Department for Education

Guidance

Further education (FE) operational guidance

Updated 30 December 2020

Contents

Main changes to previous guidance
Introduction
Minimising coronavirus (COVID-19) risks
Education and training delivery
Workforce
Supporting vulnerable young people
Supporting students with special education needs (SEND)
Funding, assessment and accountability
Annex A: Health and safety risk assessment

Main changes to previous guidance

The main changes include:

- staff who are pregnant
- new information on tier 4 restrictions
- coronavirus (COVID-19) asymptomatic testing in colleges

Introduction

This guidance sets out what further education (FE) and skills providers in England need to know so that students of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full. It explains the actions to take to stay as safe as possible as we continue to respond to the challenges of coronavirus (COVID-

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You should:

- continue 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. Special post-16 institutions should also read the guidance for special schools and other specialist settings. Apprenticeship providers should also read the guidance on providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

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

Minimising coronavirus (COVID-19) risks

Please note that this guidance is only for leaders and staff in:

- sixth form colleges
- general FE colleges
- special post-16 institutions
- designated institutions

Following the announcement on 15 December to help keep staff and students as safe as possible and in education, we will be making rapid-result coronavirus (COVID-19) tests available to colleges in the new year. This will help identify asymptomatic cases - which make up a third of all cases - limiting the spread of the virus.

Testing, along with other infection prevention and control measures such as social distancing, can ensure students are given the best chance of face to face education.

With a phased approach beginning in January, testing will be made available to all members of staff and younger students in colleges.

Following the announcement on 17 December to minimise cases and transmission of the virus when students return after Christmas, we have offered colleges access to testing from the first week of January.

Delivering exams

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

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

Risk assessment

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

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

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

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

System of controls

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

Prevention

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

2) Where recommended, or required by regulations, use face coverings.

3) Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Number 7 applies in specific circumstances.

Response to any infection

8) Engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

9) Manage confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19).

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

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

Prevention

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

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell

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

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

If anyone on your site becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home and advised to follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection. This sets out that they should 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 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive.

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

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

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

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

PPE must be worn by staff caring for the individual while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a young person with complex needs). Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms, while wearing PPE and all other members of staff or students who have been in close contact with that person with symptoms, if wearing a face covering, do not need to go home to self-isolate unless:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

General approach to face coverings

Face coverings should be worn in areas in tiers 2, 3 and 4 by staff, visitors and students when moving around indoors in corridors and other communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

Where local or national restrictions are not in place, you might decide to recommend the use of face coverings:

- in communal areas
- 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)

Face coverings must be worn in indoor areas where members of the public interact with staff or students to access goods and services. For example, if an on-site restaurant or hair salon is accessed by the public, these places must comply with face coverings regulations. This also applies where an education provider operates in a community setting such as a public library.

Consider permitting the use of face coverings where, on top of the hygiene measures and the system of controls, if it will provide additional confidence to students and staff.

Based on current evidence and the mitigating measures that you 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 could have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.

Where local restrictions apply

In the event of new local or national 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 uses

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

Students must be instructed to:

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

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

Consider:

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

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

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

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

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between students and staff. This can be achieved through keeping groups separate and through maintaining the distance between individuals. These are not alternative options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the:

- age groups of students

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

How to group students

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Response to any infection

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

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

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

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

- self-isolate if they have been in close contact with someone who develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)

Advice received through the NHS Test and Trace service applies to contacts made outside of the educational setting. You should follow the advice from local PHE teams on managing confirmed cases within the educational setting.

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.

NHS COVID-19 app

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

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

Testing kits

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.

You 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.

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

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

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

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

If someone tests positive, they should follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return on site only if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss or change in sense of smell or 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 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive.

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

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

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

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with you to guide you through the actions you need to take. Based on their advice, you must send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 10 days from the day after contact with the individual who tested positive. Close contact means:

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

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

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

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the student or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms. If someone in a group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive, they should follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

They should get a test, and:

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Site safety, ventilation and estates

Site safety

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

If you deliver higher education provision in your setting you should also read the higher education reopening buildings and campuses guidance.

Ventilation

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

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

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

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

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

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

Estates

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

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

Additional advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the CIBSE guidance on emerging from lockdown.

