Part of
Education and children's social care

Guidance
Department for Education

Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for education and skills providers

Updated 13 July 2021

Contents
Main changes to provision guidance
Introduction
Changes to delivery
Specialist provision and services
Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic prioritisation
Staff and student safety
Vulnerable children and young people
Mental health and wellbeing
Residential provision
Funding
Adult education budget (AEB) and 16 to 19 bursary fund
Business continuity planning
Ongoing learning
Supporting learning
Transition
Transitional flexibilities
Assessments and qualifications
Examinations and assessments
Regulation, accountability and inspection
Governance
European Social Fund
Apprenticeships
Contracts
Support for engaging employers
Employment
Increasing apprenticeship vacancies, colleges and other providers
Contact us

Main changes to previous guidance

The changes include:

- additional wording to clarify that we would not normally expect adults to be included in the cohort for the purposes of the 16 to 19 bonus 16 to 19 bonus, subject to the flexibilities listed in the changes to delivery section
- additional wording to clarify that providers can offer alternative Level 1 English and maths qualifications to students who have not achieved a pass
- small additions to the mental health and wellbeing section
- an additional line on the state-funded schools' Ofsted inspection framework
- amended lines on operating of education settings
- a new section on the Department for Education's prioritisation group people and guidance following the increasing attendance in FE colleges and other providers checklist

Introduction

On 24 May the Prime Minister announced that secondary schools could consider bringing back students for year 10 and year 12 students to help their education and support their wellbeing, ahead of the rest of their year group.

For further education (FE) settings (including general further education colleges, sixth form colleges, and other providers) the expected approach applied, and providers should plan on the basis that from the week commencing 31 June, they can broaden the offer to students who need to attend education or training in order to progress towards their education or training goals.

Remote education should remain the predominant mode of learning during this time. To help reduce the concentration of COVID-19 transmission risk, the number of students attending at any one time will be limited to a quarter of those on the first year of a 2 year programme.

This means that the week commencing 31 June:

- all FE settings including FE colleges, sixth form colleges, independent training providers (ITPs) and other providers should prioritise face to face provision for vulnerable learners (including those at high risk of becoming NEET) and those who require support to complete assessments, including those who are in the process of completing assessments as part of the institution's decision-making process
- for 16 to 19 learners who are in the first year of a 16 to 19 study programme, FE providers should plan on the basis that they can welcome back:
- all learners under 19 who can attend a face-to-face education or training setting in the summer term, where it would be beneficial

Further information on what this means in practice is in the changes to delivery section.

The guidance on how to phase the return of learners in further education is underpinned by an latest understanding of coronavirus (COVID-19) risks, which is based on: the vaccination programme, the lifting of restrictions on social contact, and the current transmission. Scientific evidence indicates that we need to take a phased approach that allows for the gradual easing of restrictions on social contact, while we learn to live with other variants and relaxed. This is not a set of rules but a set of latest over-arching principles and measures for education settings.

We want to get all further education learners back into education settings as soon as the scientific evidence allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because it provides important mental and physical wellbeing benefits, and social interactions with their peers and teachers.

Guidance on actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 5 June 2021 was published by the department on 11 May.

Guidance for apprentices, employers, training providers and assessment organisations on the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is separate to this guidance for providers.

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Supplemental Procurement Policy Note (SPN) 02/20 is separate to the Cabinet Office's Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 02/20.

For colleges in Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the existing support arrangements for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority area remain in place.

We are immensely grateful to providers for the vital role they are playing in supporting the national response to coronavirus (COVID-19). We recognise the significant impact the vast majority of FE providers have been able to with delivering remote teaching and learning, and that many of them have stepped again to support vulnerable learners and dependants of critical workers.

Changes to delivery

From the week commencing 31 June FE providers should offer some face to face contact for 16 to 19 learners on the first year of a study programme, as part of a blended approach to learning, with remote education continuing for most of education. This is subject to a small quarter of these learners returning at any one time.

This will primarily impact schools and colleges, but will also include a small number of local authority provision, special post 16 institutions and independent training providers.

Any operating colleges in the first year of a 16 to 19 study programme, in the first year of a 2 year programme and that hold students attending at any one time should not exceed a quarter of the group, allowing for social distancing. Providers should plan on the basis that students who are able to attend should do so, and should be encouraged to do this cohort who might already be in full time attendance. We would not normally expect students who are 19 and above to be included in this cohort, but there are flexibilities below. The following points set out areas where there are flexibilities, but they are subject to that overall limit:

- although the main focus is contact for 16 to 19 learners, there may be some courses that include learners within a class that are over 19. If these learners attend a class with 16 to 19 learners, they count as part of the cohort. In this case, the over 19s are those that would be most likely to be the settling remote within the cohort and some 16 to 19 learners will have been due to finish this academic year, but have not completed their course, for example, because they were unable to complete their remote courses to a pass. These learners can be included in the cohort and the over 19s are those that are over 19 if these learners are not included in the cohort
- 16 to 19 year old apprentices are on a study programme, and we expect this to be treated consistently for their off-the-training with other learners (16 to 19 year olds on a study programme). Providers should plan on the basis that they can be allowed a settling period based on the maximum number attending at any one time of some learners, many as an estimated proportion, for example, because they are attending a course with a mixed cohort of learners, or because they are on a study programme, or they are part-time. Although a study programme, apprentices, trainees and assessments need year. they can be included, provided the total number of 16 to 19 learners in the cohort does not exceed the quarter limit, as described above as a proportion of first year learners

Colleges and other FE settings are already welcoming increased numbers of 16 to 19 learners back in line with the wider education sector. From the week of 31 June, FE providers should be able to welcome back a larger cohort of the first year of 16 to 19 learners, meaning before the end of term, where it would be beneficial. As long as this happens in line with the guidance, providers should be able to welcome back as many students centrally in order to do so any time, we would encourage this. This time can be used to check in on students, and ensure they are supported before a longer Christmas or meaning not employed in the wider sector, and to prepare for the return.

On-site provision should continue to be offered to vulnerable young people and the children of critical workers in line with the guidance published, and should continue to have priority over other learning. Vulnerable learners and the dependants of critical workers should be given priority for face to face provision, and this should be prioritised and be included in ensuring that no more than a quarter of learners in the cohort are on site at one time. Vulnerable learners and the dependants of critical workers from other education settings should be given priority for face to face provision, alongside with Education Health Care (EHC) plans, and the only place that is available to the cohort is not meaning that it, for example, older vulnerable learners attend. It is not necessary to be in the cohort to be a vulnerable learner, and providers should be flexible.

Special post 16 institutions with learners in a phased return of the remaining quarter can be safely catered for in their setting. This should be done without specific respect to the guidance, and it is appropriate for the individual provision and proportions of learners.

In order to determine what level of attendance is appropriate, colleges and other providers should conduct risk assessments in order to be confident:

- the number of learners and staff they to attend
- whether they can safely accommodate in accordance with the guidance to prepare for wider opening
- that they can safely manage teaching staff and required ratios, including contingency cover should members of the workforce be shielding or self-isolating
- support services required to increase the number of individuals on site (for example, transport, catering, and welfare services)
- what measures, in addition to those that have already been undertaken during the current level of provision, will need to be in place to accommodate additional learners, including measures to ensure social distancing and other mitigations against COVID-19

We are asking providers to implement a range of protective measures including increased cleaning, requiring special guests (such as at the start and end of lessons, and at lunchtime) to be kept to a minimum, and ensuring that students are not in personal protective equipment (PPE) will be funded from existing college budgets. Providers should also consider how they can ensure students are able to wash their hands, for example, by providing hand sanitisers, and ensuring there are sufficient toilets and handwashes. A negative test and enable learners and staff to get back to their education and training and ensure action to protect their operation and their wellbeing.

These are very clinically vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable, or are living with someone who is should follow the protective measures guidance.

In line with implementing protective measures and reducing contacts, colleges and other providers should limit the attendance of learners in the setting on a day to day anybody learners in small and consistent groups. In particular, mixing between groups should be limited as much as possible. Providers should be able to welcome back a larger cohort of students in line with the measures the government is taking to ease lockdown restrictions, including mixing between. It is best apart from each other where possible.

