Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

What FE colleges and providers will need to do from the start of the 2020 autumn term

Updated 2 July 2020

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This guidance explains the actions that further education (FE) and skills providers should take for all learners from September.

It is our plan that FE learners, whether young people or adults will be able to return to further education settings in September and experience a full education. This guidance is intended to help colleges and all other further education settings prepare for that.

This guidance applies to:

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

This guidance also covers expectations for children with education, health and care (EHC) plans in mainstream FE settings. There is also separate guidance provided for special education settings, including special post-16 institutions, to support planning for September.

This guidance applies to adult learners as well as 16 to 19 learners.

We will keep this guidance under review as we continue to monitor the situation over the summer and we will adjust and adapt our approach as necessary if more evidence becomes available to us.

In line with the wider national approach, we have set out the interventions that you can use to make your setting COVID-secure.

These measures make up a Public Health England (PHE)-endorsed 'system of controls', building on the protective measures that have been in use throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Opening to all learners in September

You should plan on the basis that, from September 2020, all learners will return to a full high-quality education programme.

This is possible because we are continuing to make significant progress in tackling the virus. The prevalence of the virus has reduced and the NHS Test and Trace system is up and running. Given the improved position, the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of young people and adults being able to take part in a full education, including attending on site, with appropriate controls in place to manage the transmission risk.

This guidance will be kept under review and will be updated as necessary.

Public health advice to minimise coronavirus (COVID-19) risks

Risk assessment

As employers, you must protect people from harm. Health and safety legislation requires employers to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect staff, learners and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) within the education setting.

You will have already assessed the risks as sites have remained open since March, welcoming more learners back in June. You will have implemented proportionate control measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) for a limited number of learners.

As part of planning for full return, you should revisit and update risk assessments (building on the learning to date and the practices already developed), to consider the additional risks and control measures to enable a return of all learners from September. You should also review and update wider risk assessments and consider if additional controls are needed. You should implement sensible and proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety hierarchy of control to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

You should have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are effective, working as planned, and updated appropriately considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice.

You must record details of:

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

Review your assessment if:

- it is no longer valid
- there has been a significant change in related matters

You should refresh your health and safety risk assessment as part of your planning for opening your setting to more learners. For more information on what you need to do as part of your health and safety risk assessments, see the protective measures guidance.

Having assessed your risk, you must work through the system of controls, adopting measures in a way that addresses the risk identified, works for your organisation and allows you to deliver the education and training to your learners, including full educational and care support for those pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

If you follow this guidance, you will effectively reduce risks and create an inherently safer environment.

System of controls

This is the set of actions you must take. They are grouped into ‘prevention’ and ‘response to any infection’ and are outlined in more detail in the sections below.

Prevention

1) Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend the setting.

2) Clean hands thoroughly, more often than usual.

3) Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach.

4) Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.

5) Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distance.

6) Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Numbers 1 to 4 must be in place in all settings, all the time. Number 5 must be properly considered and you must put in place measures that suit you particular circumstances. Number 6 applies in specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

7) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

8) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the your FE community.

9) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

Numbers 7 to 9 must be followed in every case where they are relevant.

Prevention

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend your site

Ensuring that learners, staff and other adults do not come into your site if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or have tested positive in the last 7 days, and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the day is sent home, are essential actions to reduce the risk in education settings and further drive down transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Your organisation must follow this process and ensure all staff are aware of it.

If anyone on your site becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home (avoiding public transport) and advised to follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection, which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 7 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19). Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

If anyone becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms and is awaiting collection they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the age and needs of the individual and with appropriate adult supervision if required. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people.

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

PPE must be worn by staff caring for the individual while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as a person with complex needs). More information on PPE use can be found in the safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) guidance.

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

Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any learners who have been in close contact with them do not need to go home to self-isolate unless they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should arrange a test) or if the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive.

Everyone must wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser after any contact with someone who is unwell. The area around the person with symptoms must be cleaned with normal household disinfectant after they have left to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people. See the COVID-19: cleaning of non-healthcare settings guidance.

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

2. Clean hands more often than usual

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an easy virus to kill when it is on skin. This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser. You must ensure that learners clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive at your site, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future.

