Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

What parents and carers need to know about schools, colleges and other education settings during the coronavirus outbreak

Updated 11 June 2020

Contents

1. Wider opening of education settings
2. Early years settings
3. Exams
4. Admissions
5. Transport
6. Free school meals
7. Vulnerable children and children of critical workers
8. Resources and support

This guidance is for parents and carers about changes to schools and educational settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

You can access information, guidance and support for parents and carers of children who are learning at home.

As the Prime Minister announced on the 28 May, from 1 June we are asking nurseries and other early years providers (including childminders) to welcome back all children. Primary schools in England can welcome back children in key transition years – nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6. You can access more information on the opening of schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June for parents and carers. From 15 June, secondary schools and colleges can invite year 10 and 12 pupils, and 16 to 19 learners in the first year of their course, back into school for some face-to-face support with their teachers, to supplement their remote education.

Main changes to previous guidance

The changes include:

- updated links to new and revised guidance
- replaced section on 'closures of schools, childcare and other education settings, now named 'wider opening of education settings' with added lines on attendance (section 1)
- information on curriculum and setting expectations for those attending educational settings (1.12)
- information added about breakfast/after school clubs (1.14)
- information on repeating a year for pupils (1.15)
- information on transport for eligible pupils (section 5)
- amended lines on if its compulsory to send pupils to schools (7.2)
- amended lines on special schools and specialist post 16 providers (7.3)
- information on for parents of children with special education needs (7.5)
- amended lines on education for children at home (8.1 and 8.5)
- information on keeping children safe online (8.7 and 8.8)

1. Wider opening of education settings

1.1 When will early years settings, schools and colleges open to more children and young people?

Between 20 March and 1 June, in line with the scientific advice, nurseries, schools and colleges have remained open only to a priority group of children and young people, children of critical workers and vulnerable children.

Schools will continue to offer places for these children and young people.

From 1 June, we are asking early years providers to welcome back children of all ages. We are also asking primary schools in England to welcome back children in key transition years – nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6.

From 15 June, secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges are able to offer face-to-face support for pupils in year 10 and year 12, and 16 to 19 learners in the first year of their course, to supplement their remote education. Schools and colleges will be able to have a quarter of pupils in these year groups in school at any one time.

Other children will continue to be supported to learn at home. You can access more information on the opening of schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June for parents and carers.

1.2 Why are you opening schools to more pupils now?

Thanks to the huge efforts everyone has made to adhere to strict social distancing measures, the scientific advice indicates the transmission rate of coronavirus has decreased and the government's 5 tests have now been met.

Based on all the evidence, we are now able to begin our cautious and phased approach to the wider opening of schools. We want to get all children back into school as soon as we are able, because we know it is the best place for them to learn and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their friends, carers and teachers.

Our approach is a cautious one and in line with the experience of other European countries who have begun to bring back pre-school and school-age children in a phased way and are focusing on primary schools and younger children first. Our approach recognises that the safety and wellbeing of children, the staff that work with them, and the public is paramount.

Our guidance on implementing protective measures gives schools advice on how to minimise risks as they prepare to welcome more children back.

1.3 Why are year 10 and year 12 pupils not returning to full-time education like primary school children?

Our assessment, based on the latest scientific and medical advice, is that we need to continue to control the numbers attending school to reduce the risk of increasing transmission. Secondary schools and colleges should, therefore, ensure that only a quarter of pupils in year 10 and year 12, and 16 to 19 learners, are in school or college at any one time, including vulnerable children and children of critical workers in those year groups who are still encouraged to attend full-time. This is in addition to vulnerable pupils and children of critical workers in other year groups, who should also attend full-time.

We want to get all children and young people back into school and college as soon as the scientific advice allows, because we know it is the best place for them to learn. Our cautious, phased approach is based on the latest scientific advice. This advice shows that younger children are less affected by coronavirus and have less severe symptoms if they do get infected. We also know that time spent out of education has a particularly detrimental impact on younger children.

Secondary school pupils and college students typically travel further to school or college and are far more likely to use public transport or school buses, and they are more likely to have higher numbers of contacts outside of school/college. They are also typically educated in mixed groups for their studies and the scientific advice indicates we currently need to minimise mixing between groups. So for now, we are asking secondary schools and college, from 15 June to only provide some limited face-to-face support for year 10 and year 12 pupils, and 16 to 19 learners, who are preparing for exams next year, to supplement their remote education.