Colleges and other providers should consider how learners travel to and from education settings, and learners should be encouraged walk, cycle or drive when possible. In addition, the Department for Education (DfE) has made funding available for 16 to 19 colleges and other providers should consider:

- how many learners in the college/ctc/sixth are for travelling at the same time
- how these learners are likely to travel
- the likelihood of learners mixing with each other and coming into contact with other people on the journey to and from education/training

Providers should ensure the use that public transport to travel to and from education and training is in line with government guidance. Where this is not possible, or is necessary, this should be done during quiet times. Providers should consider staggered start and times as appropriate to achieve this. The Department for Transport has published guidance for operators, which sets out how they are preparing for the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Our guidance on implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings contains detailed settings on:

- environmental cleaning
- the importance of cleaning and handwashing products
- testing and tracing
- PPE
- what settings should do in response to a case of coronavirus (COVID-19) being identified

We recognise that the some programmes, remote education will be working effectively with a high number of engagement lasting some facilities, only. We expect that include family members who are shielding and therefore learners are not able to attend face to face provision. In these cases, providers should take a pragmatic approach to what could face to face contact for such programmes, and be consistent of limiting those on site at any one time, reflecting what and maximise learner engagement. Providers should also consider how they can ensure that learners are as safe as possible to minimise transmission risk.

For 16 to 19 learners eligible to return, in balancing on-site and online delivery, colleges may consider the frequency of sessions, within the constraint on overall numbers.

- types of study where providers have found it more challenging to engage learners in remote learning
- learners that require the provision in order to undertake learning that cannot which requires the use of equipment
- the impact on the wider community (for example if may be easier to prioritise attendance of those who are in the local area, or those who are in a bubble may be more challenging where they live nature review personal contact)
- where remote education is working well with high engagement, consider ways to maintain a larger element of online delivery
- the ability to maintain 2 metre distance between some face to face contact, even if to varying degrees.

We are consulting with sector representatives in order to develop and protective practice models of how shielding vulnerable learners in the eligible schools back into education settings could operate.

Dependants of critical workers

Parents whose work is critical to the coronavirus (COVID-19) response include those who work in the NHS, social care, education and childcare, food supply, key transport, further education and other key sectors outlined in the list of critical workers who can continue to access school or childcare.

Critical workers should be able to be reassured that the parent in question is a critical worker, such as their work ID badge or pass, or, if except to an employer or key sector as this section at this critical time as employers to write a letter on behalf of their employees.

Information on vulnerable young people

Vulnerable children and young people for the purposes of this guidance include those who are:

- aged 0 to 25 and subject to a statutory education, health and care plan
- known to be in contact with children's social care services, and up to age 18 and who are subject to a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child, or who are in the care of a leaving care team (which is usually up to age 25 and who are receiving free school meals (FSM) or who are identified as in need or who are disabled and who have a social worker
- have been assessed or otherwise identified as at risk of being not in education, training or employment (NEET) or in employment, or who are aged 19 to 25 and are subject to a care leaving plan
- are aged 19 to 25 and are subject to a care leaving plan
- are 19 to 25 and are subject to a care leaving plan and are disabled or have a learning difficulty or disability which puts them at risk of being not in education, training or employment (NEET) or in employment
- are 19 to 25 and are subject to a care leaving plan and are in receipt of or are entitled to receive, a 16 to 19 bursary fund payment

These children are clinically extremely vulnerable, or are living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable.

Providers should ensure the use that public transport to travel to and from education and training is in line with government guidance. Where this is not possible, or is necessary, this should be done during quiet times. Providers should consider staggered start and times as appropriate to achieve this. The Department for Transport has published guidance for operators, which sets out how they are preparing for the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

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- have been assessed or otherwise identified as at risk of being not in education, training or employment (NEET) or in employment, or who are aged 19 to 25 and are subject to a care leaving plan
- are aged 19 to 25 and are subject to a care leaving plan and are disabled or have a learning difficulty or disability which puts them at risk of being not in education, training or employment (NEET) or in employment
- are 19 to 25 and are subject to a care leaving plan and are in receipt of or are entitled to receive, a 16 to 19 bursary fund payment

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Make alternative arrangements

We are asking colleges and other providers that have been Closed to work towards welcoming back students who are able to attend education or training. Colleges and other providers that are closed to decline. However, in the meantime, if a college or another provider is closed, the provider should notify the local authorities and local education providers. Local authorities should be confident that the vulnerable young people who remain eligible can be found a place in alternative educational setting. Providers can also contact their local EHM team to discuss wider opening and which other providers are open. It may be possible for a work with.

Keep in contact with all vulnerable learners

As per the existing guidance on vulnerable children and young people, all vulnerable young people continue to be expected and encouraged to attend educational provision where it is appropriate for them to do so. Colleges and other providers which are open should be able to welcome back as many students centrally in order to do so from the week commencing 31 June.

However, where it is not safe for vulnerable learners to attend, or vulnerable learners are not able to attend for a period of time, providers should be expected to maintain regular contact/engagement with social workers, virtual school heads, and other families to ensure they know where their vulnerable learners are and that they are safe, and that they are receiving the support they need to ensure their wellbeing and safety. The frequency of contact required will depend on the individual circumstances and needs will be based on the assessment of risk. Social workers should be in contact with their vulnerable learners and their families, including in person where appropriate.

See the toolkit for emergency vulnerable young people for a collection of examples from providers who are successfully engaging vulnerable young people. It includes ideas on provide an opportunity for colleges and other providers to engage vulnerable learners and their families in education and the approach to engaging vulnerable learners.

Colleges and other providers should continue to comply with the requires children with education health and care plans (EHCP) and other vulnerable learners during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to schools, colleges and other providers.

Specific advice for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Supporting young people in general FE colleges

Young people up to the age of 25 with EHC plans in colleges and other providers should, like their peers, go back to college and other providers if they are in the eligible groups. Local authorities and providers should ensure they be set out in a risk assessment for coronavirus (COVID-19).

For all young people with EHC plans, we would encourage colleges, other providers and local authorities to ensure themselves that risk assessments are carried out and supported by the Department for Education (DfE) and local authorities. Local authorities should be confident that local EHM team to discuss wider opening and which other providers are open. It may be possible for a work with.

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Colleges and other providers should continue to comply with the requires children with education health and care plans (EHCP) and other vulnerable learners during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic to schools, colleges and other providers.

Young people in special post-16 institutions

Special post-16 institutions will work towards a phased return of as many young people as they can safely cater for in their setting. This should be done without specific respect to year groups of proportions of learners.

EHC plans – temporary legislative changes

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has made it more difficult for local authorities or health commissioners to meet some of their duties in relation to EHC plans. Temporary legislative changes have been introduced and health provision in an EHC plan as required by section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 may be disregarded in certain circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19). Section 42 duty has been temporarily disregarded for local authorities and health commissioning bodies can discharge this duty using their reasonable endeavours. We have published guidance for parents and carers on temporary changes.

The duty on education settings – including colleges and other providers – to cooperate with the local authority in the performance of its SEND duties remains in place. Local working and communication between all parties is a central element in ensuring that young people receive appropriate provision.

Working together to safeguard young people

Colleges, other providers, social workers, local authorities and other professionals will need to work together to ensure that vulnerable young people are safeguarded and that steps are taken to track such vulnerable young people (whether they are attending provision, or are at home) and to support their wellbeing and education.

Local authorities have the duty to take responsibility for the delivery of children and young people's social care. Social workers and Virtual School Heads (VSH) will continue to work with vulnerable young people in the difficult period.

Where vulnerable young people with a social worker do not take up their place in educational settings or discontinue attendance, the provider should notify their social worker.

Where any children are continuing and engaging in school, their social worker should discuss concerns with their local virtual school and their local authority.

Colleges and other providers are encouraged to share their risk assessments using the toolkit.

It is particularly important for colleges and other providers to offer support and support children's social workers and the local authority VSH for looked-after and previously looked-after children.

Colleges and other providers should continue to have regard to statutory safeguarding guidance, including Keeping children safe in education. Colleges and other providers should also refer to keeping children safe in education: guidance for schools, colleges and other providers.

Mental health and wellbeing

Many learners and staff members will be feeling uncertain and anxious and it is vital that we all look after our mental health and wellbeing during this time. It is important that we need to consider that learners' and staff members' mental health and wellbeing and identify those who may need additional support.

Colleges and other providers should use the DfE helplines and seeking to use digital and virtual channels to continue delivering mental health support.

Social connections, alongside exercise, sleep, a healthy diet and routine, are important protective factors for mental health and wellbeing. Resources and advice on mental wellbeing are included in the list of online resources we have published to help children and young people to cope at home.

Public Health England have also published more guidance on supporting mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, including on managing anxiety and wellbeing. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is providing £5 million of additional funding for mental health charities (to support adults and young people).

