead fairly. We will accordingly be asking Ofqual to consult rapidly next week to put in place alternative arrangements that will allow students to progress fairly to the next stage of their lives.

## **Qualification achievement rates**

The position for 2020 to 2021 exams is under review.

All exams that were due to take place in schools and colleges in England in summer 2020 were cancelled. We will not publish any provider-level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020. This includes the 2019 to 2020 qualification achievement rates. No provider will be judged on data based on exams and assessments from 2020.

For the 2020 to 2021 academic year, provider-level performance data based on exams, tests and assessments, including qualification achievement rates, will be made available to Ofsted, DfE teams, and to providers themselves, to support improvement.

We will not publish this data on school and college performance tables or publish qualification achievement rates.

See guidance on [school and college performance measures](#) and [qualification achievement rates](#) for more information.

## **Regulation, accountability and audit**

### **Inspection**

For FE and skills providers inspection activity remains under review and more guidance will be published in due course.

Ofsted will continue to have the power to inspect in response to any significant concerns, such as safeguarding.

### **Audit**

Prior to the Prime Minister's announcement of the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown measures on 23 March 2020, we made the decision to pause the start of any new routine funding audits for all post-16 providers, as result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We restarted routine funding audits on a remote basis for independent training providers from September 2020 and for colleges from November 2020.

We are also carrying out a risk assessment on restarting site visits for audits and investigations so that we have the ability to do so, should we need to. We recognise the challenges providers face as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) and will be sensitive to these in agreeing arrangements for both remote funding audits and site visits with providers.

Where funding audits and investigations were already in progress prior to the lockdown, we have sought to complete the work, taking into account providers' capacity to resolve any issues.

It may be necessary for ESFA to contact providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to continue to maintain effective oversight and protection of public funds. Where such contact is necessary, we will continue to be sensitive to the challenges providers face as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19).

# Annex A: Health and safety risk assessment

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19). This means you are required by law to think about the risks the staff and students face and do everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising you cannot completely eliminate the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19). You must therefore make sure that a risk assessment has been undertaken to identify the measures needed to reduce the risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) so far as is reasonably practicable. General information on how to make a workplace COVID-secure, including how to approach a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment, is provided by the HSE [guidance on making your workplace COVID-secure during the coronavirus pandemic](#).

You should undertake a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment by considering the measures in this guidance to inform your decisions and control measures. A risk assessment is not about creating huge amounts of paperwork, but rather about identifying sensible measures to control the risks in the workplace, and the role of others in supporting that. The risk assessment will help you decide whether you have done everything you need to.

Employers have a legal duty to consult their employees on health and safety in good time.

It also makes good sense to involve students and parents (where applicable) in discussions around health and safety decisions to help them understand the reasons for the measures being put in place. You do this by listening and talking to them about how you will manage risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) and make the setting COVID-secure. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions shows that you take their health and safety seriously.

## Sharing your risk assessment

You should share the results of risk assessments with your workforce, ensuring this is accessible. You should consider publishing on your website to provide transparency (HSE would expect all employers with over 50 staff to do so).

## Monitoring and review of risk controls

It is important that you know how effective your risk controls are. You should monitor and review the preventive and protective measures regularly, to ensure the measures are working, and take action to address any shortfalls.

## Roles and responsibilities

All employers are required by law to protect their employees, and others, from harm. Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the minimum employers must do is:

- identify what could cause injury or illness in the organisation (hazards)
- decide how likely it is that someone could be harmed and how seriously (the risk)
- take action to eliminate the hazard, or if this is not possible, control the risk

Given the employer landscape in schools and FE is varied, we have set out what the existing [health and safety responsibilities and duties are for schools](#). The employer is accountable for the health and safety of staff and students.

The principal, or risk management owner, is responsible for ensuring that risks are managed effectively. This includes health and safety matters.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides more information on the role of headteachers and employers which can be applied to FE settings. See [the role of school leaders - who does what](#) for more information. There is also a simple guide to who the employer is in each type of setting in HSE's FAQs section, under 'Who is accountable for health and safety within a school?'.

FE principals and management teams may in practice carry out the actions by employers in this guidance. But the employer will need to assure themselves that they have been carried out, as they retain the accountability for health and safety. If not already done, employers should ensure that a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment for their setting is undertaken as soon as possible.

## Wider guidance on the risk assessment process

Health and safety risk assessments identify measures to control risks during education and childcare setting activities. Health and safety law requires the FE employer to assess risks and put in place measures to reduce the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. The law also requires employers to record details of:



- risk assessments
- the measures taken to reduce these risks
- expected outcomes

You need to record significant findings of the assessment by identifying:

- the hazards
- how people might be harmed by them
- what they have in place to control risk

Records of the assessment should be simple and focused on controls. Outcomes should explain to others what they are required to do and help staff with planning and monitoring.

Risk assessments consider what measures you need to protect the health and safety of all:

- staff
- students
- visitors
- contractors

You need to think about the risks that may arise in the course of the day. This could include anything related to the premises or delivery of its curriculum or activities, whether on-site or in relation to activities off-site.

## **Consulting employees (general)**

It is a legal requirement that employers must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or if there isn't one, a representative chosen by staff. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.

At its most effective, full involvement of staff creates a culture where relationships between employers and staff are based on collaboration, trust and joint problem solving. As is normal practice, staff should be involved in assessing workplace risks and the development and review of workplace health and safety policies in partnership with the employer. Consultation does not remove the employer's right to manage. They will still make the final decision but talking to employees is an important part of successfully managing health and safety.

## Resolving issues and raising concerns

Employers and staff should always come together to resolve issues. Any concerns in respect of the controls should be raised initially with line management and trade union representatives and employers should recognise those concerns and give them proper consideration. If that does not resolve the issues, the concern can be raised with HSE.

Where HSE identify employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. The actions HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

## Approach to risk estimation and management

Some types of control are more effective at reducing risks than others. Risk reduction measures should be assessed in order of priority, you should not simply adopt the easiest control measure to implement. Controls should be practical to be implemented and, ideally, should be able to be maintained easily over time. It is critical to remember that it will only rarely be feasible to eliminate individual risks completely.

The combination of controls introduced should aim to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably practicable and prioritise structural, environmental interventions over individual level ones. This does not just mean considering risks of transmission, but also balancing these against risks to wider health and wellbeing and to education. You have the flexibility to respond to risks in a way that suits your circumstances, whilst complying with your duties under health and safety legislation.

You should work through these steps to address your risks, considering for each risk whether there are measures in each step you can adopt before moving onto the next step:

1. Elimination: stop an activity that is not considered essential if there are risks attached.
2. Substitution: replace the activity with another that reduces the risk. Care is required to avoid introducing new hazards due to the substitution.
3. Engineering controls: design measures that help control or mitigate risk.
4. Administrative controls: identify and implement the procedures to improve safety (for example, markings on the floor, signage).
5. Having gone through this process, PPE should be used in circumstances where the guidance says it is required.



Department  
for Education

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