1.4 Can you guarantee it will be safe for pupils and staff?

Children, young people and teachers' safety is our top priority. That's why we are taking a cautious, phased approach to the wider opening of schools.

We have worked closely with Public Health England (PHE) to develop guidance on implementing protective measures which schools should put in place. This guidance sets out a hierarchy of controls which schools should work through and which, when implemented, create an inherently safer system where the risk of transmission of infection is significantly reduced.

These controls are:

- avoiding contact with anyone with symptoms
- frequent hand cleaning and good hygiene practices
- regular cleaning of settings
- minimising contact and mixing

All staff and children and their families will also have access to testing if they display symptoms of coronavirus.

1.5 Why are you welcoming more children back when they can't stay 2m apart?

We know that, unlike older children and adults, early years and primary age children cannot be expected to remain 2 metres apart from each other and staff. In deciding to bring more children back to early years and schools, we are taking this into account. Schools should, therefore, work through the hierarchy of controls to reduce the risk of transmission – crucially minimising contact and mixing by keeping children and staff in small consistent groups and keeping groups away from each other.

1.6 Will this apply to independent schools, boarding schools, residential colleges and other providers?

Yes. We are asking independent schools, boarding schools, residential colleges and other providers to do the same as state-funded schools and welcome back children in key transition years – nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6, from 1 June.

From 15 June, we are also asking them to offer face-to-face support to supplement the remote education of year 10 and year 12 pupils, and 16 to 19 learners, which should remain the predominant mode of education during this term for these pupils.

For all children and young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plan in special education settings, such as special schools, special post 16 institutions and hospital schools, settings should encourage attendance based on the child's risk assessment and on the ability of the setting to provide for their needs, and not using the child's year group as a primary deciding factor.

1.7 Can you guarantee that eligible children and young people will be able to attend their usual educational setting, school, or childcare provider?

We are expecting the majority of settings to open for children and young people who are eligible so that they can continue to attend their usual provider, but we acknowledge this will be impossible for some.

Where a setting is unable to stay open, we will work with local authorities, regional school commissioners and neighbouring providers to find an alternative setting for their students.

We have made temporary changes to the law to allow vulnerable children and the children of critical workers to attend another school, on only a temporary basis if their school is closed. The changes ensure they can return to their normal school once it reopens.

1.8 My child is eligible to attend, but their educational setting has closed. What should I do?

Arrangements will be made in your local area to ensure that your child can still attend an educational setting.

If your setting has not already informed you about those arrangements, please contact your local authority. They will be working with regional school commissioners and neighbouring providers to make alternative arrangements.

You can find out your local authority by entering your postcode. Contact details should be on your local authority's website.

If your child is attending further education, you should contact your college or provider in the first instance. You are also able to contact your local authority.

1.9 If I send my child to another school temporarily whilst their normal school is closed, will they be able to go back to their normal school once it opens to more children?

We have made temporary changes to the law so that when a school is closed, children can attend another school.

Once their normal school reopens, children and young people in the priority groups should return there where their attendance is appropriate.

1.10 Will parents of eligible children be penalised if they do not send their child to school?

We strongly encourage children and young people who are in the eligible groups to attend, unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as shielding due to health conditions).

You should notify your child's school or college as normal if your child is unable to attend so that staff are aware and can discuss with you.

Parents will not be penalised for non-attendance at this time.

1.11 What if I have to leave my children at home unattended?

There is no law about when you can leave your child on their own, but it is an offence to leave them alone if it places them at risk. As parents, you should use your judgement on how mature your child is before you decide to leave them at home. Read the government advice on the law on leaving children unattended.

It is important to be aware that you can be prosecuted if you leave a child alone 'in a manner likely to cause unnecessary suffering or injury to health'. If you are at all unsure, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) recommends that children under 12 are rarely mature enough to be left alone for a long period of time, children under 16 should not be left alone overnight and babies, toddlers and very young children should never be left alone.

1.12 Will education be provided as normal to children who are attending?

Schools and colleges continue to be best placed to make decisions about how to support and educate all their pupils during this period, based on the local context and staff capacity.