Digital support includes:

- an online resource for adults about children and young people's mental health, including a list of helplines and other services, including advice for parents, carers, guardians and carers
- the Every Mind Matters platform from Public Health England has specific advice for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing
- the Association of Colleges has established a mental health and wellbeing hub, which includes advice for students and staff

Mental health is also covered in the Ofsted's safeguarding guidance, and the principles in keeping children safe in education continues to apply. these are some suggestions as to how colleges and other providers may wish to support their students and staff:

- making offers up of remote drop-in or counselling
- ensuring that students know exactly what their own safe strategies during this uncertain time, some resources can help with this – some providers are using Headspace and Headspace for parents
- completing wellbeing checks at the start of each session to ensure that all learners are engaged and supported
- Personal, Social, Health and Economics (PSHE) sessions have been delivered remotely to cover topics such as coronavirus, mental health and wellbeing, relationship awareness, healthy lifestyles and safety
- there are many studies which have shown that doing physical activity can improve mental health and wellbeing. Providers should consider how they can promote and derive a programme of free daily digital content to help keep young people active

Residential provision

We are requesting residential further education providers to keep their residential provision open where necessary, and decisions will have to happen on a case-by-case basis. Providers should consider the risks to their residential provision and students who have particular needs that cannot be accommodated safely in their home, or who do not have suitable alternative accommodation.

In collaboration with Public Health England and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), we have produced guidance on support for residential educational settings. This includes a risk assessment tool, and guidance on managing residential provision for special colleges. This contains advice on how to manage self-isolation in such settings in the event of a confirmed or probable case.

Funding

We recognise that the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak carries financial implications for providers. We are working with providers to ensure that they can access the right advice facilitations we are introducing to support grant funding arrangements to deliver learning.

To ease cash flow and financial implications, we can confirm that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will continue to make payments to providers in line with monthly profiled payments for the remainder of the 2019 to 2020 funding year.

We are also asking ESFA to work with providers to ensure that they can access the right advice and support on financial matters.

Adult education budget (AEB) and 16 to 19 bursary fund

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line with the national profile which will be confirmed in the relevant [2020 to 2021 funding rates].

16 to 19 funding arrangements (grant-funded providers)

As we set out plans for the 2019 to 2020 academic year to calculate 16 to 19 allocations for 2020 to 2021, the ESFA may need to apply a different approach to a number of elements within 16 to 19 funding. Where appropriate we will, therefore, use the information we collect in the autumn census to calculate 16 to 19 funding. We will provide more information on the approach we will take in our annual publication. We do not anticipate this does will have an untoward detrimental impact on future allocations. For example, we will use the 16 to 19 funding rates published for the academic year 2019 to 2020 to calculate learner numbers and we take the initial data return in the autumn but not just data from 2018 to 2019.

Student prior attainment in English and/or maths GCSEs

This element confirms the 16 to 19 funding formula use students' prior attainment in English and/or maths, namely:

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

Student prior attainment data will continue to be calculated as base following the attainment plans that have been published to award grades to students in the academic year of GCSE exams this summer, and as providers will still be allocated additional funding for students who do not achieve a standard pass in GCSE English and maths, we will continue to publish the supplement for students who sit such exams, and we consider these elements fundamental.

Funding a purpose for and about Trusts

Allocations have been made to providers who will be delivering the first area of Trusts in 2020 to 2021 (known as planned Trust student numbers). We have made allocations to Trusts based on the number of students we expect the Trust to deliver in the planned number.

Due to the staged Trust number approach, where the area of Trust boundary has recruited means the balance would be implemented, only the numbers above the planned number will be funded in the following year. For example, if a Trust in Sefton has planned and Trust to deliver 1,000 in 2020 to 2021.

We will monitor the suitability of this approach over the coming months as we get nearer to the implementation of Trusts.

Industry Placement Capacity and Delivery Fund (CDF) 2019 to 2020

The unprecedented impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) has meant that it is currently extremely difficult for providers to continue to organise and deliver industry placements through the Capacity Delivery Fund (CDF).

Given these exceptional and unprecedented circumstances, providers will not be required to deliver industry placements to be eligible for funding. Instead, the Capacity Funding will be paid between 3 tranches (can demonstrate have the ability and are willing to continue to support your work on industry placement delivery. We want to make sure providers are able to focus on the immediate impact of COVID-19 and are doing this period to continue to support the delivery of placements, we will be expected to deliver placements in 2020 to 2021. Activities we would expect to continue to go ahead include:

- continuing to build relationships with employers and developing engagement strategies for different industries
- developing virtual opportunities (such as through virtual training for work preparation)
- ensuring alignment between curriculum planning and industry placement provision
- developing marketing processes for when students can go on placements again

We will ask for evidence of this through the usual autumn CDF monitoring process in November 2020 and January 2021 and we will use this to inform the amount of funding the usual programme should provide for to demonstrate the ability and willingness to support the delivery of industry placements. Providers must avoid the risk of students being unable to take back funding should providers fail to deliver industry placements.

Free meals further education

We expect further education institutions to continue to support students who are eligible for free meals during the period they are not attending college. We are therefore asking you to continue to attend the provide or are studying remotely and to continue to provide free meals to students who are eligible for support (see Free meals further education guidance for 2019 to 2020).

High needs funding for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Colleges and other providers will continue to receive from the ESFA allocations of high needs funding for students with SEND, as we set out in our publication for academic year 2019 to 2020.

Local authorities will also continue to receive their high needs funding for the financial year beginning April 2020 and should continue to pay high needs top-up funding to providers for students with SEND, in accordance with the agreed local offer and agreed. This will ensure that individuals' educational and training needs are met in supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can continue to be met. We expect local authorities, colleges and other providers to continue to hold pre-16 planned placements, that actually should consider funding for students in the Devolved areas of previous patterns of placements and commissioning, so as to make sure that 16 to 19 provision is sufficient to meet the needs of young people with special educational needs. Staff in institutions which support vulnerable students should be available for redeployment if their services are needed elsewhere, so they can provide support to the NHS and other services. Local authorities, and colleges and other providers, will be important in arranging this.

Adult education budget (AEB) and advanced learner loans bursary contract for services

Ex providers included in a contract for services for AEB and Advanced Learner Loans Bursary, we will remove the financial year contracts set out in the funding and performance management rules for 2019 to 2020.

This means we will pay one last delivery in the August 2019 to March 2020 period for contracts for services that we have awarded for 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021 financial year. The commitment that we have set out in our ESFA 2019 and 2020 AEB and traineeship contract values will still apply over the full funding year.

2019 to 2020 year-end claims forecast cancelled

On 20th to 2020 (latest guidance) reminder provided to the allocations listed below to complete a year-end forecast funding claim:

- ESFA AEB - Adult Skills and Community learning - grant-funded
- ESFA AEB - 19-24 Traineeships (provision)
- Advanced Learner Loans Bursary (ALB) - grant-funded
- ESFA AEB - Adult Skills Learner Support - pass-on profile (AEB provision) - grant-funded

As part of the ESFA's commitment to COVID-19 response, the ESFA will now not require year-end reconciliation to complete a year-end claims forecast due in June 2020.

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), adult education budget (AEB) funding (grant-funded providers) and advanced learner loans bursary fund

Year-end reconciliation

We will not require the ESFA will not carry out the final reconciliation for grant providers in receipt of 2019 to 2020 AEB (adult skills, community learning, learner and learning support and 19 to 24 traineeships) and the advanced learner loans bursary fund. We will not require providers to be in line with the current agreement schedule with no contract.

Providers must:

- continue to deliver learning online wherever possible including for English and/or mathematics qualifications, or other qualifications that are required for learners to complete their course/qualifications or retain assistance where it is not possible
- support furloughed workers to enhance existing or develop new skills

Where it is not possible to deliver online, for example where learning is practical or requires specialist equipment, providers should use their professional judgement of whether this applies and keep evidence of efforts made to remain in contact with learners and prepare for a return to learning in the future.

However, there will be exceptions for grant funded providers who had already forecast a year-end reconciliation claim for the period 1 August 2019 to 31 March 2020 and delivered learner loans bursary fund. In advance of the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), ESFA will contact affected providers to discuss their forecasts and potential reconciliation claims. We will not require providers to claim for any learner numbers that a grant funded provider has not sought to continue delivery online/remote or online or otherwise, either directly or for ESFA funded AEB through their existing contracts.

When planning ESFA funded AEB allocations for 2020 to 2021, we will consider how we will take into account any unused provision would have been to run further education in 2019 to 2020.

Advanced learner loans

With respect to advanced learner loans, the Student Loans Company (SLC) will continue to make scheduled payments to providers with Learner Activity. Providers must continue to inform the SLC if and when a learner's circumstances change.

Devolved AEB

From 1 August 2019, the AEB is approximated between the ESFA and 6 mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) and the Greater London Authority (GLA). The ESFA is no longer accountable for administering AEB in these devolved areas. The MCAs or GLA will be responsible for agreeing arrangements with their providers in respect of devolved AEB.

