Department for Education

Guidance

Further education (FE) autumn term guidance

Updated 18 September 2020

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The guidance sets out what further education (FE) providers need to know for the autumn term so that students of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full.

Main changes to previous guidance

This guidance document combines the previous operational and autumn term guidance for the FE sector.

We have also made changes to the guidance on:

- implementing risk assessments
- good ventilation to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- face coverings in FE settings
- managing confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19)
- managing local outbreaks
- public transport
- music, performing arts and physical activity
- remote and blended learning
- health and safety and equalities duties
- resuming educational visits
- the 16 to 19 tuition support fund
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Introduction

This guidance explains the actions that further education (FE) and skills providers in England should take for the return of students.

From this autumn, FE providers should:

- resume delivery so that students of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full
- follow the system of controls, which sets out what to do to minimise the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your setting
- work with local authorities to contain local outbreaks

This guidance is for leaders and staff in:

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

It also covers expectations for students with education, health and care (EHC) plans in mainstream FE settings, including special post-16 institutions. Specialist post-16 institutions should also read the guidance for full opening for special schools and other specialist settings. Apprenticeship providers should also read the guidance on providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

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

Minimising 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, students and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) within the education setting.

You may already have implemented proportionate control measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) for a limited number of students. As part of planning for welcoming students back for the autumn term, you should:

- revisit and update risk assessments
- consider additional risks and control measures to enable a return of all students from the beginning of the autumn term, including those who may be at more risk of an adverse outcome if infected
- review and update wider risk assessments and consider whether you need to put in place additional controls to meet Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requirements for things like ventilation as set out in the estates section - you should implement proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety system of controls to mitigate these risks
- have arrangements in place to monitor control measures to ensure they are working as planned - arrangements should be updated appropriately according to any issues you identify or changes in public health advice
- involve students in the development of a student charter or agreement which sets out responsibilities for staying safe and protecting others

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

Having assessed your risk, you must work through the system of controls. Make sure the measures you put in place:

- address the risks identified
- work for your organisation
- allow you to deliver the education and training to all your students
- include support for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Ventilation

Poorly ventilated buildings are particularly conducive to virus spread.

HSE guidance sets out how good ventilation can help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19). It is important to make sure your buildings have good ventilation, maximising this wherever possible. The HSE guidance sets out:

- how good ventilation can be maintained through improving general ventilation, preferably through fresh air or by using mechanical systems
- ways you can maintain and increase the supply of fresh air, for example, by opening windows and doors (unless fire doors)
- why it's important for you to ensure all spaces with multiple occupants are well ventilated - this should at least meet current guidance on the ventilation rate for the setting as set out in Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) guidance
- that where possible, poorly ventilated spaces should be adapted to improve ventilation or not be used as a teaching location
- that you should identify spaces where there is no provision of ventilation and restrict these spaces to single occupancy or very short durations

Estates

FE and skills providers should look to maximise the use of their site and any associated available space, if feasible. We do not, however, consider it necessary for FE providers to make significant adaptations to their site to enable them to welcome all students back.

Following a risk assessment, some FE providers may determine that small adaptations to their site are required, such as additional wash basins. This will be at the discretion of individual FE providers, based on their circumstances.

It is important that, prior to reopening for the autumn term, all the usual pre-term building checks are undertaken to make buildings and 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 outbreak.

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

Measures within rooms and workshops

Maintaining a distance between people whilst inside and reducing the amount of time they are in face to face contact lowers the risk of transmission. It is strong public health advice that staff maintain distance from their students, staying at the front of the room, and away from their colleagues where possible. Ideally, everyone should maintain a 2 metre distance from each other wherever possible, or 1 metre with additional mitigations.

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

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

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

Make small adaptations to rooms or workshops to support distancing where possible. That should include seating students side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face or side on and might include moving unnecessary furniture out of rooms to make more space. 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 outdoor communal areas is low risk, you should avoid creating busy corridors, entrances and exits. You should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (and time for cleaning surfaces in the canteen or restaurant between groups).

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

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

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

Music

There may be an additional risk of infection in environments where you or others are:

- singing
- chanting
- playing wind or brass instruments
- shouting

This applies even if individuals are at a distance.

Singing, wind and brass instrument playing can be undertaken in line with the guidance provided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in the performing arts.

Studies have indicated that it is the cumulative aerosol transmission from both those performing in and attending events that is likely to create risk. DCMS is continuing to develop a more detailed understanding of how to mitigate this potential aggregate risk. Colleges that offer specialist, elite provision in music, dance and drama should also follow the latest DCMS guidance on the performing arts.

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

Although singing and playing wind and brass instruments do not currently appear to represent a significantly higher risk than routine speaking and breathing at the same volume, there is now some evidence that additional risk can build from aerosol transmission with volume and with the combined numbers of individuals within a confined space. This is particularly evident for singing and shouting, but with appropriate safety mitigation and consideration, singing, wind and brass teaching can still take place.