Where year groups are returning to school, we would expect school leaders and teachers to:

- consider their pupils' mental health and wellbeing and identify any pupil who may need additional support so they are ready to learn
- assess where pupils are in their learning and agree what adjustments may be needed to the school curriculum over the coming weeks
- identify and plan how best to support the education of high needs groups, including disadvantaged pupils, and SEND and vulnerable pupils
- support pupils in year 6, who will need both their primary and secondary schools to work together to support their upcoming transition to year 7
- consider how to best use additional contact time to support those in years 10 and 12 and the first year of a 16 to 19 course, who are starting their final year of study for

GCSEs, A levels and other qualifications next academic year

Schools should use best endeavours to support pupils attending school as well as those remaining at home, making use of the available remote learning support.

No school will be penalised if they are unable to offer a broad and balanced curriculum to their pupils during this period.

1.13 Can I send my child to supplementary schools / community activities or private tuition instead?

No.

Apart from those children who are eligible to return to attend early years and school, it remains the case that you should keep your child at home to limit the chance of the virus spreading. You should not use any in-person supplementary schools, community activities or after school clubs or tuition. We are expecting these settings to remain closed for the time being.

1.14 Can I send my child to breakfast/ after school clubs?

School-based wraparound providers, such as breakfast and after school clubs, can operate for children in eligible year groups (those in reception, and years 1 and 6) or those within priority groups (such as children of critical workers and vulnerable children) if they are:

- operating on the same premises as the school those children are attending
- only caring for children of that school and no others

Those who do open should ensure they are following the same protective measures being taken by schools during the day and work with schools to follow their arrangements, such as keeping children in the same small consistent groups that they are in during the school day.

If wraparound providers are unable to implement the same protective measures as the school, they should remain closed for the time being.

1.15 Can my child repeat a year?

Once a child has been admitted to a school it is for the head teacher to decide how best to educate them. This may, on occasion, include deciding that a child should be educated in a year group other than the one indicated by their age. Such decisions should be based on sound educational reasons and in consultation with parents.

We do not currently anticipate that children and young people will need to repeat a school year as a consequence of the coronavirus outbreak. We continue to look at all options to make sure children and young people get the support they need to continue their education during the coronavirus outbreak and make up for time spent out of school.

However, it remains possible for headteachers to agree this in individual cases if they think it is appropriate.

2. Early years settings

2.1 Can childcare settings charge me if I am not able to take up my child's place?

We are working hard to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on all parts of our society, including individuals and businesses. We expect nurseries to comply with the law and take a reasonable and proportionate approach to parents' fees, in light of these unprecedented circumstances, and to communicate any arrangements clearly with them.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has established a COVID-19 Taskforce to identify, monitor and respond to competition and consumer problems arising from coronavirus and the measures taken to contain it. People and businesses who have seen or experienced businesses behaving unfairly during the coronavirus outbreak can report it to the CMA by using their dedicated online form. Where there is evidence that businesses have breached competition or consumer protection law, the CMA will take enforcement action if warranted.

2.2 Is there any additional support available for parents who were meeting eligibility criteria for 30 hours free childcare and/or tax-free childcare before the coronavirus outbreak but who are no longer working or working reduced hours?

Yes. If you are temporarily not meeting the minimum income requirement for 30 hours free childcare and/or tax-free childcare as a direct consequence of the coronavirus outbreak and would normally meet the threshold for these schemes, you will be treated as eligible.

You should continue to apply or reconfirm if you have a childcare account already.

2.3 Do parents need to provide any proof to access 30 hours free childcare or tax-free childcare that they've been adversely affected by the coronavirus outbreak and so can still apply?

You should continue to apply or reconfirm if you have a childcare account already. You will be contacted if further evidence is required.

2.4 Can I still continue to claim 30 hours free childcare and/or tax-free childcare if I or my partner have earned over the maximum threshold because we've had to work longer hours due to the coronavirus outbreak?

Subject to parliamentary approval of a temporary amendment to the 30 hours free childcare and tax-free childcare regulations, we intend to allow critical workers who exceed the maximum income threshold (£100,000 per year), due to increased hours as a direct result of the coronavirus outbreak, to remain eligible for 30 hours for the current tax year.

2.5 My child isn't currently attending an early years setting. Do I still need to apply or reconfirm for the 30 hours entitlement and/or tax-free childcare if I'm not currently accessing a place?