Data collection and recording

Disruption to training

It is our priority to support learners and providers to continue with their learning online wherever possible. We will work with providers to make sure they have the support they need to ensure their 'classroom' learning and continue to a successful completion, while maintaining quality.

Breaks in learning

ESFA funded AEB and advanced learner loans (including bursary) funding rules for 2019 to 2020 already make provision for breaks in learning "for a range of circumstances.

You and the learner can agree to suspend learning while the learner takes a break. This means you can continue later with the same eligibility that applied when they started their learning.

We are extending the current breaks in learning rules for ESFA funded AEB and advanced learner loans to:

- allow a break in learning at the learner's request where a learner is self-isolating, or is unable to attend due to the impact of COVID-19 and is unable to continue distance learning online or online offer
- allow a break in learning to be recorded where a provider is unable to deliver because of the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the provider is not able to continue to deliver the distance and/or online learning

Where some learning rules have been relaxed, this should be evidenced in the usual way. However, where a break in learning is now beginning or expected, provider should include these learners in their individualised learner record (ILR) submission and record the reason for the break in learning using the appropriate code. We will use the ILR data that flows and will have suspended incoming that is will be recorded in stages over the coming months. Under no circumstances should the current planned end date be changed.

To record breaks in learning for coronavirus (COVID-19) reasons, providers should use the appropriate code from the following options:

- record, retain and submit evidence in the usual way
- record a break in learning in line with suspension
- ensure that the arrangements are not recorded as permanently withdrawn from their learning, by entering the 'completion status' field of the ILR as '6', deeming that the learner has temporarily withdrawn from learning. This will ensure that the learning as a direct impact of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Further information on data collection is included in returns to providers on educational and training collections.

Ongoing learning

Due to the need to maintain social distancing, FE providers will continue to deliver much of their provision remotely. Over time, as restrictions are lifted, providers will need to plan for a phased return of learners to face-to-face learning. This will be a major transition from remote education to blended learning for many learners, and providers will need to plan for this carefully.

Given resources are finite - assets, equipment and staff - the varied needs of different learner groups and cohorts will need to be balanced, prioritised and managed, while deciding the optimal mix of online and face to face contact across their curriculum to maintain high quality provision. Providers will need to be flexible and adaptive in order to minimise the transmission risk. Providers will also need to take account of learners who may have family members who are shielding and, in exceptional circumstances, may not be able to physically attend.

Two DfE joint funded organisations - Joy and The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) - have developed support and support colleges and other providers in this transition.

Support available includes free content, blogs, and community support. The ETF's Teaching Skills Hub provides a wide range of free resources to support teaching and technology to support the continuity of teaching and learning. ETF's Jisc provides webinars, the FE provides on how to make the most of online learning.

Providers' strategies for ongoing learning should include informing the needs of teachers and students, and their respective home teaching and learning environments. Where possible, colleges and other providers should:

- prepare staff on remote education practice through bespoke/alternative training programmes, and ensure they have the appropriate equipment, communication tools and digital and non-digital resources
- ensure ready available of wider college including physical and digital resources, including IT equipment, and access to the internet, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Jisc and students have top-ended and know how to access and use them
- provide learners with accessible guides on remote education, focusing on where, when and how they are expected to engage and demonstrate their learning and assessment and feedback will be delivered - consider how to support disadvantaged learners
- consider provision of learning working with the relevant local authorities (LA) health and social care) to help ensure support for vulnerable children and children with special educational needs and disabilities
- consider how and delivery mail of any remote safeguarding, welfare and pastoral policies are maintained - the Related Cyber Security Centres (RCS) provides guidance on how to keep up to date with cyber security during coronavirus
- consider lesson capture to allow students to dip in and out of lessons when ready
- be proactive and adaptive to the wellbeing and wellness of both students and teachers, recognising that health and wellbeing is critical to the success of the teaching delivery and learning journey for individuals during the course period - Jisc has provided guidance on how to do this, including on the wellbeing and wellness of resources and guides.

We understand that what providers can offer during this period will vary. Some colleges and other providers will have more resources than others and some will be better placed and better able to cope with a major transition. This is a situation that providers will be reasonably maintained.

The local ESFA teams will also provide support and you can submit enquiries through the ESFA enquiries service.

Richard Atkins, the FE Commissioner (FEC), and the team of highly experienced deputy FECs and FE advisers have offered support to colleges providers that need to discuss their plans for ongoing learning. Colleges and other providers can contact the FEC directly (FEC@ESFA.GOV.UK) and the FEC will then arrange a phone conversation between yourself and a member of the FEC team or an FEC, which will be a member of the FEC team.

We continue to collect examples of good practice and will share these through our usual communications channels.

Support from your provider unable to access remote education

On 16 April, the Secretary of State for Education announced new support for schools, colleges and young people to access remote education. We have worked with sector without a suitable device and/or connectivity to study remotely, and whose family income is low, or who are in receipt of free school meals, to ensure that FE providers should consider supporting them, for example, by providing devices and connectivity necessary to access remote education.

As set out in 16 to 19 Bursary Guidance, decisions on support should continue to be made on the basis of an individual assessment, in line with Bursary rules that an provider's discretionary bursary fund.

Providers should use their existing 16 to 19 Bursary Fund (grant) to provide support to their FE free meals grant to pay for the support. Where providers need additional support, they should contact their local access education remote, the Education Foundation (see Jisc's blog for FE providers).

- the amount of bursary fund and/or free meals funding carried forward from previous years
- the amount of funding already spent in the 2019 to 2020 academic year
- the amount of funding already irrevocably committed for use in 2020
- the amount of funding the provider has available to support disadvantaged students, including free meals eligible
- the number of students assessed as requiring support
- the support and funding the provider has assessed is requested to support free meals eligible students, in line with the criteria set out in the 16 to 19 Bursary Guidance.

Local authorities will receive devices for children and young people who have a social worker and are in KS2, KS3 and KS4 and care leavers. Local authorities are the lead authorities to ensure that vulnerable children in these categories can access education, ensure that support for them from the local authority and education institution is co-ordinated.

Supporting teachers to continue to deliver

Bringing some learners into FE settings will present their own challenges. Teachers will need to be able to deal with the impact of COVID-19 on their learners, and to bring them back into the classroom where this is appropriate and sustain the online offer that has been developed during the period of lockdown. We know that FE providers will be working out how. The current pressure means that a number of important dynamics will return to face to face learning in the first instance and remote education will remain the predominant mode of education.

We know that this move will cause concern for some teachers who are following advice to continue to shield, or who are in vulnerable groups themselves. It is essential that in all their planning, colleges and other providers (colleges) will implement government advice on supporting those who have risk factors which put them at risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) and those who are shielding. We know that FE providers will be working out how to support teachers who are shielding, and to protect themselves and their families including remaining at home should they need to.

Colleges and other providers will be planning how they can best continue to support those who are shielding, and those who are in vulnerable groups, and those who are workers who are already present on site. We know that there will be aspects of teaching and learning that will be more challenging to deliver, such as practical classroom or workshop teaching or specific assessment and other competencies. The guidance on social distancing will help colleges and other providers to plan for this. Colleges and other providers will need to be sensitive to the impact on those who they are delivering face to face teaching or activities, particularly those with a practical demonstration.

We are confident providers will be able to make this transition work for their learners and staff, so that education can continue to be delivered in the most effective way for their learners. The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and the Association of Colleges (AoC) will continue to be optimised and have been working alongside the advice. What is most important is getting the balance right between the safety of staff and students, and the need to ensure that there is a high quality teaching and learning. Any additional costs arising from increasing numbers of learners will be funded from existing college budgets.

Providers will need to be sensitive when planning to recruit new teachers to FE existing vacancies and support delivery in future. We know that this will be challenging in the current circumstances, particularly as teacher recruitment often includes a demonstration of teaching skills in a classroom. Providers will need to be creative in ways in which they can find ways to recruit teachers using online delivery and other approaches where appropriate.

Providers can register for round 2 of the Talent Teachers Further programme which is intended to support the recruitment of industry professionals to teaching roles in the FE sector. Round 1 of the programme ran from 27 April to 11 May and round 2 will still accepting applications for a course on FE starts at 27th JEE, which will be delivered directly from the department.

The Education and Training Foundation's FE Initial Teacher Education providers to mitigate the disruption to teacher training where possible and enable as many trainee teachers as possible to complete their training where they have demonstrated they have met the standards. Providers will need to be sensitive to the impact on those who are qualified teachers able to take employment for the training academic year.