Measures to take include:

- playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible - if indoors, consider limiting the numbers in relation to space
- if indoors, use a room with as much space as possible, for example, larger rooms, rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission
- if playing indoors, limiting the numbers to account for ventilation of the space and the ability to social distance. It is important to ensure good ventilation - advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak
- singing, wind and brass playing should not take place in larger groups such as choirs and ensembles, or assemblies unless significant space, natural airflow (at least 10l/s/person for all present, including audiences) and strict social distancing and mitigation as described below can be maintained
- in the smaller groups where these activities can take place, colleges should observe strict social distancing between each singer/player, and between singers/players and any other people such as conductors, other musicians, or accompanists - current guidance is that if the activity is face-to-face and without mitigating actions, 2 metres is appropriate
- students should be positioned back-to-back or side-to-side when playing or singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- position wind and brass players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player
- use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly

By considering and adopting these additional risk mitigation measures, the overall risk will be reduced.

Performing arts

This section of the guidance is designed to help you minimise risk for performing arts provision during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. You should also take account of the guidance on working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in the performing arts, which is applicable to both professionals and non-professionals.

Performing arts courses, in normal circumstances, may involve a considerable amount of practical face-to-face teaching and assessment. Some providers have found alternative methods during the outbreak. You should consider new ways of delivering in-person teaching and assessment that adhere to guidelines on social distancing, so that all students can receive a high-quality academic experience in a way that protects both students and staff.

If it is not possible to avoid face-to-face teaching or group sessions, particular effort should be made to maintain social distancing and consideration given to other additional approaches to mitigate the potential for transmission.

Teaching sessions

You should design sessions and rehearsals to avoid situations where students are unable to socially distance. If this is not possible, reduce any time that students are not able to maintain social distancing.

Consider the number of students in teaching groups. Smaller teaching group sizes should be used where it is not possible to maintain social distancing. For example, you might consider reducing the:

- sizes of casts in drama
- size of orchestras
- number of students involved in movement sessions

Where this is not possible, you should take mitigating actions to reduce the risk of transmission between staff and students, such as holding the session in a larger room.

Where social distancing cannot be adhered to, consider the use of technology solutions to reduce interactions, for example for one to one tutorials, rehearsals and practice and if possible, for assignments. You might consider using booths, barriers or screens between individuals who are not part of a teaching group, between teaching groups and others, and between performers and any staff or students not participating at that moment.

Ensure no one is participating in in-person sessions if they are suffering with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or when advised to self-isolate.

Equipment

Equipment, including instruments and props are integral to many performing arts courses. Measures should be taken when handling equipment. These include:

- avoiding sharing equipment if possible
- if equipment has to be shared, making sure there is increased handwashing before and after handling equipment
- regularly cleaning all equipment including shared instruments, desks, sound and lighting equipment, mics or battery packs
- limiting the handling of paperwork, including music scores, scripts and learning materials

Audiences

Refer to guidance on working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in the performing arts for advice around audiences.

You should consider whether there is a need for a live audience. Where it is essential to have an audience, for assessment and teaching purposes, they should be seated in accordance with social distancing. Staff and other students can watch rehearsals and performances, but they should avoid cheering or shouting. This is because of the potential for increased risk of transmission – particularly from aerosol and droplet transmission. You might consider mitigating actions, such as the use of screens to protect audience members where necessary and limiting the length of performances. Maximum ventilation should be applied in all enclosed performance areas and both the ventilation and social distancing measures should consider performers and audience cumulatively.

Students should be prepared for the difficulties of performing without an audience or with a reduced audience, especially if the production is particularly interactive.

Physical activity in FE

You have the flexibility to decide how physical education, sport and physical activity will be provided whilst following the measures in the system of controls. Students should be kept in consistent groups and sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups.

Sports whose national governing bodies have developed guidance under the principles of the government's guidance on team sport and been approved by the government are permitted. Colleges must only provide team sports on this list and ensure they follow the national governing body guidance.

Outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not, maximising distancing between students and paying scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene and using maximum fresh air ventilation through either opening doors and windows or ventilation systems. This is particularly important in a sports setting because of the way in which people breathe during exercise. External facilities can also be used in line with government guidance for the use of, and travel to and from, those facilities.

You should refer to advice:

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

You are able to work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extra-curricular activities where you are satisfied that it is safe to do so. You should consider carefully how such arrangements can operate within the wider protective measures.

Students who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future, there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. We expect most students will be able to return full time (part time for students attending part time courses) in the autumn term.

A small number of students may still be unable to attend because they are:

- self-isolating or living with someone who is and/or has had symptoms or a positive test result themselves
- a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)

Shielding advice for all adults and young people was paused on 1 August. This means that even the small number of students who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to college, as can those who have family members who were shielding. Read the current advice on shielding.

If rates of the disease rise in local areas, young people (or family members) from that area, and that area only, may be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily unable to attend.

Students no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional are likely to discuss their care with their health professional at their next planned clinical appointment.

You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people.

If students are not able to attend because of public health advice, we expect you to offer them access to remote education.

Students who are pregnant should follow the relevant guidance in coronavirus infection and pregnancy.

Local outbreaks

The COVID-19 contain framework sets out how national and local partners will work together to prevent, contain and manage local outbreaks. If a local area sees a spike in infection rates that result in localised community spread, relevant authorities will decide which measures to implement to help contain the spread.