We encourage all eligible parents to continue to apply for and reconfirm, their 30 hours and tax-free childcare entitlement, even when childcare settings remain closed to all but vulnerable children and children of critical workers. This will ensure a smooth transition back into childcare when settings fully reopen. Please see the guidance on tax-free childcare and 30 hours free childcare during coronavirus outbreak.

2.6 Is there any flexibility for parents who have missed the deadline for 30 hours codes?

We have asked local authorities and childcare providers who are approached by the parents of vulnerable children or critical workers who have missed the 31 March 2020 deadline, to accept their codes, having first checked the child's date of birth to ensure summer term eligibility. To be eligible for a summer term 30 hours place the child must have turned 3 before 1 April 2020.

2.7 My employer is saying I have to return to work but I can't find any childcare, what should I do?

In the first instance, parents are advised to get in touch with their local authority who will be able to help them find available childcare, which may be different from the setting the child usually attends. In the event that a child moves to a different setting, important information should be provided by the parent or carer to the new setting on day one, including emergency contact details, dietary requirements and medical needs to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child.

There is also an expectation that settings should be flexible, taking into account where parents work shifts or atypical hours, especially for parents who are critical workers, and so parents are encouraged to communicate their needs to settings as well as their employer.

3. Exams

3.1 What will happen to exams?

Exams and assessments that were due to take place this summer have been cancelled.

Students taking GCSEs, AS and A levels will receive calculated grades this summer.

For students taking other qualifications instead of or alongside GCSEs and A levels, such as some BTECs, will also receive a calculated result wherever possible.

There will be some qualifications where this is not possible, such as those that need to demonstrate a more practical set of skills. These assessments will be adapted wherever possible so that students can receive a result this summer.

Where it is not possible to adapt the assessments, these will be delayed. Ofqual – the qualifications regulator – is working with the awarding bodies who provide the assessments to agree the approaches.

Ofqual has published a range of guidance on how the awarding of qualifications this summer will work.

4. Admissions

4.1 Can parents appeal if a school has refused them a place?

Yes, we have amended the regulations so that admission authorities can hold appeals by telephone, video conference or in writing, where necessary, instead of holding face to face hearings with parents. More information on the appeals process is available.

5. Transport

5.1 My child is attending school, and usually gets free transport provided by the local authority. Will they still get this?

Yes. Local authorities continue to be under a statutory duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible children that are able to attend school.

Colleges and schools also have the capacity to support transport costs where necessary for 16 to 19 year olds.

5.2 If my child is attending an alternative setting on a temporary basis, will transport be provided?

Local authorities and schools should work together to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place to support children travelling to school.

5.3 How should my child travel to and from their childcare, school or college?

Parents, children and young people are encouraged to walk or cycle where possible and avoid public transport at peak times.

Refer to the safer travel guidance for passengers.

5.4 What precautions should my child take when travelling to school?

From 1 June, children in reception, year 1 and year 6 will be able to attend school, in addition to the children of critical workers and vulnerable children who were already attending school.

From 15 June, children in year 10 and 12, and 16 to 19 learners in the first year of their course, will be provided with some face-to-face contact and only a quarter of them will attend at any one time.

This should limit the amount of children travelling to and from school/college to manageable numbers.

When planning your journey to school, particularly if using public transport, you should follow the safer travel guidance for passengers.

Pupils and parents should do all they can to help make sure they and others can travel safely. This can be done through:

- not leaving home if anyone in their household, has symptoms of coronavirus
- avoiding travelling on public transport, particularly at peak times
- maintaining a 2 metre distance from others who are not in their household
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene by using the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach
- avoiding touching their face
- washing their hands thoroughly before and after travelling
- wearing a face covering if they need to use public transport

When deciding whether children wear a face covering on school transport, it is also important to remember:

- school transport is unlike public transport, in that it generally carries the same group of children to and from the same destination each day – this may help reduce the risk of cross infection
- children and staff won't be expected to wear face coverings in school
- it is important that those using face coverings are able to do so properly – guidance on how to wear and make a cloth face covering is available
- face coverings should not be used by children under the age of 3 or those who may find it difficult to manage them correctly

6. Free school meals

6.1 If my child is eligible for free school meals, will they still receive a meal or food voucher if they are not attending school?

Yes. Under normal circumstances, schools are not expected to provide free school meals to eligible children who are not attending due to illness or if the school is closed. However, during the coronavirus outbreak, we expect schools to continue to provide support to these children if the school is only open for certain groups or closed.