Support from your provider associations

Provider associations are also offering information and tips for resources via their websites:

- Association of Colleges (AoC) can offer support and advice with questions relating to business continuity at coronaVirus@aoc.co.uk. AoC has also published guidance on remote learning.
- Association of Independent Learning Providers (AILP) has created a dedicated page.
- AoC has produced a checklist for partially closing or closing an adult education centre.
- Tutorway is assisting a regular training page.
- The Association of Employer Coaches has an online learning hub with resources that will be updated on a regular basis.

Traineeship flexibilities

The current coronavirus (COVID-19) situation means that many trainees are not able to attend their work placements or work experience, or to attend their traineeship venues and colleagues being closed or having 'work at home' arrangements and the impact on their ability to work.

We want to enable providers to continue to offer traineeships and to continue delivering and/or an important part of managing and supporting young people's learning and training and welfare throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

There are temporary flexible measures that apply from 27 March 2020 when social distancing measures were introduced that prevent learners from undertaking work placements. We will review these measures with providers and stakeholders and provide a evidence for extension.

New trainees can start programmes during this period with programme aims adjusted in line with these flexibilities.

Reduced work experience duration

The unprecedented impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) has meant that it is currently extremely difficult for providers to continue to organise and deliver work placements within traineeships. We are therefore relaxing the required work placement duration.

If the trainee has completed more than 70 work experience hours and the provider is satisfied that the trainee has gained sufficient work skills, then providers can record the work placement as completed. Providers should record the actual hours, even if the temporary period of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions prevent the trainee from undertaking work placement in the trainee for. The trainee should continue with other traineeship activities, including English and maths, and other activities that will complete these elements of their traineeship.

If the trainee has completed less than 70 work experience hours, the provider is not required to continue work placement if it is impossible to arrange in current circumstances, providers will be not penalised for not meeting the 70 hour minimum.

Providers should demonstrate how they have continued to support trainees to develop their work experience skills in the absence of a work placement in the learner file and in the ILR, and should record the appropriate completion processes. We will be monitoring to continue to go ahead.

- preparing students for work and/or work placements through alternative distance and online training that develops their skills for work
- continuing to build relationships with employers and developing engagement strategies for different industries, including virtual opportunities (such as virtual training for work preparation)
- developing transition plans with employers and providers to facilitate smooth transitions from traineeship to apprenticeship
- developing marketing processes for when students can go on placements again

These are temporary flexible measures that apply while learners are unable to undertake work placements and/or attend their traineeship venues.

Extended programme duration up to 12 months

It is our priority to enable providers to support learners to continue with their learning online during this period until trainees are able to complete their traineeship.

During this period, providers can extend the traineeship programme duration up to 12 months where one or more of the following scenarios applies:

- the learner has not completed their qualification and basic skills learning aims - English and mathematics - and/or work experience
- the learner has completed less than 70 planned work experience hours
- the provider has assessed the learner as needing further work placement hours to complete the planned offer of traineeship

This flexibility is offered on the basis that the trainee undertakes online or alternative learning and training, including English and mathematics, and/or work experience and work experience learning and of the traineeship where online/remote is possible.

Where flexibilities are used, providers should record this and retain evidence of provision.

Providers delivering traineeships funded by ESFA AEB can also refer to the guides to flexibilities for trainees in COVID-19 related factors in traineeships.

Impact on benefit claimants for extended programmes

People receiving benefits do not have to attend jobcentre appointments for 3 months, starting from 16 March 27 2020. People will continue to receive their benefit in full as normal, but all requirements to attend the jobcentre in person are suspended. People who are claiming benefits will be able to continue to claim benefits. Some of the benefits amounts will depend on the claimant's circumstances (also directed by law) or the benefit purpose.

Benefit claimants therefore are eligible to participate in longer spells of learning in accordance with extending traineeship duration as part of this guidance, where the claimant's circumstances are such that they are unable to make clear advantage in doing so, in relation to claimant's future job goals.

For more information on employment and benefits support.

Extending 16 to 19 study programme traineeships

Our funding guidance sets out that planned hours should not be changed after the start of the programme, but we will allow providers to do this in exceptional circumstances. However, we recognise that in the current circumstances, some students may need more than originally planned in order to complete their traineeship programme.

We have agreed that longer than originally planned hours can be added to study programmes, we expect, in most cases, extending their existing planned hours over a 12 month period, and providers should use their professional judgement.

Extending 19 to 24 adult education budget and 16 to 18 traineeships without 16 to 19 study programme funding

Where learners need longer than originally planned to complete their traineeship, providers should continue their learning programme and claim funding for adult education.

The planned end date must not under any circumstances be changed or extended within the 16-19 funding rules to record the end date of the programme using 'Learning Actual End Date'.

Additional funding delivered in 2021 to 2022, as a result of the programme's actual end date being later than its planned end date, will be made available for the entire availability of growth in 2019 to 2021 if there is not sufficient budget available to fund the learner's programme. Providers should continue to claim for learners who continue the traineeship within your funding year allocation.

This is a temporary measure that applies only in this period of social distancing and will be disabled ready for use in future years as normal.

For more information, see the traineeship addendum to the ESFA adult education funding rules, page 2019 to 2020.

Supported internships

Where the core aim of a student's supported internship has been lost due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), students will be able to complete their internship in a reduced form, or to undertake a different supported internship, depending on their duration of the placement, and an appropriate planned number of hours spent in work. Supported internship providers will need to know the young persons unit a new study programme, but it is not envisaged that all students will require the full length of the programme.

The new study programme will be funded through the usual funding rules. The normal ESFA processes for followed and payments will be used through the 16 to 19 funding system. Providers will need to make a claim for the 'Learning Actual End Date' to be issued for the academic year 2019 to 2002. In addition, all providers should continue to record the actual end date of their learners' programmes, to consideration issues and calculations and any adjustment to the timetable.

Any requirement for high needs funding should be discussed with the relevant local authority, in conjunction with their local health commissioning partners. Requests regarding high needs will cover pupils/students aged 16 to 25 (for pre-16 SEND provision, please continue to follow the normal process). Requests for high needs funding occurring unfortunately should be handled in accordance with the normal high needs operational guide.

Applications from local authorities for a relaxation of the normal rules for continuing studies support to schools and sixth form colleges for students aged 19 to 25 will be considered. Applications should be made to the ESFA at least 10 weeks before the school to complete their supported internship in the new academic year.

Examinations and assessments

Ofqual will be sitting down in schools and FE providers this summer.

Our priority is to ensure that learners and adult learners can move on as planned to the next stage of their education or training, college or work. We want to make sure that the system is working well for all learners, including those who are expecting to be issued the qualification year 2019 to 2002. In addition, all providers should continue to record the actual end date of their learners' programmes, to consideration issues and calculations and any adjustment to the timetable.

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Assessment and qualification arrangements

For some qualifications, for example those which signal occupational competence, assessment is essential to ensure that the appropriate standard has been achieved. Delaying assessment should not stand in the way of progression. Where assessments have been cancelled, or need to be delayed, they should be delivered as soon as it is practically possible.

The phased reopening of centres may provide an opportunity for assessments to be delivered that would otherwise be delayed.

Autumn assessment opportunities should be provided where there is demand and it is safe to do so. We will work with awarding organisations and their assessors to put plans for autumn arrangements.

As part of supporting the exceptional arrangements for assessment and grading of vocational and technical qualifications, a temporary suspension of the 'Ofqual' rules has emerged. Ofqual has confirmed that extend the regulation and the Scottish Qualifications Authority in England and Parliaments to 30 December 2020. This means that, where it is not practicable for a learner to undertake the required end-to-end assessments, as expected to complete their qualification. Ofqual and the ESFA have confirmed the certification and data has been extended on the Register of regulated qualifications and the Qualifications in England (QiE) database. Ofqual, the ESFA, the authorities, to hold schools colleges to account. Further information can be found on Coronavirus (COVID-19): school and college performance measures.

Audit

Prior to the Prime Minister's announcement of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions on Monday 23 March 2020, we made the decision to pause the start of any audits for the 2019 to 2020 academic year, to ease the burden on providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We have now extended this pause to cover the period for, at least, the duration of the lockdown.

Where funding audits and investigations were already in progress, we have sought to minimise the disruption to your audits providers' capacity to resolve any issues. We will be in touch with providers to discuss how we can best support providers to resolve outstanding audit and have been able to have challenges when completing audits.

It may be necessary for the ESFA to contact providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in order to continue to meet our statutory responsibilities as an arm's length public body. Where such contact is necessary, we will continue to be sensitive to the pressures and challenges providers are facing at this time.

We will continue to review and review the situation in light of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions are reduced and there is a return to office working in the future. Currently, we will review when it is appropriate to restart routine funding audits.

Alternative evidence for wet signatures

This guidance applies to evidence for learners who are funded through apprenticeship, 16 to 19 education, adult education budget (AEB) and advanced learner loans funding rules.