Off-site provision and work placements

External work placements

Minimising contact and mixing between people reduces transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Training providers and employers must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering training and assessment.

You should consider how students on placements, from different workplaces, mix with other students and staff when training in an educational setting. Information on how to group students can be found in the system of controls section.

It is important that you involve staff, students and the organisations who provide work placements to co-produce guidance, student charters or agreements, making clear the responsibilities for staying safe and protecting others. By involving others, the guidance is more likely to be adhered to. Where relevant, other outside bodies that may be affected (for example, suppliers, transport providers) may also be involved.

We are committed to ensuring that all young people undertaking a traineeship can spend time on a work placement with an employer. The work placement is fundamental to a traineeship, which is a work-focused route. We have given you further flexibilities to tailor traineeships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This includes reducing the number of required work placement hours from 100 to 70 and extending the duration of the programme from 6 months to 12 months. The work placement can be delivered flexibly over the full programme duration.

Teaching and learning environment measures within rooms and workshops

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

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

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

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

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

Additional mitigation measures

These include:

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

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

Measures elsewhere

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

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

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

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

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).

Public facing facilities

Public facing facilities that are used for the purposes of training can operate in line with restrictions in place in the local area. For example, a restaurant in a college in a tier 2 area may open to the public, but a restaurant in a college in a tier 3 area may only open for delivery or takeaway and in a tier 4 area must be closed to the public.

Restaurants and food service facilities can remain open for use by staff and students at all local restriction tiers. Other facilities such as gyms, swimming pools, and 3G pitches can remain open for the purpose of education and training at all local restriction tiers.

Performing arts

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

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

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

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

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

Performances

In tier 3 and 4, performances with an audience must not take place. In these cases, you should use alternative methods such as live streaming and recording performances, subject to the usual safeguarding considerations.

In other local restriction tiers, if you are planning an indoor or outdoor performance in front of an audience you should follow the latest advice on working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in the performing arts, implementing events in the lowest risk order as described. If planning an outdoor performance, you should also read the guidance on delivering outdoor events.

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

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

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

Further measures that you can take include:

- playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible
- if indoors, use a room with as much space as possible, for example, larger rooms, rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission

- if playing indoors, limiting the numbers to account for ventilation of the space and the ability to social distance - it is important to ensure good ventilation, advice on this can be found in the HSE guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak
- students should be positioned back-to-back or side-to-side when playing or singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- position wind and brass players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player
- use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly

Physical activity and sports

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

Organised indoor sport is permitted where it is part of education or training provision, or as part of official team sports, but local restriction tiers will determine which restrictions apply and how you can safely participate. Further information for public and sport providers on tier restrictions is available.

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.

At all times participants should comply with coronavirus (COVID-19) secure measures including the system of controls for their setting and limit social interaction outside the sporting activity. 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. You must only provide team sports on this list and ensure they follow the national governing body guidance.

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 can 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 clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable

The advice for students who remain in the clinically extremely vulnerable group is that they should return to their educational setting at all local restriction tiers unless they are one of a very small number of students under NHS care (such as recent transplant or immunosuppressed students) and have been advised specifically by their GP or clinician not to attend an educational setting.

The government may reintroduce more restrictive formal shielding measures for the clinically extremely vulnerable in the worst affected areas, based on advice from the Chief Medical Officer. The government will write to families separately to inform them if clinically extremely vulnerable students are advised to shield and not attend their setting.

Shielding advice is currently in place in tier 4, so all students still deemed clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend their setting.

Students who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves should still attend their educational setting

Further guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable is available.

Moving between settings

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

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

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.

Managing national and local restrictions

The government has made it a national priority that FE providers should continue to operate as normal as possible during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This remains the default position for all areas irrespective of local restriction tiers.

We have published a contingency framework for the rare circumstances in which you might need to revise your delivery model for a short period of time to help contain virus transmission within a community. Such measures will be implemented in the fewest number of colleges required, for the shortest time. Any restrictions on education would only be as a last resort and may only be initiated following a ministerial decision.

Circumstances where it may be necessary to restrict on-site delivery and move to greater remote delivery

Nationally education settings have been prioritised to remain open for on-site provision ahead of other parts of the economy. This reflects the importance of young people's education.