All decisions relating to education provision in a geographical area will be made at a national level by the Secretary of State for Education. The Department for Education (DfE) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will support appropriate authorities and individual settings to follow the health advice. In the event of local restrictions being implemented which affect education, guidance will be published outlining the steps that colleges may need to take.

Read the government's approach to managing local coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreaks.

You should develop a strong contingency plan for remote education provision by the end of September. This will help ensure you are able to rapidly shift to blended, or if necessary remote education should the need arise, accepting that some provision cannot be delivered remotely (for example, occupational competence provision).

This planning will be important to make sure education and training is maintained in a range of scenarios, from a single student needing to stay at home, to circumstances where large numbers of students are required to remain at home due to a local lockdown.

Transport

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

The guidance on transport for schools and other places of education provides information about the steps local authorities are taking to ensure that children and young people can travel to school and college in the autumn. It also includes information on the measures you should take where you provide dedicated transport for students.

You are advised to work with your local transport authority to identify when it might be necessary to take steps to manage demand on public transport or to arrange additional transport. Local transport authorities have received additional funding for school and college dedicated transport to support children and young people in their region to return to school and FE providers. Funding has been allocated to reflect the number of children and young people in the area and how far they travel. Local authorities (through their local transport authorities) have been asked to work with local education providers to help plan and manage transport locally to help ensure young people can return to their education in the autumn.

Dedicated FE and skills provider transport

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In accordance with advice from Public Health England (PHE), we recommend that children and young people aged 11 and over wear a face covering when travelling on dedicated school and college transport from the start of the autumn term. This does not apply to those who are exempt from wearing a face covering on public transport. A face covering is a covering of any type which covers your nose and mouth.

Wider public transport

Wider public transport

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

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

Encourage staff and students to walk or cycle where possible.

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

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

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

Moving between settings

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

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

As apprenticeship delivery can be extremely flexible, it is up to you, the employer and the end point assessment organisation to agree on how apprenticeship training is delivered, and how assessments are undertaken. You should consider whether you want to take advantage of more than one delivery method to balance minimising any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) with providing a full educational experience. For example, a block release delivery method may be better at reducing movement between sites.

See guidance on providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Temporary staff and visitors

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

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

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

Educational visits

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

In the autumn term, you can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits. These trips should include any trips for students with SEND connected with their preparation for adulthood (for example, workplace visits, travel training). This should be done in line with protective measures. As normal, you should undertake full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they can be done safely. As part of this risk assessment, you will need to consider what control measures need to be used and ensure you are aware of wider advice on visiting indoor and outdoor venues. You should consult the health and safety guidance on educational visits when considering visits.

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has produced information on travel insurance implications following the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. If you have any further questions about your cover or would like further reassurance, contact your travel insurance provider.

System of controls

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

Prevention

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

2) Where recommended, use of face coverings in FE settings.

3) Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Number 7 applies in specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

8) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

9) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the education setting community.

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

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

Prevention

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

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, or who have been advised by NHS Test and Trace to stay at home, do not attend the setting. Individuals formally advised by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact should also self-isolate.

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

All settings 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 and advised to follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. This sets out that they should self-isolate for at least 10 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19).

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

Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

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

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

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

For more information on how to care for a symptomatic student while protecting the welfare of other students and staff, read the guidance on isolation for residential educational settings.

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 except in an emergency situation.

Any members of staff who have helped someone with symptoms and any students 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 etc.)
- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive or
- they have been requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace

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

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

2. Where recommended, use of face coverings in FE settings.

From 1 September, new advice will apply to the use of face coverings by staff and students in further education settings.

Returning to education is vital for a student's education and for wellbeing. Time out of education is detrimental for their cognitive and academic development, particularly for disadvantaged learners, therefore we need to ensure all students can return to education sooner rather than later.

This guidance is not mandatory and any legal exemptions that apply to the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport also apply to this new advice.

There is additional guidance available about wearing face coverings in public spaces where social distancing is not always possible.

General approach to face coverings

The government is not recommending face coverings are necessary for education settings generally because a system of controls, which are applicable to all education environments, provides additional mitigating measures.

Further education providers will have the discretion to require the use of face coverings in communal areas where social distancing cannot be safely managed if they believe that it is right in their particular circumstances.

You might decide to recommend the wearing of face coverings for students and staff in specific communal settings where the layout of the setting makes it difficult to maintain social distancing when staff and students are moving around the premises (for example, in corridors).

Consider permitting the use of face coverings where, on top of the hygiene measures and the system of controls, it would provide additional confidence to students to support a full return to education in the autumn term.

Based on current evidence and the mitigating measures that FE providers are putting in place, face coverings will not generally be necessary in the traditional classroom setting, even where social distancing is not possible. There is greater use of the system of controls for minimising risk, including keeping in small and consistent groups, and greater scope for physical distancing by staff within classrooms. Face coverings would have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.