It is expected that where providers keep a digitalelectronic signature process, the evidence for learners who are funded through apprenticeship, 16 to 19 education, funding rules above 16 to 18, adult and apprenticeship levies.

A wet signature is created when a person physically 'marks' a document. Where is provider has to digital or electronic systems and processes in place to record learner or employer signature, then under normal circumstances a wet signature is required for evidence to support a learner's participation.

It is recognised that providers obtaining training and/or recruitment activities during coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak will experience difficulty in obtaining learner and employer signatures. In order to ensure that learners can continue to be funded, providers do not have systems and processes in place for electronic signature during the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, we will allow confirmation/evidence to be obtained through alternative detailed below.

For the purpose of audit evidence, we expect a record of acknowledgement or adoption of the electronic message or document. Acceptable alternative evidence includes:

- an email from the learner and/or employer email address with details of the confirmation and their signature at the end of the message
- a typed name on an electronic form or document emailed from the learner and/or employer
- a typed a scanned document attached to an email from the learner and/or employer
- a photo taken on a camera/digital medium of the signed document attached to an email from the learner and employer

We are allowing providers to use this type of electronic confirmation detailed above for the duration of the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions. We will review this approach and adjust or discontinue processes soon. This is not to be used as a permanent solution, and we will review when it is appropriate to restart routine funding audits. The COVID restrictions are lifted.

Following the period of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, providers using the above alternative evidence must resolve their usual processes for obtaining wet signatures on learner and employer agreements. Providers should be able to demonstrate to auditors and wet signatures received during the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions is genuine and verifiable, and the evidence is retained for audit purposes.

Governance

Holding meetings online or by telephone

Some FE and sixth form colleges, corporations, and other providers which are charities, have had to cancel their governing body meetings. The guidance also tells you about the limitations on using any electronic tools.

European Social Fund

For European Social Fund (ESF) provisions, the following assessments have been agreed.

Delivery postcode for remote education

The managing authority has confirmed that where delivery is occurring remotely, ESF providers can now use the postcode of their physical base within the local enterprise partnership area in which the participant is resident, for the purposes of reporting to the ESF. This means that where remote delivery is taking place in other areas, to include the LEP area relating to the contract, it will be considered eligible.

Evidencing remote environment and remote education

Currently, projects must have wet signatures from participants, on each enrolment form, and evidence of the participant's location, in order to be eligible to claim for a decision research information. The ESF managing authority recognises that this is not possible given current social distancing measures. Therefore, ESF providers can, from 1 February 2020, accept and use alternative to alternative means, such as email.

28 day progression requirement

It is a requirement of the ESF programme, that all programme progression related deliverables are achieved within 28 days of starting the ESF programme. The contract states all ESF funded interventions facility has ceased. Providers may wish to use the 28 day progression requirement to support participants who have received support remotely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Contract extensions

It's vital our intention to extend ESF contracts to March 2020, where funding is available and with consideration to contract performance. It is planned to action this extension, subject to the agreement of the managing authority, and formal amendment, along with the revised timelines which we will share as soon as it is possible. We are proposing to implement a simplified and streamlined process to support the transition and reduce required from the providers due to the challenge presented.

External audit testing

The Managing Authority (MA) Agency (IA) (sub the ESF Audit Authority (AA), has confirmed that, at this moment, ESF based audit testing, relating to ESF processes, funded through the ESFA, will be temporarily paused until the current restrictions are lifted. Consideration will be given to the impact on the ability to carry out audit work during the wider potential impact. We will provide providers in due course with further information on resumption of this work, as it continues to constitute a key requirement within the current regulatory framework.

Compliance and performance reviews

Compliance and performance visits (reviews previously agreed have been suspended until further notice. This is in recognition of the difficulties in accessing physical documentation and premises currently.

Broader support to the community

Further education providers are major community institutions and have greater capacity and organisational resilience than smaller schools.

We know a number of colleges have already taken steps to support vulnerable learners in the children of local workers and local supported absentees.

This is a hugely valuable contribution. Colleges have a vital role to play in holding communities together and supporting our broader national recovery from coronavirus (COVID-19).

Remember that, if your organisation is a charity, any help you provide for the national effort should be consistent with your charitable purposes. Guidance for charities organisation is contained within the GOV.UK Coronavirus guidance for charities. Charities can help while keeping within their objects.

FE and sixth form college associations which are recognised the national effort in ways other than education, such as giving surplus food to a food bank or allowing critical workers to use their premises for childcare purposes. Colleges can make a contribution in this way. Governors must satisfied that such contributions are consistent with corporation's interests and does not create additional risk to significant one-off ongoing costs to the corporation, and should record the loss from the income.

Toolkit for engaging vulnerable young people

We have collected examples from providers who are successfully engaging vulnerable young people. We have created a toolkit for providers to support engagement remotely and safe and engaging vulnerable young people in learning.

This information is intended to provide an opportunity for colleges and other providers to share ideas and learn from each other's practice and develop their approach to engaging vulnerable learners in education.

Keeping in contact with vulnerable learners

Providers have found that the most effective method of communication varies by learner. It could take place via telephone, video call, email, text or social media. In some instances, providers have found that it is helpful to use a mix of these methods to establish. Providers are taking measures to ensure that staff are supported to work safely and securely.

Case study 1

The Education Training Collective has sustained a 100% engagement rate with vulnerable learners by their welfare and safeguarding teams, meaning that all vulnerable learners are being supported and kept in touch with. Staff have been supported to be flexible with safeguarding teams engage in extensive contact with vulnerable learners using many forms of communication. TPS learners, retail, text and phone calls. Staff have been supported to be flexible with safeguarding teams and authority. Safeguarding teams focus on ensuring that there is ongoing support provided to supporting learners in care, including holding virtual meetings with the local authority and key professionals.

Case study 2

Hugh Baird FE College has focused on being named Teaching and Learning Assistants (TLAs) to support vulnerable learners. Staff are being allocated vulnerable learners. Learners are expected to be online at specific times for each subject, and resources is measured by learners in country Portfolio.

Vulnerable learners are also monitored by Tier 2 support, non-teaching support staff who are responsible for pastoral care and welfare of learners. Tier 2 staff are also in contact with vulnerable learners and their parents/carers about attendance. Tier 2 staff can also work in wider colleague support as needed. The effective use of an online platform has enabled staff to continue to provide pastoral support to vulnerable learners. As a result of this system, Hugh Baird has been in place since 23 March to support and with most vulnerable learners.

Bolton College's Education, Training, Pastoral, who devised the model said: "The most important element of our work is to support and be there for our learners and to make sure they are safe and well. We have a duty of care to our learners and we want to ensure there are known there and to support them as best we can."

Case study 3

Harris Education has responded effectively to the needs of our learner's utilising a highly individualised set of blended learning interventions, including daily calls, tailored work packs and online learning. Harris Education has made over 1,000 home visits and 5,000 of such subject to Youth Referral Order from the start of the lockdown. Over the last few weeks, Harris has been challenges in maintaining engagement and support. The Youth Offending Team has been working with Harris Education to support the learner who is being behaviour is effectively behaviour, which has historically impacted school with the Youth Offending Service: collect's services and with his mum to ensure she also has the support she needs. Harris Education has also, in the last few weeks, been in the position to be supporting and staying on track with learning, and said that this contact has also kept her mental wellbeing.

Case study 4

In addition to remaining open to vulnerable learners, Blackpool and The Fylde College has been working with vulnerable learners who are at home, to ensure they are kept closely monitored. This practice has been in place since 24 March to support and safeguard the most vulnerable during this public health emergency.

The college has been able to maintain regular contact with the majority of their vulnerable learners. Staff have been able to support learners who are at home, and have undertaken a risk assessment and where appropriate conducts a home visit to check on the welfare of the student. Where a home visit is required, staff will ring the bell on the doorbell and ask the student if they are ok through the window.

Nigel Brown, Director for Learners, said: "The expansive <NOT> has adapted how to ensure our learners are kept safe and supported. We have worked closely with our partners in developing new systems that serve across agencies. Our Safeguarding team, vulnerable learners, I am genuinely proud of the selfdedication of new working practices and the commitment to ensuring our learners are supported and safeguarding."

Some providers have put in place emergency phone numbers or email addresses for learners to use.

Some providers have found that tools or messages may be an effective tool for keeping in contact with vulnerable learners and promoting engagement.

Innovative approaches to the delivery of remote education

Some providers have found the creation of a virtual timetable can create structure and routine that may help vulnerable learners to engage.

Recorded classes enable learners to learn at a time that is convenient for them, which is particularly important for young parents and learners with caring responsibilities.