Points to consider and implement include:

- whether your site has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations' available so that all learners and staff can clean their hands regularly
- supervision and help with hand sanitiser use given risks around ingestion for learners with complex needs - skin-friendly skin cleaning wipes can be used as an alternative
- building these routines into your site culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure younger children and those with complex needs understand the need to follow them

3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important, so education settings must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available to support learners and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, you must ensure those with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all learners understand that this is now part of how your site operates. Some learners with complex needs will struggle to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers, for example, those who spit uncontrollably or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these learners and the staff working with them and is not a reason to deny these learners face to face education.

Public Health England does not (based on current evidence) recommend the use of face coverings in schools or further education settings. This evidence will be kept under review. Face coverings are required at all times on public transport (for children, over the age of 11) or when attending a hospital as a visitor or outpatient. They are not required in further education settings as learners and staff are mixing in consistent groups, and because misuse may inadvertently increase the risk of transmission. There may also be negative effects on communication and thus education.

4. Introduce enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach

Points to consider and implement include:

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

By the end of the summer term, Public Health England will publish revised guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings to advise on general cleaning required in addition to the current advice on cleaning when there is a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19).

5. Minimise contact and maintain social distance

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

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between learners and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining social distance between individuals. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the age groups of learners, the layout of the building, and the feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum.

Points to consider and implement

How to form groups

Consistent groups reduce the risk of transmission by limiting the number of learners and staff in contact with each other to only those within the group. Maintaining distinct groups that do not mix makes it quicker and easier in the event of a positive case to identify those who may need to self-isolate, and to keep that number as small as possible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Measures within rooms and workshops

Maintaining a distance between people whilst inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face to face to contact lower the risk of transmission. It is strong public health advice that staff maintain distance from their learners, stay at the front of the room, and away from their colleagues where possible. Ideally, adults should maintain 2 metre distance from each other. In particular, they should avoid close face to face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of anyone. However, it will not be possible when working with many learners who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These learners' educational and care support should be provided as normal.

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

When staff or learners cannot maintain distancing, the risk can also be reduced by keeping learners in the smaller, class-sized groups described above.

Make small adaptations to rooms or workshops to support distancing where possible. That might include moving unnecessary furniture out of rooms to make more space, considering desk layout, and seating learners side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face or side on. More information for particular types of vocational areas can be found in the working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance.

Measures elsewhere

Groups should be kept apart. Avoid large gatherings such as meetings with more than one group.

When timetabling, groups should be kept apart and movement around the site kept to a minimum. While passing briefly in the corridor or playground is low risk, you should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. You should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the canteen or restaurant between groups).

You should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other. Use of staff rooms should be minimised.

Measures for arriving at and leaving settings

Consider how learners will get to and from their education setting and limit use of public transport where possible.

Encourage walking, cycling and other forms of active exercise where appropriate.

Consider whether staggered start and finish times will limit contact between learners and the wider public.

Transport providers will determine what appropriate protective measures can be put in place on transport and learners must comply with any requirements set.

You should remind learners and staff that it is the law that they must wear a face covering when travelling in England on a public bus, coach, train, tram, or other forms of public transport, as per the safer travel guidance for passengers.

You should also have a process for removing face coverings when learners and staff who use them arrive at your setting, and communicate it clearly to them. This process should enable them to wash their hands immediately on arrival and dispose of temporary face coverings in a bin or place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag. See the guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care for more advice.

Activities such as singing and/or playing instruments should be avoided. The government is continuing to work on scientific and medical advice around how such activities can best be managed safely and further guidance will follow on this shortly.

Other considerations

Particular care should be taken if a learner routinely attends more than one setting on a part-time basis, or moves between a training provider and workplace as part of an apprenticeship. Block release may be better at reducing movement between sites, if that is possible. You should consider what is right for your setting, based on your risk assessment and your particular needs.

Some young people with SEND, whether they have an EHC plan or not, will need specific help and preparation for the changes to routine that this will involve. This might include, for instance, visits to the college site, social stories, and other approaches that colleges would normally use to enable a young person with SEND, who has spent some time out of education to return to full-time attendance. You will need to ensure that appropriate support is made available for students with SEND, for example in deployment of learning support assistants and in enabling specialist staff to work with young people in different cohorts.

Supply staff and other temporary workers can move between providers, but you will want to consider how to minimise the number of visitors to your setting where possible. Where it is necessary to use supply staff and to welcome visitors such as peripatetic staff, those individuals will be expected to comply with your arrangements for managing and minimising risk.