Headteachers can decide which of the available options will be best for families in their area. We encourage schools to work with their suppliers to arrange food parcels or collections for families eligible for free school meals. Where this is not possible, a national scheme was launched for schools to provide supermarket vouchers.

Contact your school to find out what they are providing.

We expect further education (FE) institutions to continue to support students who are eligible for, and usually receive, free meals in FE, or who are newly eligible, whether they are continuing to attend the provider or are studying remotely due to coronavirus related issues. Institutions should continue to provide that support as they determine the most appropriate and practical actions, for example, providing vouchers for supermarkets or local shops, making payments by BACS, or other local arrangements. 16 to 19 colleges and other providers can also access the school voucher scheme where needed.

7. Vulnerable children and children of critical workers

This section does not refer to early years settings as early years setting are welcoming children of all ages back.

7.1 Is my child counted as vulnerable?

During the coronavirus outbreak, vulnerable children and young people are defined as those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an EHC plan and it is determined, following a risk assessment, that their needs can be as safely or more safely met in the educational environment
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services), and who could, therefore, benefit from continued attendance - this might include children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services, adopted children, those at risk of becoming NEET ('not in employment, education or training'), those living in temporary accommodation, those who are young carers and others at the provider and local authority's discretion

The term 'all year groups' in this context for attendance purposes refers to children under 5 eligible for early years entitlements and children and young people aged 5 to 18 (or aged 5 to 25 for children and young people with an EHC plan).

You can access further guidance on supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus outbreak.

7.2 Is it compulsory for parents of vulnerable children to send their children to school?

As per the existing guidance on supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus outbreak, vulnerable children of all year groups continue to be expected and encouraged to attend educational provision, unless they are self-isolating or there are other reasons for absence (such as a risk assessment of a child with an EHC plan determining their needs would be more safely met at home, or a child is shielding due to health conditions).

In circumstances where a parent does not want to bring their child to an education setting, and their child is considered vulnerable, the social worker and education provider should explore the reasons for this directly with the parent.

Where parents are concerned about the risk of the child contracting the virus, the education provider should talk through these anxieties with the parent following the advice set out in the implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings guidance.

For children who have an education health and care (EHC) plan, attendance is expected where it is determined, following a risk assessment, that their needs can be as safely or more safely met in the educational environment.

We are asking local authorities to work with educational providers, families and the child or young person to carry out these risk assessments.

7.3 Does this guidance apply to special schools or specialist post-16 providers?

We recognise that children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) and their parents and carers are facing numerous challenges as a result of coronavirus. Residential special schools and other special settings should be supported to remain open, wherever possible.

Special schools, colleges and local authorities are advised to make case by case assessments of the health and safeguarding considerations of pupils and students on an EHC plan. For some, they will be safer in an education setting. For others, they will be safer at home. We trust leaders and parents to make these decisions and will support them as required. More information can be found in the guidance on supporting children and young people with SEND as schools and colleges prepare for wider opening.

7.4 How can I report if I am worried that a child or young person might be at risk of harm?

To further protect children and young people from harm, we are working with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) to expand and promote its helpline.

Parents or any adult will be able to call if they want someone to talk to, and they should get in touch if they are worried about a child or young person. Anyone with concerns should call 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

7.5 My child has an EHC plan. What support will they receive?

We have made some amendments to the law around education, health and care (EHC) plans to provide some flexibility in the current circumstances. We have published detailed guidance on changes to the law on education, health and care needs assessments and plans due to coronavirus.

7.6 My child has special educational needs (SEN). Can my child go back to school?

Children and young people in eligible year groups with an education, health and care plan are strongly encouraged to attend (where there are no shielding concerns for the child or their household), so that they can gain the educational and wellbeing benefits of attending.

Special schools, special post-16 institutions and hospital schools should work towards welcoming back as many children and young people as can be safely catered for in their setting. They may want to prioritise attendance based on key transitions and the impact on life chances and development and to consider creating part-time attendance rotas so that as many children as possible can benefit from attending their setting. Special settings should work with local authorities and families to ensure that decisions about attendance are informed by existing risk assessments for their children and young people, which should be kept up to date.

Where you may have concerns about your child's return, speak to the school special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo).

7.7 Am I counted as a critical worker?

Critical workers include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors.