Some providers have used Microsoft Teams to create tutorials to ensure orders are accessible, and some providers have used direct video link use to enable intervention support work to continue to interact lessons for learners with foreign organisations.

Case study 5

Bournemouth Sixth College has found that working remotely is significant challenge when it comes to developing the communication skills of its vulnerable learners. Key to approach has been the provision of emotional support for learners, including the provision of a 'safe space' for vulnerable learners to engage in online discussions using skills within their home environment.

The team's focus has been on contacting parents to provide them with a clear record of what their children are doing, and what they are expected to do next. The team's ideas of how they can be met and sharing ways in which parents can support their child's ongoing development. Response from families has been positive, with parents feeling more informed and able to support their children. The team's ideas are thankful for the insight into their parents' ideas and ways in which Bournemouth Sixth Cast Colleague' forward planning for when things finally return to 'normal'.

Case study 6

Skills Training UK promotes social mobility through apprenticeships and traineeships and continues to work with significant numbers of vulnerable learners and 16 to 19 study programme learners. Skills Training UK has developed a virtual classroom to support the accelerated development of a hybrid online learning, incorporating online lessons and tutorials, with blended learning activities and independent study. Learners contribute to dedicated Moodle lessons (Apprenticeship Knowledge Assessment and Study Programme).

This approach has been welcomed by those vulnerable learners in regular attendance and at this point, their attendance rates on their courses remain consistent at around 90%. Skills Training UK has also developed a dedicated Moodle page for Skills UK hours that all learners will collect the following feedback: Learner Voice: "I feel satisfyingly, lost my mother and didn't pass my GCSEs. I enjoyed the course at Skills Training UK and I'm looking forward to the future. I'm proud of myself and I can now confident now. I'm looking forward to the future."

Providing additional support for vulnerable learners

Providers are considering how to help vulnerable learners find much-needed ways to engage with remote education, some of those young people may need additional support.

Some providers have staff members, including FE staff assistant to manage open question and learners engage in online learning, which can prevent learners disengaging.

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Supporting learners with SEND

Many providers have put in place specific support for learners with SEND.

Case study 15

The Weston College Innovation Practice Team has produced a full timetable of weekly activities for their learners with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and have found that levels of engagement have been high through the virtual platform. The team have also created a SEND Hub on Microsoft Teams, which is a place for parents/carers to access the Coronavirus "Knowledge" centre.

An example of one of these sessions involved learners and staff being taken through a "Mindfulness and Relaxation" session, which was led by a SEND Tutor and Mental Wellbeing Ambassador. The session was very well received by learners and staff.

been delivered using a range of methods (for example, video, text and voice) and has played a vital role in keeping learners with SEND engaged in remote education.

Case study 11

Derby College Group are supporting their learners with SEND to manage online learning and their transition to further study or progression. The college has worked with the learners and their support network to put in place personalised, realistic and meaningful targets that enable learners to continue to progress towards their EHCP or wider study programme goals. Progress is tracked in online learning sessions for some and via tutorial conversations, photo and video evidence. Achievements are celebrated. All learners have tailored communication plans in place, with some students with complex needs having an additional support contact at several points each week. Derby College Group has had very positive feedback from learners and parents about the personalised learning and wellbeing support the college has put in place.

Case study 12

City College Norwich has had some vulnerable students and students of key workers on-site throughout lockdown. The college has also prepared for providing face to face contact for other students and children in the nursery in June. The college has individual risk assessments and actions to ensure that they stay safe whilst opening for more staff and students.

City College Norwich has been engaging their remote learners with SEND via regular remote timetabled classes 2 or 3 times a week during lockdown. Breakout functions enable tutors to provide additional support to learners their need, and British Sign Language signers are actively engaged. Students have worksheets and interactive activities sent out weekly. For those without IT access, the college is sending printed packs of work in the post and keeping in contact via phone. Specialist support workers are supporting learners with SEND and their parents remotely.

The supported interns are brushing up on their employability skills with help from their job coaches. They are taking this opportunity to fine tune their CVs and to practice job searching and interview skills development through online platforms. For many students, this has helped them develop their speech and language skills as well as building confidence in communicating and engaging with people in different ways. Once restrictions are lifted students will be able to return to their placements and their supported internship. For those students who haven't gained employment by the end of the academic year, City College Norwich will explore how to potentially extend current employer placements or refer students to the college's supported employment agency.

Case study 13

Activitee delivers personalised educational and vocational programmes for young adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. To support learners to continue to progress towards their EHCP outcomes, Activitee has set up a YouTube channel to try and recreate the normal timetable remotely. The videos on the Activitee channel are supported by a pack of resources delivered either online or physically, including adapted equipment where necessary. Activitee has also supported around 15 learners with high sensory needs to buy specific apps that support their learning.

The college is providing education guidance to parents, which can include signposting to outreach services. Staff communicate weekly to ensure parents and learners wellbeing is also supported.

Increasing attendance in FE colleges and other providers: a checklist

On 11 May, we published guidance on a phased wider opening of schools, colleges and nurseries and setting out actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening. Because the transmission rate of coronavirus (COVID-19) has decreased, we are asking colleges and other providers to prepare to offer some face-to-face support to eligible learners to support their education and childcare over the week commencing 15 June, subject to the government's 5 tests being met. Remote education should remain the predominant mode of education during this time. To help reduce the risks of transmission, a quarter of 16 to 19 learners (including vulnerable learners and the children of critical workers) in the first year of a 2 year course, or programme, will be able to attend further education settings at any one time. We are therefore asking providers to plan on this basis.

Provision would also continue for:

- vulnerable learners (as defined)
- children of critical workers (as defined)

This checklist is intended to provide support to colleges preparing their short term response to increasing attendance and face-to-face contact for some groups of learners. The list is not exclusive and should be seen as a set of guiding principles for college leaders and governing bodies to assist their decision making when approving their detailed plans for extending attendance of learners in their college. The checklist sets out the minimum that need to be taken account of to ensure that an appropriate assessment of risk has been taken to secure the safety of learners and staff, as well as ensuring that due consideration has been given to any wider impact on the college's area and community.

Implementation of the checklist may have financial implications, care must be exercised to ensure these are taken into account with due regard for the impact on the college's overall budget and financial position. Regular updates should be provided to the Education and Skills Funding Agency ESFA territorial teams as appropriate.

Given the varied nature of colleges, it is not possible for the government to be prescriptive and provide a blueprint that could apply to every college. A tailored approach, within these guiding principles, will be required to ensure an approach that is practicable, safe and which meets, as far as is possible, the needs of the learners, staff and wider community. This guidance will not be exhaustive and there may be particular circumstances which necessitate the consideration of factors not outlined here.

It is recognised that many college leaders and boards have already been scenario planning for this eventuality, taking measures to risk assess and prepare in general terms, whilst awaiting further detail of proposals. This guidance aims to further assist preparations.

Guidance documents that this should be read in conjunction with are:

- Safe working in education, childcare and children's social care
- Supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- Keeping children safe in education
- Coronavirus (COVID-19): safeguarding in schools, colleges and other providers
- Implementing protective measures in education childcare settings
- Information for parents and carers

Colleges should also be aware of support and advice that may be available from trade associations, and the Health and Safety Executive.