To help you minimise the numbers of temporary staff entering your premises, and secure best value, you may wish to use longer assignments with supply staff and agree a minimum number of hours across the academic year. This advice for supply teachers also applies to other temporary staff working in your settings, such as support staff working on a supply basis and peripatetic teachers such as sports coaches.

6. Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

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

- where an individual becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms while on site, and only then if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained
- where a learner already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, in which case the same PPE should continue to be used
- if the use of PPE is specified in the COVID-secure guidance for the sector, for example, hairdressing courses need to follow the same guidance as salons do when doing practical work

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

Response to any infection

7. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

You must ensure you understand the NHS Test and Trace process and how to contact your local Public Health England health protection team. You must ensure that staff members and parents/carers understand that they will need to be ready and willing to:

- book a test if they are displaying symptoms - staff and learners must not come onto your site if they have symptoms, and must be sent home to self-isolate if they develop them on your premises
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with if they were to test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)
- self-isolate if they have been in close contact with someone who develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests can be booked online through the NHS website, or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet. Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, have priority access to testing.

The government will ensure that it is as easy as possible to get a test through a wide range of routes that are locally accessible, fast and convenient. We will release more details on new testing avenues as and when they become available and will work with you so you understand what the quickest and easiest way is to get a test. By the autumn term, FE providers will be provided with a small number of home testing kits that they can give directly to learners or a parent or carer of a learner who has developed symptoms on-site, or staff who have developed symptoms on-site, where they think providing one will significantly increase the likelihood of them getting tested. Advice will be provided alongside these kits.

You should ask learners and staff to inform you immediately of the results of a test:

- if someone tests negative, if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), they can stop self-isolating. They could still have another virus, such as a cold or flu – in which case it is still best to avoid contact with other people until they are better. Other members of their household can stop self-isolating.
- if someone tests positive, they should follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and must continue to self-isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return onsite only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 7-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal. Other members of their household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.

8. Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the FE provider community

You must take swift action when you become aware that someone who has attended has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). You should contact the local health protection team. This team will also contact you directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended your premises – as identified by NHS Test and Trace.

The health protection team will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate.

The health protection team will work with you in this situation to guide you through the actions you need to take. Based on the advice from the health protection team, you must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious. Close contact means:

- direct close contacts - face to face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face to face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin to skin)

- proximity contacts - extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual
- travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

The health protection team will provide definitive advice to you on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we recommend you keep a record of learners and staff in each group, and any close contact that takes places between learners and staff in different groups. This should be a proportionate recording process. You do not need to ask learners to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.

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

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the learner or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within their 14-day isolation period they should follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. They should get a test, and:

- if the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14-day isolation period - this is because they could still develop the coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and must isolate for at least 7 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends before or after the original 14-day isolation period), their household should self-isolate for at least 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms, following guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection

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

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

9. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

If you have 2 or more confirmed cases within 14 days, or an overall rise in sickness absence where coronavirus (COVID-19) is suspected, you may have an outbreak, and must continue to work with your local health protection team who will be able to advise you if additional action is required.

In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other learners self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure – perhaps the whole site or a specific group. If you are implementing controls from this list, addressing the risks you have identified and therefore reducing transmission risks, whole site closure based on cases within your setting will not generally be necessary, and should not be considered except on the advice of health protection teams.

Learners who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer young people and adults advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of learners will be able to return. You should note, however, that:

- a small number of learners will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19).
- shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return their setting, as can those who have family members who are shielding - read current advice on shielding
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, learners (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below)
- some learners no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning in September (usually at their next planned clinical appointment) - read advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- where learners are not able to attend settings because of public health advice, we expect providers to offer them access to remote education. Providers should monitor engagement with this activity as set out below

Transport

Social distancing has significantly reduced available transport capacity. This guidance sets out a new framework for supporting transport to and from further education and skills providers from the autumn term.

We are making a distinction between dedicated further education and skills provider transport and wider public transport by:

- dedicated further education and skills provider transport, we mean services that are used only to carry learners to the provider
- public transport services, we mean routes which are also used by the general public

Dedicated further education and skills provider transport

Learners on dedicated services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and tend to be consistent. This means that the advice for passengers on public transport to adopt a social distance of 2 metres from people outside their household or support bubble, or a ‘one metre plus’ approach where this is not possible, will not apply on dedicated services from the autumn term but passengers should still be encouraged to space out as much as possible on any enclosed transport.