Schools and local authorities should ensure that children with a parent or carer who is listed on the government's critical worker list can continue to attend school. If the child's school is closed, provision should be made, on a temporary basis, at a setting which remains open.

7.8 If only one parent or carer is a critical worker, can I send my children to school?

Children with at least one parent or carer who is listed on the government's critical worker list can attend school.

8. Resources and support

8.1 What support is available to parents to help them educate their children at home and to access children's social care services?

We want to support schools and parents to ensure children and young people's education can continue.

We also want to ensure that children with a social worker can continue to receive support from children's social care services and that care leavers have the online access they need to keep in touch with the support and services they need.

To help young people access online learning, devices will be ordered for disadvantaged children who would otherwise not have access to one and are preparing for exams (in year 10) or receive support from a social worker, or are a care leaver.

Where care leavers, children with a social worker at secondary school and disadvantaged children in year 10, do not have internet connections, we are providing 4G routers to them so that they can learn at home. In addition, we are working with the country's major telecommunication providers to make it easier for families to access selected educational resources by temporarily exempting these sites from data charges.

For support to access social care services, you should first contact your local authority. For year 10 children, you should contact your child's school, who will be able to offer advice.

Other available support includes:

- a list of high quality online educational resources which have been assessed with the support of some of the country's leading educational experts to help pupils to learn at home
- guidance for parents on supporting your children's education during coronavirus outbreak
- an online resource from Oak National Academy with daily lessons available to both primary and secondary pupils (your child's school is best placed to advise you regarding whether to use the academy alongside their existing offer)
- enhanced education provision from the BBC, including daily lessons

For 16 to 19 year olds, education providers are able to provide support to young people who are not able to access an internet connection. Young people and parents should contact their provider if they are not able to access remote education.

Most further education providers have established remote education offers, which they have expanded to support education at home. Young people should be in regular contact with their provider around what support is available and to ensure they take full advantage of the offer.

8.2 My child qualifies for a device and connectivity at home but I don't know how to apply for one. How can I do this?

Laptops, tablets and 4G routers will be sent to schools and children's social care teams. They will contact you once they have the devices to let you know how to access them.

If you / your child is aged 16 to 19 you should contact your college, school, or other provider around accessing similar support if you need it.

8.3 Which children and young people are eligible for a laptop or tablet and why?

There are two groups of children and young people eligible for a laptop or tablet who currently lack access. The first is care leavers and children who receive support from a social worker (including families with pre-school children with a social worker, as well as older children), who need to keep in touch with social care services. The second group are disadvantaged students who would not otherwise have access to online learning and are preparing for exams (in year 10).

Any 16 to 19 year olds in education, without a suitable device and/or connectivity to study remotely and whose family can't afford these costs, should approach their college, school or other 16 to 19 providers to request support. Decisions on support will be made by providers. Colleges, schools and other 16 to 19 providers will be able to apply to top-up bursary funds, where necessary, to ensure that vulnerable students receive appropriate support.

We are also working with major telecoms companies to temporarily exempt certain educational resources from data charges. More details on this will follow.

8.4 What resources are available for parents with children under 5 to help support their children's early learning at home?

For parents with children under 5 years old who have not yet started school, the Department for Education's Hungry Little Minds campaign features tips and practical activities that you can do at home with children to support their early learning. There are many simple ways to help your children learn and it does not have to feel like 'learning'.

Having everyday conversations, make-believe play and reading together all make a big difference to your child's development. You can find more ideas and content from the BBC's Tiny Happy People campaign and the National Literacy Trust's Family Zone. We have also published further guidance on how to help children aged 2 to 4 to learn at home during the coronavirus outbreak.

8.5 What advice is available to parents with children, to help them support their children's education at home?

We have published guidance for parents to support the continuation of education at home. This includes advice and guidance around:

- structuring the day
- use of digital devices
- language development
- reading and writing
- numeracy
- information tailored to each age group

This guidance is designed to complement support and advice provided by schools and teachers. Engaging with your child's learning will be helpful in their continued educational development. For example, something as simple as talking to them during the day about what they are doing for school, or about anything around the home, enhances learning.

8.6 There is too much pressure on broadband connections in my area. How can my child participate in remote education?

The government is having regular calls with the major fixed and mobile operators, and with Ofcom, to monitor the situation and ensure that any problems on the networks are rapidly addressed and rectified.