Outside of the traditional classroom setting, consider recommending the use of face coverings where:

- teaching settings are more reflective of, or are a workplace environment, for example, a restaurant that may be open to the public
- it is a requirement of the workplace or other indoor setting and where the teaching is taking place in an area in which students or staff are likely to come into contact with other members of the public (complying with relevant coronavirus (COVID-19) sector guidance)

Where local restrictions apply

You should take additional precautionary measures in local restriction areas, where the transmission of the virus is high. In FE settings in these areas, face coverings should be worn by adults and students when moving around, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. It will not usually be necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom, where protective measures already mean the risks are lower, and they may inhibit teaching and learning.

In the event of new local restrictions being imposed, you will need to communicate quickly and clearly to staff, students, parents and carers that the new arrangements require the use of face coverings in certain circumstances.

Exemptions

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. For example, people who:

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

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

Access to face coverings

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

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

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

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

Safe wearing and removal of face coverings

You should have a process for removing face coverings when those who use face coverings arrive and when face coverings are worn on your premises in certain circumstances. This process should be communicated clearly to students and staff.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

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

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

Students must be instructed to:

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

Guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care provides more advice.

3. Clean hands thoroughly, more often than usual.

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

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

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

Consider:

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

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

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

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

Further education providers have the discretion to recommend the wearing of face coverings in the communal areas of the education setting. See the face covering section for more information.

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

Consider:

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

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

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

Minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is important in all contexts, and you must consider how to implement this. You must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering a full programme of study. Where possible you should maintain 2 metres between people.

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between students and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate (in 'bubbles') and through maintaining the 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 students
- layout of the building
- feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad programme of learning

How to group students

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

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

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

Where 'class-sized' groups are not possible in order to deliver the full programme of study, or to manage the practical logistics within and around the site, other measures from the system of controls become even more important. We strongly recommend that, as a minimum, you plan to keep your year groups or cohorts of students separate from each other during the day. You will need to think about whether you can group students into smaller groupings and still deliver a full programme of study. However, there is no set requirement to make cohorts smaller than 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. These are considerations you will need to make when reaching your decision.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Face coverings are not classified as PPE (personal protective equipment). PPE is used in a limited number of settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks, such as surgical masks or respirators used in medical and industrial settings. A face covering is a covering of any type which covers your nose and mouth.

Response to any infection

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

8. Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

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

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

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

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

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

If someone tests positive, they should follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return onsite only if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss or change in sense of smell/taste. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. The 10 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.

9. Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the education setting community.

You must take swift action when you become aware that someone who has attended your premises has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). You can contact the dedicated advice service introduced by Public Health England (PHE) and delivered by the NHS Business Services Authority. This can be reached by calling the DfE Helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 for advice on the action to take in response to a positive case. You will be put through to a team of advisers who will inform you what action is needed based on the latest public health advice.

The advice service will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate. If, following triage, further expert advice is required the adviser will escalate your call to the PHE local health protection team.

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with you to guide you through the actions you need to take. Based on their advice, you must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 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 advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will provide definitive advice to you on who must be sent home. To support them in doing so, we recommend you keep a record of students and staff in each group and include a check-in system for anyone using communal or shared areas such as libraries. This should be a proportionate recording process. You do not need to ask students to record everyone they have spent time with each day or ask staff to keep definitive records in a way that is overly burdensome.

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

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the student or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within 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 someone who is self-isolating because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) starts to feel unwell and gets a test for coronavirus themselves, and the test delivers a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 14 day isolation period - this is because they could still develop coronavirus (COVID-19) within the remaining days
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and must isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms (which could mean the self-isolation ends 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 students or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

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

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

Reporting actual or suspected cases through the education setting status form (colleges only)

Where a college has a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), you should notify us as part of the information submitted in the educational settings status form. All colleges should complete this form by midday each day.

The data you submit is crucial to enabling us to build a national picture of educational provision so that we can focus support more effectively, monitor the impact of the virus, and ensure students are safe. The government also uses this data to inform public health management and planning.

See guidance on how to submit the educational settings status form for more information.

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

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

- continue to work with your local health protection team who will be able to advise you if additional action is required
- complete the educational settings status form each day **(colleges only)**

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

Education and training delivery

What we expect of FE providers

From this autumn, we expect you to resume delivery so that students of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full. This means we expect you to:

- fully deliver planned hours for students of all ages from your normal term start date in autumn 2020, including those with SEND (with or without an EHC plan)
- ensure that on site delivery resumes, recognising that this may be supplemented by high quality remote delivery where that is effective existing practice
- assess the gaps in students' knowledge and skills early in the autumn term and focus on addressing the significant gaps to help them to catch up
- put in place additional support for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people, including identifying whether they need support to access any remote delivery
- identify and put in place plans to manage any safeguarding concerns

Mode of delivery

Some providers delivered aspects of provision remotely prior to national lockdown and this has been successfully expanded over recent months. This may continue in the new academic year.

An increase in the use of remote delivery is reasonable provided that:

- it complements the overall offer and does not undermine the quality of education and engagement with students
- on site delivery counts for the majority of planned learning hours for all 16 to 19 students (other than in exceptional circumstances such as when restrictions are in place to contain local outbreaks or if individuals need to self-isolate)
- approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of students

Adult students have always been offered a wider variety of delivery models in comparison to 16 to 19 year olds. As was the case prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, you should continue to judge the right balance between on site and remote delivery for adult students in order to provide high quality education.