The approach to dedicated transport should align as far as possible with the principles underpinning the system of controls set out in this document and with the approach being adopted for your provider. It is important to consider:

- how learners are grouped together on transport
- use of hand sanitiser upon boarding and/or disembarking
- additional cleaning of vehicles
- organised queuing and boarding where possible
- the use of face coverings, where appropriate

Dedicated provider transport services can take different forms. Some journeys involve coaches regularly picking up the same learners each day, others involve use of a minibus, whilst other services are used by different learners on different days, or by learners with SEND. The precise approach taken will need to reflect the range of measures that are reasonable in the different circumstances. It will also require a partnership approach between local authorities, further education and skills providers and others.

Given the pressures on public transport services it may also be necessary to work with local authorities to identify where it might be necessary to provide alternative solutions.

Wider public transport

In many areas, learners normally make extensive use of the wider public transport system, particularly public buses. We expect that public transport capacity will continue to be constrained in the autumn term. Its use, particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum.

To facilitate the return of all learners to further education and skills provider it will be necessary to take steps to both depress the demand for public transport and to increase capacity within the system. Both will require action at a national and local level. Further education and skills provider have a critical role to play in supporting collaboration between all parties - providers, local authorities, parents and learners.

You should work with partners to consider staggered start times to enable more journeys to take place outside of peak hours. We recognise that this option will be more feasible in some circumstances than others.

Further education and skills providers

You should encourage parents, staff and learners to walk or cycle if at all possible. You may want to consider working with your local authority to promote safe cycling routes. The government has announced a £2 billion package to promote cycling and walking, including to support pop-up bicycle lanes and widened pavements. For some families and learners, driving to providers will also be an option.

However, these options will not be suitable for all. The Department for Transport is asking local authorities to:

- urgently work with providers to survey parents on their typical routes to school and potential alternatives
- consider a range of options for shifting demand for public transport onto other modes
- consider using traffic demand management approaches in order to ensure that learners are able to attend FE and skills providers from the start of the autumn term

Travel patterns, the availability of vehicles, the length of journeys undertaken, and other local pressures on public transport vary significantly. The government recognises the challenge but is confident that if all available options are considered by all parties it will be possible to reduce demand and ensure transport is available for those who need it most. Experience during the 2012 London Olympics showed that it is possible to make a very real difference to travel patterns where there is a concerted effort to do so and where the general public understand the imperative for doing so.

Families using public transport should refer to the safer travel guidance for passengers.

If it is not possible for learners, particularly vulnerable learners, to attend due to public transport routes being limited or closed, you should speak to the local authority to consider what alternative transport arrangements could be put in place.

You should also work with the local authority to consider the transport needs of learners with SEND and those with an EHC plan, taking account the guidance on supporting young people with SEND as schools and colleges prepare for reopening.

Workforce

Following the reduction in the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) and relaxation of shielding measures from 1 August, we expect that most staff will attend work. It remains the case that wider government policy advises those who can work from home to do so. We recognise this will not be applicable to most staff, but where a role may be conducive to home working, for example, some administrative roles, leaders should consider what is feasible and appropriate.

Staff who are clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable

Where providers apply the full measures in this guidance, the risks to all staff will be mitigated significantly, including those who are extremely clinically vulnerable and clinically vulnerable. We expect this will allow most staff to return to the workplace, although we advise those in the most at risk categories to take particular care while community transmission rates continue to fall. Advice for those who are clinically vulnerable, including pregnant women, can be found in the guidance on staying alert and safe (social distancing).

Individuals who were considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable and received a letter advising them to shield are now advised that they can return to work from 1 August as long as they maintain social distancing. Advice for those who are clinically vulnerable can be found in the staying alert and safe (social distancing) guidance.

Leaders should be flexible in how those members of staff are deployed to enable them to work remotely where possible or in roles where it is possible to maintain social distancing.

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

Staff who are pregnant

As a general principle, pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category and are advised to follow the relevant guidance on staying alert and safe (social distancing).

Staff at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes report. If people with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend providers discuss their concerns and explain the measures the organisation is putting in place to reduce risks.

Leaders should try as far as practically possible to accommodate additional measures recommended by individuals' medical advisers. People who live with those who have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace.