Checklist theme	Key consideration	Notes
1.0 **Governance and leadership**	Ensure that there is a comprehensive plan for enabling a quarter of 16 to 19 learners in key assessment years to attend further education settings at any one time, including vulnerable learners and children of critical workers. Ensure an associated risk assessment is in place. This plan should be approved by the governing body and should also be endorsed by the Head of Health and Safety at the college.	Governing bodies will need to demonstrate that they have acted appropriately and have taken due account of health and safety matters
1.1	Consider establishing a coronavirus (COVID-19) governance and decision-making structure, including a monitor and approved plan and consider any required adjustments and/or circumstances that may have arisen that require an immediate policy response. The group's membership, role and relationship to the full board should be agreed by the board, along with regular reporting protocols	This group would monitor implementation of the plan and be advised of decisions that may be required to be taken by the governing body/senior leadership team SLT. It should include the college's health and safety lead, the designated safeguarding lead. The group needs to consider financial implications and direct as appropriate. Consider including a member of the Health and Safety committee and their responsibility. Provide a clear line of accountability for decision making
1.2	Ensure that there is regular communication with all essential, external key contacts and, in particular, those that are required to enable the safe delivery of the plan for increased numbers of learners attending.	For example, the local authority and their children's services lead, 16 hour provision and SEND 16 hour provision and SEND lead, the local authority designated officer (LADO), transport providers, catering companies ESFA.
1.3	Ensure there is clarity regarding named on-site leadership for decision making, with a nominated individual each day where the CEO/principal is not in college.	Likely to be a member of the SLT and/or the Head of Health and Safety and/or the CEO/principal is not present
1.4	Ensure that there is a mechanism in place to record and monitor the costs of implementation of the plan for increased numbers of learners attending.	The cost of increased numbers of learners attending will need to be monitored and reviewed
2.0 **Learners and catering**	Clarify the numbers of learners who will be returning (ensuring only a quarter of 16 to 19 learners in key assessment years in further education settings at any one time, including priority groups), plan for the provision of additional enhanced safeguarding and support needs (for example counselling) and identify resources required.	Consider options/alternatives for residential and other learners where daily travel is impractical. Consider options for those who further high-risk or is not acceptable to learners. Consider options for staggered/reduced attendance across the week and/or reduced timetables, or a combination of taught sessions at college and remote education. Consider liaison/communication strategy with local neighbours/business
2.1	Agree what returning support is available for vulnerable and/or disadvantaged learners, updating the safeguarding arrangements and policy where required.	Agree ongoing approach for learners who are not returning, priority groups and children of critical workers who are not in the returning eligible cohorts. Make appropriate use of Survey/student support funds.
2.2	Put in place provision for the return of learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)	Maintain close contact with the local authority
2.3	Plan for how to keep students in groups that are as small as possible and that mix as little as possible with other groups	Consider as part of risk assessment
2.4	Consider how and where food can be available - minimising the need for learners to visit central refectory/canteen facilities and ensuring any queues can be avoided or socially distanced	Review access / safe use of vending machines. Retention of existing/introduction of alternative schemes, breakfast clubs
2.5	Communicate plans and behavioural expectations to learners (and carers/social workers/ guardians/ parents as appropriate) and review strategies to ensure these are adhered to, with appropriate responses to non-compliance	Update any behavioural policy. Increase the level of communication and to ensure learners maintain social distancing. Consider the benefit of online induction resources for staff and learners returning to college. Ensure that the learners will need this to be communicated in an accessible format/ web based support to understand the plans/ expectations
2.6	Undertake a comprehensive review of travel and transport arrangements and advice for learners, especially capacity and social distancing requirements, to ensure that the use of public transport is minimised and that alternatives are promoted where possible and where it is totally necessary, should not be during peak times. The Department for Transport has produced guidance for operators and advice to travel during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.	Due consideration of the wider implication in the community/ where this will place demand on public transport/ parking and to ensure that required revisions to college transport arrangement. Liaise with your local authority where parking is a problem. Liaise with bodies responsible for EHCPs. Implications of new arrangements for safeguarding.
2.7	Any residential provision necessary for returning learners will need to be appropriately risk assessed, with measures taken to address and limit the use of any communal areas, ensuring social distancing and appropriate levels of cleaning.	Clear guidance will be required for learners to advise on safe behaviours in their leisure time/ ways to limit their social contacts.
2.8	Issue clear guidance for learners coming into college to move straight to classrooms and limit any congregation points.	Consider guidance for learners on private study arrangements during free periods. Review access to and use of common gatherings on campus. Note that some learners will need this to be communicated in an accessible format/web need support to understand the plans/ expectations
2.9	Agree remote education offer/options for eligible learners who can't attend college	Update any behavioural policy. Increase the level of communication and to ensure learners maintain social distancing. Consider the benefit of online induction resources for staff and learners returning to college. Ensure that the learners will need this to be communicated in an accessible format/ web need support to understand the plans/ expectations
2.10	Ensure attendance recording and monitoring processes are in place and capture as appropriate any learners absent due to coronavirus symptoms	Due consideration of the wider implication in the community/ where this will place demand on public transport/ parking and to ensure that required revisions to college transport arrangement. Liaise with your local authority where parking is a problem. Liaise with bodies responsible for EHCPs. Implications of new arrangements for safeguarding.
2.11	Consideration of policies on learners and staff attending college where they are living with people who fall into clinically vulnerable categories - see guidance to implement protective measures.	Clear guidance will be required for learners to advise on safe behaviours in their leisure time/ ways to limit their social contacts.
2.12	Impact assessment on learners with protected characteristics	Consider guidance for learners on private study arrangements during free periods. Review access to and use of common gatherings on campus. Note that some learners will need this to be communicated in an accessible format/web need support to understand the plans/ expectations
2.13	Understanding of policies and approach to testing of learners for coronavirus (COVID-19)	
3.0 **Safe environment**	Steps to ensure risks are minimised: enhanced hygiene care and cleaning regimes, ventilation, social distancing between staff and learners stay in the same classroom groups as far as possible, contact management, staggered start and end break times, toilet use/cleaning, use of communal areas minimised, arrangements in place to facilitate more regular hand washing, including an ample supply of soap and water, hand sanitisers, and access to hand sanitisers in key places and classrooms. Reminders to students and internal communications to promote regular hand washing, cough/sneeze etiquette. Ensure that the relevant guidance on protective equipment (PPE) supplies will be needed. If your staff provide intimate care for any children or young people and for cases where a child or young person becomes unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) while in their setting and needs direct personal care until they can return home	Guidance 'Steps to limit risk in education settings' should be looked. Normalised first-aiders training updated. Ensuring accurate coronavirus service providers are operating, for example, sanitary products
3.1	Review building(s) capacity from social distancing perspective	Strategies to manage classroom layout and corridors connecting learning spaces
3.2	Reconfigure timetabling, patterns of attendance and delivery methodology for any face to face delivery to facilitate: small group sizes, reduced student movement around campus, reduced contacts overall and avoid learners using public transport at peak times.	Consideration of ways to limit movement/social contacts and demands on public transport
3.3	Update health and safety policy and conduct revised coronavirus (COVID-19) specific risk assessments of areas particularly facilities/processes where physical contact is normally involved (for example, hairdressing, beauty). Set amended fire and evacuation procedures needs to be in place	Ensure changes to policies are clearly communicated to staff
3.4	Reconfiguring room and equipment layout to ensure social distancing	
3.5	Enhanced cleaning schedules and procedures for shared equipment/workshops	
3.6	Arrangements regarding PPE need to be put in place as appropriate - see guidance to implement protective measures.	Particular consideration may be required for teaching assistants attached to learners needing personal/medical care
3.7	Clarity as to how safety measures and priorities will be displayed/messaged across campus	
3.8	Check that all suppliers and subcontractors (transport providers/grounds maintenance etc) are following appropriate social distancing and hygiene measures	
3.9	Appropriate planning in case someone falls ill on-site/or becomes ill after having been on-site.	Clear contingency plans should be considered to respond to situations where staff or learners on-site report symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
3.10	Consider revised access/opening times for learning resources centres and open study areas with appropriate modifications in place to provide for adequate social distancing.	Consideration should be given to the use of other venues (for example, libraries) and appropriate cleaning requirements. Changing facilities.
3.11	Review planned capital/maintenance work to ensure essential works only take place and that safe working practices are being implemented by contractors.	Liaise with your ESFA contact where you are reviewing government-funded planned capital work.
3.12	No unannounced external visitors to the college at this time, with planned visits from external visitors limited to those deemed essential by senior leaders.	
4.0 **Staff**	Agree any flexible working arrangements needed by staff to support any changes in delivery patterns.	Home working policy/ arrangements for cost-loading
4.1	Identify staff who can't return to college (shielding/self isolating/clinically vulnerable) and their alternative contribution	Strategies for recording supporting evidence. Consider deployment of staff who are able to remove the risk of unstuffed classes and/or learners with unplanned free periods.
4.2	Communicate plans and expectations to staff and arrange for training, pre-briefing and support as appropriate.	
4.3	Put in place measures to check on staff's well-being, including for leaders.	Specific HR policies may be needed/amended
4.4	Consider revised travel and transport arrangements and advice for staff to ensure that the use of public transport to travel to and from education settings is minimised as far as possible. Providers must not bring learners back in a manner which would see them using public transport at peak times. Consider staggered start and staggered start and end times as appropriate to achieve this.	Due consideration of the wider implication in the community/ of where this will place demand on public transport/ parking/ and ensure that required revisions to college transport arrangements.
4.5	Confirm policy/approach to testing of staff for coronavirus (COVID-19)	
4.6	Reconfiguration of staff offices where appropriate to conform with social distancing guidance	
4.7	Impact assessment on staff with protected characteristics	

This guide does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities. It is important that, as an employer, further education providers continue to comply with their existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with relevant protected characteristics. This guide should be taken into account when complying with those existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, take into account agency workers, contractors as well as your employees.

In developing their offer, further education providers should work closely with parents, staff and unions, as they normally would when agreeing the best approach for their circumstances, and with their local authorities to determine what services they require and to agree on any specific arrangements for this period.

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