The funding section provides additional guidance on the different ways that remote provision could meet the 16 to 19 funding regulations. If you deliver remotely, you should:

- support staff and students to access and make effective use of digital technology such as virtual learning environments, video conferencing and digital resources and storage
- take account of the skills and confidence of your teachers in using technology and teaching online and ensure that teachers are supported to develop their skills and confidence in planning and delivering online
- provide students with clear expectations on remote education, so they know when and how they are expected to engage and demonstrate their learning and how you will give assessment and feedback, with particular consideration given to how to support disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs
- take account of home learning environments and the support that students may need to engage and learn remotely and safely
- be sensitive and adaptive to the wellbeing and wellness of both students and teachers

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

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

We are introducing a change to the adult education budget (AEB) funding rules for the 2020 to 2021 academic year. This is to enable providers to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices for students (aged 19+) and to help them meet students' IT connectivity costs, where these costs are a barrier to accessing or continuing in their training.

The introduction of this additional flexibility into the funding rules will be accommodated within providers existing AEB for 2020 to 2021.

See the AEB funding rules 2020 to 2021 for full details.

This flexibility is only for providers funded by ESFA. In areas where the AEB budget is devolved, contact the relevant mayoral authority concerning adult student support arrangements.

Support for high quality remote and blended education

EdTech demonstrator programme

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

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

Developing EdTech and online teaching skills

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) offers support for teachers to develop their online teaching skills. Visit the enhance digital teaching platform to find materials on a wide range of topics including:

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

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

- using devices
- handling information
- staying safe online

ETF have also developed a guide for FE staff on EdTech and essential digital skills training to support remote working. The guide identifies and provides links to EdTech and essential digital skills training modules on the enhance digital teaching platform as well as other useful resources which can contribute to developing the knowledge, skills and understanding required for teaching and learning online.

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

- how to teach online
- blended learning essentials
- use of technology in evidence-based teaching

Microsoft, Google and Apple also provide free training to help teachers use their platforms to build interactive lessons. Certification is subject to a fee.

Digital curriculum content and resources

Jisc provides curriculum content mapped against qualifications and national standards for 5 vocational subject areas:

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

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

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

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

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

The College Collaboration Fund is funding several sector projects to develop high quality digital curriculum content and resources. This content will become available from the autumn.

Support from provider associations

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

- Association of Colleges
- Sixth Form Colleges Association
- Association of Employment and Learning Providers
- Holex

Workforce

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

All staff working on site should follow the system of controls to minimise the risks of transmission. Following the system of controls will reduce the risks to all staff significantly.

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

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

Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

Rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) are now reduced to levels below that when shielding was introduced. Shielding measures were paused from the 1 August, except for areas where local lockdown means that shielding will continue. Therefore, we advise that those who are clinically extremely vulnerable can return to work in September provided they follow the system of controls their workplace has implemented to minimise the risk of transmission.

The clinically extremely vulnerable should now follow the same guidance as the clinically vulnerable population, taking particular care to practice frequent, thorough hand washing and cleaning of frequently touched areas in the home and/or workspace.

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

Staff who are clinically vulnerable

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

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

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

Staff who are pregnant

Pregnant women are in the 'clinically vulnerable' category, and are generally advised to follow the advice for staff who are clinically vulnerable. Employers should conduct a risk assessment for pregnant women in line with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

You should advise staff members who are pregnant to follow the relevant guidance in occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women.

We are currently working with the Department of Health and Social Care and Public Health England to consider the position of those over 28 weeks gestation and/or with underlying health conditions working in the education sector. If appropriate, we will update this guidance.

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

Some people with particular characteristics may be at comparatively increased risk of severe outcomes from coronavirus (COVID-19), as set out in the COVID-19: review of disparities in risks and outcomes report. These staff members can return to the workplace as long as the system of controls are in place. The reasons for the disparities are complex and there is ongoing research to understand and translate these findings for individuals in the future.

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

Health and safety, and equalities duties

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

General information on how to make a workplace COVID-secure, including how to approach a coronavirus (COVID-19) risk assessment, is provided by the HSE guidance on working safely.

Employers have a legal duty to consult their employees on health and safety in good time. It also makes good sense to involve students in discussions around health and safety decisions to help them understand the reasons for the measures being put in place.

Following the system of controls will mitigate the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to students and staff.

Emergency treatment and first aid

Emergency treatment, for example, provision of first aid, should be prioritised and given promptly in the event of an emergency. This means that people do not have to stay 2 metres apart if emergency assistance is required.

People involved in the provision of assistance of others should pay particular attention to hygiene measures immediately afterwards, including washing hands.

Recruitment

You can continue recruiting members of staff.

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

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

Teacher training

You should continue initial teacher education (ITE), including teacher training placements, where possible.

Supporting staff

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

Because some staff may be particularly anxious about returning, you may need extra systems in place to support staff wellbeing. Read about the extra mental health support for pupils and teachers.