Employer health and safety and equalities duties

FE providers have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others, from harm and should continue to assess health and safety risks and consider how to meet equalities duties in the usual way.

Following the steps in this guidance will mitigate the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to learners and staff and help providers to meet their legal duties to protect employees and others from harm.

Recruitment

You can continue recruiting members of staff. You can still register for round 3 of the Taking Teaching Further programme. This programme supports the recruitment of industry professionals to teaching roles in the FE sector. If you are recruiting English, maths or SEND teachers, you can apply for in-service initial teacher education (ITE) grants of £18,200.

Teacher training

FE ITE providers should continue teacher training where possible.

Safeguarding young people

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

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

Try to give Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) and their deputies more time to support staff and learners with new safeguarding and welfare concerns as learners return.

Continue to work with and support:

- young people's social workers
- the local authority virtual school head for looked-after and previously looked-after children
- personal advisors for care leavers
- any other relevant safeguarding and welfare partners

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

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

There are also external resources available to support the safeguarding of young people, including:

- SafeCall which offers support to victims of exploitation - young people can contact SafeCall directly or can be referred to SafeCall by professionals
- the See, Hear, Respond service provided by Barnardo's to help young people in England who are experiencing harm and increased adversity during lockdown

Mental health and wellbeing

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

You should identify young people and members of staff that may need additional support and ensure that there is appropriate mental health and wellbeing support in place. Vulnerable young people are particularly likely to need additional support with their mental health and wellbeing. The guidance on mental health and behaviour in schools might be helpful with this.

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

Support can be:

- over the phone for any learners self-isolating
- from specialist staff or support services

NHS children and young people's mental health services (CYPMHS) may be able to provide support remotely. Continue referring young people to their local CYPMHS where needed. Young people or their parents or carers can also contact their GP or refer to NHS 111 online.

NHS trusts have also established 24-hour urgent mental health helplines in most parts of England for people of all ages. If you have urgent concerns about a young person, find your local helpline to discuss your concerns with a mental health professional. PHE have published more extensive guidance on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

You can find resources to promote and support mental wellbeing in the list of online resources to help young people to learn at home.

Other resources include:

- MindEd, which includes e-learning modules about young people's mental health
- the Every Mind Matters platform which has specific advice for adults and young people on maintaining good mental wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- the Association of College's (AoC) coronavirus (COVID-19) resource hub, which includes advice for learners and staff
- the Education and Training Foundation's mental health and emotional wellbeing advice for FE staff
- Education Support provide mental health and wellbeing support services to all education staff
- free apps available on the NHS App Store for mental health and wellbeing support

Mental health is also covered in the interim safeguarding guidance, and the principles in keeping children safe in education continue to apply.

Consider supporting learners with their mental health and wellbeing through:

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

Residential providers

We have produced guidance on isolation for residential educational settings. This applies to FE providers with residential accommodation and residential special colleges. It contains advice on how to manage self-isolation in such settings in the event of a confirmed or possible case.

In the event of cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in a residential setting, you should also seek input from your local health protection team.

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

You will need to remain open to those who:

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

Education and training delivery

We expect you to:

- provide a full programme of study and training offer for learners of all ages from your normal term start date in September 2020, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) (with or without an EHC plan)
- make sure that individual learners are undertaking their full study programme, in as far as they can in compliance with wider government guidance, and that it is of a sufficient standard to meet relevant funding requirements (this should include evidence for any elements completed remotely)
- comply with wider government guidance on services that are permitted to be open, for example, if you have a hairdresser on-site, or are delivering hairdressing training, you should ensure that beauty or nail treatments are not offered, if you have a community or leisure centre, it should not host indoor sports or fitness activity
- decide the appropriate mix of face to face and remote delivery - post-16 learners are more likely to undertake self-directed study but may still need additional support, you should make sure that planned hours meet the relevant funding guidance as set out in funding guidance for young people 2020 to 2021
- assess the gaps in learners' knowledge and skills early in the autumn term, focusing on the most important content and prioritise this to help learners to catch up
- put in place additional support for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people, including identifying if they need support to access any remote delivery

- identify and put in place plans to manage any safeguarding concerns
- develop remote education so that it is integrated into planning:

Remote education may need to be an essential component of delivery for some pupils, alongside classroom teaching, or in the case of a local lockdown. You are therefore expected to plan to ensure anyone who needs to stay at home for some of the time is given the support they need to make good progress. Where a class, group or small number of learners need to self-isolate, or there is a local lockdown requiring learners to remain at home, we expect you to have the capacity to offer immediate remote education.