We fully understand the importance of having reliable internet connectivity, particularly at this time, so that people can work from home wherever possible and access critical public services online, including health information.

8.7 Is my child at additional risk while spending more time online?

With children spending more time online to do schoolwork and other activities, there could be an additional risk. This is why it is more important than ever that children, parents and carers know how to stay safe online.

It is especially important that you talk to your children about online safety, show an interest in what they are doing online, including knowing the sites they will be accessing and who your child is interacting with online. In talking to your children, you can discuss age-appropriate 'ground rules' such as how much time they spend online doing different things, what games and apps are appropriate to use and what their children like and dislike about being online. You should also consider setting up and reviewing age-appropriate parental controls. Setting parental controls can be a quick and effective tool to help protect children online.

We know some parents and carers may choose to supplement the school or college online offer with support from online companies and in some cases individual tutors. This should only be secured from a reputable organisation/individual who can provide evidence that they are safe and can be trusted to have access to children.

8.8 Where can I go to get support to help keep my child safe online?

Here are some useful links to help you keep their children safe online:

- government guidance on keeping children safe from online harms such as child sexual exploitation, cyberbullying and harmful content
- government guidance on staying safe online including parental controls, fact-checking information, communicating with family and friends while social distancing is in place and taking regular breaks from the screen
- Thinkuknow is the education programme from the National Crime Agency (NCA) proving age-appropriate resources for children and support for parents
- Parent Info is a collaboration between Parentzone and the NCA providing support and guidance for parents from leading experts and organisations
- Childnet provides a tool kit to support parents and carers of children of any age to start discussions about their online life, to set boundaries around online behaviour and technology use, and to find out where to get more help and support
- Internet Matters provides age-specific online safety checklists, guides on how to set parental controls on a range of devices and a host of practical tips to help children get the most out of their digital world

- LGfL provides support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online, including 6 top tips to keep primary aged children safe online
- Net Aware provides support for parents and carers from the NSPCC and O2, providing a guide to social networks, apps and games
- Let's Talk About It provides support for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation
- UK Safer Internet Centre provides tips, advice, guides and resources to help keep children safe online, including parental controls offered by home internet providers and safety tools on social networks and other online services

Age-appropriate practical support on reporting concerns is available from:

- Childline - for support
- UK Safer Internet Centre - to report and remove harmful online content
- CEOP - for advice on making a report about online abuse

8.9 What support is available to parents to help them maintain their family's wellbeing while their children are at home?

Social connections, alongside exercise, sleep, diet and routine, are important protective factors for mental health.

Materials to promote and support mental wellbeing are included in the list of online resources we have published to help children to learn at home. Public Health England's Rise Above platform supports young people. The Department of Health and Social Care is providing £5 million of additional funding to support mental health charities to increase their provision for adults and children at this time.

Social isolation, reduced exercise and bereavement may affect children's wellbeing in this period. Resources to promote and support children and young people's mental wellbeing include:

- MindEd educational resources for adults about children and young people's mental health which is relevant for parents and carers as well as volunteers, teachers, and other professionals working with children
- Every Mind Matters which supports looking after your own and other's mental health
- guidance on looking after wellbeing and mental health during the coronavirus outbreak
- guidance on supporting children's wellbeing and mental health

All NHS mental health trusts are setting up 24/7 helplines and seeking to use digital and virtual channels to continue delivering support during the coronavirus outbreak.

8.10 What support is available for children/young people who receive SEN support?

Pupils who would usually be in receipt of SEN support (those without EHC plans) do not automatically meet the definition of 'vulnerable children'. Local authorities and schools/colleges have the flexibility to consider whether other children have vulnerabilities that mean they are safer at school/college than at home. However, we recommend that these decisions are taken based on risk assessment involving education settings, local authorities and parents. Further information can be found in the guidance on supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus outbreak.

Pupils on SEN support who remain at home will continue to have ongoing learning needs. Ensuring there are good communication channels between education settings and parents during this period is essential, as well as aiming to ensure that schools and colleges provide access to appropriate teaching materials wherever possible. Special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) in particular may be able to act as a contact point for families of children on SEN support. SENCOs will typically lead on ensuring that children and young people with SEN have access to materials they can use to learn and consolidate their learning at home. The government has also published details of remote learning resources, which includes those designed for children with SEND.

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