Supporting vulnerable young people

Vulnerable young people are those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an EHC plan and following a risk assessment it is decided that their needs can be 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) - this includes:
  - young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services
  - adopted children
  - those at risk of becoming 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET)
  - those living in temporary accommodation
  - young carers
  - others at the provider and local authority's discretion

Attendance

All students, including vulnerable young people, should attend FE settings in the new academic year.

You should remind students that they must attend unless they:

- are ill
- are self-isolating, including if self-isolating due to a household member having a suspected or confirmed case
- have been advised not to attend by their local health protection team or NHS Test and Trace

It is important to keep an accurate record of attendance should there be a positive case or cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in your setting to help the local health protection team advise you on who must be sent home.

If vulnerable young people do not attend, follow up with their parents, carers and social workers to resolve any issues or barriers. You should also involve the virtual school heads (looked after children) or personal adviser (if the young person is a care leaver).

If vulnerable young people cannot attend education settings, for example, because they are self-isolating, you should maintain regular communication with them to ensure that they are safe and are accessing remote provision. You should also maintain contact with personal advisers and virtual school heads where relevant and the young person's social worker if they have one.

In case of any localised outbreaks, you should continue to prioritise vulnerable young people for on site provision.

Transition to FE

Transition is particularly important for September because new post-16 students will not have been able to undertake transition activities such as visits to FE settings.

Continue to work with schools and local authorities to support transitions. This includes sharing any relevant welfare and child protection information. Keeping children safe in education sets out responsibilities for sharing information.

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

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

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

Supporting students with special education needs (SEND)

General FE settings

We will continue to monitor the need for the temporary changes to the law on EHC assessments and plans. The changes give local authorities more flexibility and are currently in force until 25 September 2020.

From September 2020, all young people with SEND, with or without EHC plans should return to their mainstream FE setting. This includes students whose individual risk assessment said their needs would be more safely met at home.

Use risk assessments to identify any extra support students with EHC plans need to make a successful return to full education. Involve the young person, as well as parents or carers in planning for the return to their setting.

You will need to give students with SEND appropriate support. This could include:

- extra learning support assistants
- asking specialist staff to work with young people in different cohorts

If access to workplace or community settings is limited for students at the start of the academic year, consider rearranging schemes of work. For example, you could move any preparation for adulthood skills session you can cover on site into earlier terms.

Some young people with SEND, whether they have an EHC plan or not, will need careful preparation for a return to full time attendance. This might include:

- visits to the college site
- social stories
- other approaches you would normally use to help a young person with SEND who has spent some time out of education to return full time

Special post-16 institutions

From autumn 2020, all students should return to the majority of their planned hours on site for courses normally delivered face to face. This includes those in special post-16 institutions unless lockdown restrictions or personal circumstances (for example, those under active specialist care are advised to self-isolate) prevent it.

SEND temporary legislative changes

From 1 May to 31 July, section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 was modified. Local authorities and health commissioners were required to use their 'reasonable endeavours' to secure or arrange the specified special educational and health care provision in EHC plans. To ensure that young people receive the support they need to return to education settings, we will not be issuing further notices to modify this duty. Our focus is now on supporting local authorities, health commissioning bodies and education settings to restore full provision for all young people with EHC plans.

The temporary changes to the law on the timescales for EHC needs assessments and plans, which give local authorities and others who contribute to the relevant processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by coronavirus (COVID-19), will expire as planned on 25 September 2020.

We remain committed to working with local authorities, parent carer representatives and specialist SEND organisations, to ensure that the lifting of the temporary changes is managed in a way that supports the needs of young people with SEND.

Many young people will have found lockdown exceptionally difficult socially and emotionally. You should consider any challenging behaviours or social or emotional challenges arising as a response to the lockdown (following discussion with the young person or their parents) and offer additional support and phased returns where needed, as a reasonable adjustment to support a disabled young person to return successfully to their education setting.

Safeguarding young people

Delivery of 16 to 19 provision

We have published our guidance on learners' about new and additional safeguarding risks and threats. We also published our advice and guidance on what they should do if they have any concerns about a student. It is important that they all understand how to report any concerns.

Check that the safeguarding and welfare information you hold on all students is up to date. Make sure that you have the right information about students' health and safeguarding needs, including any vulnerabilities.

Try to use Disclosure Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) and their deputies more than usual. Ask them to check and deal with new safeguarding and welfare concerns as students return.

Continue to work with and support:

- young people's social workers
- young people who have been assessed for looked after and previously looked after children
- personal advisers for care leavers
- any other relevant safeguarding and welfare partners

You have a statutory duty with respect to 18 and 19 year olds to provide information to the local authority about those who are not participating in education or training. You should work with your local authority to identify those not participating, so that they can provide those students with the support they need to return to education.

Continue following statutory guidance on mental health, and use it to support students returning to education. Refer to the guidance on promoting children's mental health in schools.

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

- Contact, which offers support for families with children and young people who contact Contact directly or can be referred to Contact by professionals
- Young Minds, which provides support for children and young people
- Childline and its partnership with Papyrus to provide support and advice for young people
- Anti-Bullying and the National Association for Managers of Student Services (NAMSS) developed Bullying Intervention Group guidance. Supporting the lessons online and engaging in one to one activity with older SEL

Mental health and wellbeing

Many students and staff members will be feeling uncertain and anxious at this time. It is important that we all look after our mental health and wellbeing, and it is necessary for young people to manage it for themselves.