You are expected to consider how to continue to improve the quality of your existing offer and have a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision by the end of September, for all provision apart from that which requires face to face delivery e.g. occupational competence provision. This planning will be particularly important to support a scenario in which the logistical challenges of remote provision are greatest, for example where large numbers of learners are required to remain at home.

Onsite learning can also continue to be complemented by high-quality remote learning if it meets learners' needs.

Support for the use of technology in remote education

Support is available to improve your online and blended learning and assessment offer.

Jisc is providing a series of webinars, guides, free content, blogs, practical assistance and communities of practice. Jisc is also offering its cloud consultancy and professional support service for free for colleges until 30 July.

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF), through its Enhance Digital Learning Platform, offers free training to work on how to use education technology effectively and develop their practice to engage learners and improve outcomes. ETF is also running webinars for FE providers on how to make the most of online learning.

FE and sixth form colleges can request free peer-to-peer support on using technology to support remote or blended learning from an EdTech demonstrator college or school. The support available includes direct advice, guidance and communities of practice, as well as live webinars and pre-recorded training content. Further information about the support available can be found on the Ed Tech demonstrator programme website.

Your strategies for remote and blended learning should be informed by the needs of teachers and learners and their respective home teaching and learning environments. If possible, colleges and other providers should:

- prepare staff to teach using remote education practices through supporting staff to access training on the use of online learning platforms used within the establishment (for example, Office 365 and MS Teams, Google Classroom, Moodle, Blackboard, etc) and to ensure that staff are familiar with digital pedagogy and relevant digital content and resources available to them
- support staff and learners to access the digital technology available, including video conferencing and other methods of remote communication, physical and digital resources, and cloud-based storage systems that can be accessed remotely (for example, Office 365 or Google G Suite), ensure that staff and learners have log-in details and know-how to access online systems and content
- provide learners with clear expectations on remote education, focusing on where, when and how they are expected to engage and demonstrate their learning and how assessment and feedback will be delivered, with particular consideration given to how to support disadvantaged learners and learners with special educational needs
- consider provision for partnership working with the relevant agencies (including health and social care) to help ensure support for vulnerable young people and young people with SEND
- follow safeguarding procedures when planning remote education strategies and teaching remotely as set out in safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19)
- consider how you will deploy your staff to ensure Prevent and security policies are maintained. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides guidance on how to work from home while adhering to these policies
- consider lesson capture to allow learners to dip in and out of lessons at their own pace
- consider using digital content and resources identified as high quality through recent projects funded through the College Collaboration Fund
- be sensitive and adaptive to the wellbeing and wellness of both learners and teachers. Jisc has produced a guide to the Digital Wellbeing of Learners that curates a number of resources and guides

Support for young people unable to access remote digital education

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help learners overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education. This may include provision of devices and connectivity support. As set out in 16 to 19 Bursary Fund guidance, decisions about support should be made on the basis of an individual assessment, in line with bursary fund rules that all support must be based on individual circumstances and needs.

In the 2019 to 2020 academic year, you should use your existing 16 to 19 Bursary Fund (and any spare resources from the FE free meals grant) to pay for this support. If you need additional resources to support young people to access education remotely, you should submit a business case to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Arrangements for the 2020 to 2021 academic year will be confirmed in due course.

Local authorities have provided laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers to young people who have a social worker or who are care leavers. 16 to 19 education providers should work with local authorities to ensure that any learners in these categories can access education and to ensure that support for them from the local authority and education provider is co-ordinated.

Estates

Following a risk assessment, small adaptations to site may be required, such as additional wash basins or sanitiser gels. This will be at your discretion, based on your particular circumstances.

It is important that prior to reopening for the autumn term all the usual pre-term building checks are undertaken to make the site safe. If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires' disease, advice on this can be found in the guidance on legionella risks during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Additional advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers' guidance on emerging from lockdown.

Once in operation it is important to ensure good ventilation, advice on this can be found in the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

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Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

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Transition period: get ready for 2021

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Business and self-employed
Childcare and parenting
Citizenship and living in the UK
Crime, justice and the law
Disabled people
Driving and transport
Education and learning
Employing people
Environment and countryside
Housing and local services
Money and tax
Passports, travel and living abroad
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