You should identify young people and members of staff who may need additional support or signposting to further assessment of their mental health and wellbeing support in place. Vulnerable young people are particularly likely to need support and signposting. Refer to the guidance on mental health and wellbeing.

We will use the Department for Education's wellbeing for education return grant. This consists of training for mental health and wellbeing leads in schools and colleges, and universal mental health support offers to students and staff members returning to education (COVID-19).

Training will be available to all state-funded schools and FE providers for pupils and students from ages 5 to 19.

Local authorities have responsibility for ensuring delivery staff to deliver the training to education settings and provide ongoing advice and support from the wellbeing for education team.

Training will be delivered to education settings in small groups and will cover the training and tools they need to specifically to them documenting the learning and support that students have received during the COVID-19 period and be available in the autumn term.

The Department for Education, Public Health England and NHS England also released a webinar, Time to Talk, for mental health and wellbeing.

Mental Wellbeing of Students report, this, which contains a number of resources and signposts.

Mental health is also covered in keeping children safe in education and their guidance contains links.

Consider supporting students with their mental health and wellbeing through:

- remote one to one mentoring
- encouraging young people to identify their own self-care strategies during lockdown and to share them with their peers and staff
- completing activities that promote self-esteem and self-belief to ensure that all students are engaged and supported
- using Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) resources focused on topics including mental health and wellbeing, and managing transitions
- encouraging participation in sport, NDC Sport promotes and supports participation in sport

Residential providers

We have provided guidance on vacation for residential educational settings. This applies to Ofsted-registered residential accommodation and residential special colleges. It contains advice on how to manage self-isolation in such settings in the event of a coronavirus (COVID-19) case.

In the event of cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in a residential setting, local directors of public health will provide local support.

In the case of any localised outbreaks, we expect you to keep your residential provision open where necessary. Refer to the guidance for more information.

You will need to remain open to those:

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

Funding

We have issued the funding rates and budgets for 2020 to 2021. Given the unprecedented circumstances, we will continue to review the guidance and will notify you of changes.

16 to 19 tuition fund

We will provide additional funding in the year for 2020 to 2021. This is to mitigate the disruption to learning arising from coronavirus (COVID-19). You will need to add to revise or supplement the 16 to 19 tuition fund.

16 to 19 funding arrangements (grant funded providers)

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

Retention factor

We will calculate the 16 to 19 funding allocations for 2020 to 2021 using an average retention factor for each provider.

We will use the retention factor for the 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019 allocated retention factor and then combining the factors to create an average retention factor for each provider.

This is intended to provide retention factors for the 2019 to 2020 that represent the expected year and also halt the adverse year-on-year effect by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

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

In-year recruitment of students

We currently use the 16 to 19 funding model for 16 roughly the year to determine funding for students who start after the 31 October.

If you recruit students late in the year rather than purely at the beginning or at the academic year, we will provide funding for students who start late in the year if late course, we will determine a way to ensure that this does not lead an unfavorable impact on your funding. We will provide funding for students who apply the current approach to calculate funding for students who recruited late were recruited after we take the initial data return in the autumn but just prior to the 31 October.

Student prior attainment in English and/or maths GCSEs

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

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

We will calculate these elements using the 16 to 19 funding formula and the prior attainment data we have for students.

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

Funding support for independent learning providers delivering 16 to 19 study programmes

ESFA provides support to independent learning providers (ILPs) that are facing cash flow difficulties as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Refer the 16 to 19 education business continuity planning examples.

- find out if you are eligible for support
- download the relevant forms to access it

Return your completed templates through the online enquiry form, between 23 September 2020 and 30 September 2020.

Funding for remote delivery to 16 to 19 students

The 16 to 19 funding regulations set out the principles that need to be met in order to claim funding for learning. We have published guidance on how to deliver remote education. We have also issued a set of principles to support providers to continue time in the classroom or workplace with remote delivery, this will be kept under review.

As set out in the funding regulations, you must make sure virtual or distance learning is suitable for the student and that it is part of a high quality study programme. This could include remote learning or a blended or hybrid or normal working pattern. The planned hours have to be realistic and deliverable for students and should include the time they will need to spend on their own.

Examples of eligible provision

As with classroom based delivery, it is about funding, you should plan, deliver and oversee remote or other delivery as part of the timetable you have agreed with your local ESFA office. Remote delivery could include:

- live lessons using online or telephone conference calls
- pre-recorded lessons
- students accessing learning plans online

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

- a log to show the time students have spent on remote learning or other learning is being delivered
- tracking notes for students from online learning sessions
- evidence of the length of the exercise that supports the planned delivery hours for the student
- communications between students and tutors as well as feedback or reflections on sessions

If students are encouraged to be recorded retained, we expect evidence that students have given their consent. We also expect evidence of student engagement with remote learning, such as the results of tests to check a student's understanding of the material covered.

T Levels

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

Read more about the tolerance and how T levels will be funded in 2020 to 2021.

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

T Level industry placements

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

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

See the industry placements delivery guidance for information about delivering high-quality industry placements.

Free meals in further education

You should continue to support students who are eligible, and who could be eligible, free meals. This includes students who are 16 to 19 and who are eligible.

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

Read further guidance on free meals in further education funded institutions for 2020.

High-needs funding for students with SEND

You should follow the normal placement and high needs funding processes. Local authorities should continue to pay high needs top-up funding for the students with high needs whose autumn term placements they have agreed. Providers should continue to provide the education and support they usually do.

For autumn term placements and top-up funding that has not been confirmed, local authorities will need to work with providers and parents/carers. Local authorities to set out a decision about a suitable placement and confirm the top-up funding. Local authorities should make sure that the provision is in place to be open and transparent.

Local authorities will need to be confident that the data we hold and can use is accurate, that we can trust it.

We intend to turn systems based on city nations (PCS) to identify an expected threshold to recognise the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak on significantly underperforming providers. This will enable us to ensure impact mitigation is provided where needed.

Advanced learner loans

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

Contact SLC if student's circumstances change.

Adult education budget (AEB) funding (grant funded providers)

Currently, approximately 70% of the AEB is devolved to 7 mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) and the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate as a combined authority (MCA). The remaining 30% is retained by the Secretary of State for processing AEB funds to deliver adult education and training in areas not covering the AEB to providers.

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

Supported internships

Where the size and of a student's supported internship has not been full during the coronavirus (COVID-19) period, we will fund the full-time equivalent hours they intended to be in place for 2020 to 2021 academic year.

For those requesting additional funding to complete their programmes in the 2020 to 2021 academic year, we will provide a pro-rata student to year-on-year:

- necessary duration of this extension
- number of placements

You will need to send the student into a new study programme. We do not expect providers to provide a second internship.

Please study programmes in learning through the usual funding rules. Payments will be issued through the usual logged funding system. This affects providers in receipt of 16 to 19 funding. Providers will be issued to the academic year 2019 to 2020.

Access to Work and supported internships

Supported interns can claim Access to Work payment for work-related support, such as:

- a job coach from the provider
- the activities develop employability skills
- the intern has been employed in their planned work placements due to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Job coaches may also claim Access to Work for activities that are necessary to support the intern in their workplace. Access to Work is available to support academic learning activities such as English and maths.

Terms for Access to Work changed on 19 March 2020 to 75 for more information.

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

Continue using the current timetable for data collection, allocations and payments for the academic year 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021.

We are conscious that there will be pressure on you to complete your submissions, and we will be flexible in our approach to data quality and data improvement. We'll publish the ILR specification for 2020 to 2021 and the data collection plan on 23 October. We are unable to extend the period for collecting data and to distribute block budget allocation and payment to some providers.

High-needs funding

Discuss any requirement for high-needs funding with your local authority. Students who have high needs and occupy places for which HN SOM are paid, should be in receipt of the appropriate funding. Refer to the high-needs funding guidance for more information and further guidance.

Local authorities should follow the established EIFS process. Providers need to inform an LA to complete their supported internship in the new academic year.

Examinations and assessments

Exams and assessments are the most reliable and fair way to know students will take place next academic year.

We have also published proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2021 and confirm the arrangements for vocational and technical qualifications and other general qualifications taken in vocational and technical qualifications and assessments of these qualifications. Ofqual has indicated its intention to extend the extraordinary regulatory framework for vocational and technical qualifications and other general qualifications to cover assessments in summer 2021.

We have announced a package of support to enable providers to set advance and examinations assessments. This includes:

- sourcing mitigations and venues for assessment
- the student mitigation and support

This package will cover:

- GCSE and A-Level exam accommodations in any subject (including GCSEs in English language and maths)
- vocational and technical qualifications at levels 2, 3 and 3 where the student mitigation is provided in accordance with the guidance and is for an assessment (excluding functional Skills qualifications) where the student attends

Qualification achievement rates

All exams that were due to take place in schools and colleges in England in summer 2020 were cancelled. We will not publish any school or college level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020.This includes the 2019 to 2020 qualification achievement rates.

See guidance on school and college performance measures and qualification achievement rates for more information.

Regulation, accountability and audit

Inspection

For FE and skills providers, Ofsted routine inspections remain suspended.

During the autumn term, inspectors will visit a sample of colleges and FE providers to talk about their education and training provision.

These visits will not result in a graded judgement. Ofsted will publish a report following the visit. The insights that inspectors gather will be aggregated nationally to share learning with the sector, the government and the wider public.

Ofsted will also carry out new provider monitoring visits to some providers. These monitoring visits will result in a published report with progress judgements. Ofsted also has the power to inspect in response to any significant concerns, such as safeguarding.

Ofsted intends to restart routine inspections from January 2021.

Audit

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

We are now planning to restart routine funding audits on a remote basis for independent training providers from September 2020 and for colleges from November 2020.

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

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

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

Is this page useful? Yes No Is there anything wrong with this page?

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

The UK has left the EU

Check the new rules for January 2021

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