Under all local restriction tiers, our priority is to continue to ensure that students aged 16 to 19 can attend the majority of their planned hours on-site, as this provides the best circumstances for most students to learn.

You should only restrict on-site delivery if:

- you have received written public health advice to do so
- it is strictly necessary for operational reasons, with all other mitigations having been exhausted
- you have been advised to do so following a ministerial decision as part of the contingency framework

In such circumstances, you should put into action your contingency plans to quickly move to remote delivery of education and training for all students affected to minimise disruption to their learning.

Decisions to restrict on-site delivery for public health reasons due to a local outbreak

Decisions to restrict opening for public health reasons should only take place where there has been clear public health advice to do so, and this is provided in writing. This is to ensure clarity around the basis on which the decision has been made. This is normal practice for PHE, and both local PHE teams and local authority public health directors should be aware of this expectation.

Where you have been advised by local health teams to substantially reduce on-site attendance in response to local outbreaks or community transmission, please contact your ESFA territorial lead or caseload manager in the first instance or, if this is not possible use fed.covidcentral@education.gov.uk.

It is important for you to inform ESFA so that we understand the contingency plans and plans for communicating the decision. This should not delay any urgent decisions which may need to be implemented quickly.

Decisions to restrict on-site delivery for operational reasons

We recognise that you may have operational reasons where for a short period of time, the level of on-site learning for 16 to 19 year old students may be less than 50%. Such a reduction should only take place where necessary, and for a short period. Over a longer period (for example, the term), students should continue to receive a majority of their learning on-site and on-site delivery should count for the majority of planned learning hours for all 16 to 19 students.

If it is strictly necessary for you to decide to significantly reduce on-site delivery, please engage with your ESFA territorial leads or caseload managers, in the first instance. You should do this before communicating any decision, so they can understand the position and discuss the mitigations you are putting in place. If you are unable to reach territorial leads or caseload managers, please contact fed.covidcentral@education.gov.uk, this should not delay any exceptionally urgent decisions.

Examples of circumstances in which you may find it necessary to make adjustments are:

- a short planned testing period of their online learning systems to ensure that staff and students are ready to move to online learning as a contingency if needed - we would normally expect this only to last a couple of days
- a planned reduction of the number of 16 to 19 students who are on-site during busy exam and assessment periods when it would otherwise be more difficult to implement established infection control measures - any restrictions should be proportionate to the need, and we would normally expect significant restrictions to last no longer than the period of exams and assessments
- in the event of a very high level of staff absence - it may be appropriate to consider a mixed model, with some teachers delivering lessons remotely to students who are on-site and supervised by other staff, a reduction in on-site delivery should be proportionate to the scale of the staffing challenge

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

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

- vulnerable young people
- the children of key workers who need it
- students who do not have a home environment suitable for learning, including students who do not have access to digital devices or connectivity at home

For example, you may want to deliver lessons remotely, but encourage some students to engage in the lessons through computer terminals on-site.

In circumstances where a student is unable to access learning on-site because they are self-isolating and do not have access to a device or internet connection (and you are unable to remedy this), you should, where possible, deliver remote education by other means. This could include providing hard copy resources and communications via telephone.

Education and training delivery

Flexibility for providers to deliver education remotely within our guidance

The FE sector responded impressively during the first national lockdown and since to deliver substantial remote education to students. This reflects excellent leadership and governance, and the huge strides teachers have made to adapt their delivery.

FE providers have had flexibility to deliver a minority of their programme remotely, this recognises that remote education is an existing model in FE and that there are some aspects of FE (such as students moving between a work and education environment) that are particularly challenging.

While FE providers have been highly successful in delivering remote education in a challenging context, we know that remote education is not a full replacement for on-site education for many 16 to 19 year olds. When students have extended periods of time out of an education setting, this creates risks around engagement and wellbeing.

In their paper on further education, SAGE stated that 'there is evidence of physical and mental health impacts from missing or limited access to education and from reduced social interaction and support that can arise from remote learning'. Ofsted has been clear that some students struggle to engage with the remote offer and suffer from feelings of isolation at home. It is also the case that many teachers have found it challenging to adapt to delivering remote education.

Therefore, while remote education will continue to be an important element of FE provision, which has some real benefits, you should strive to maximise on-site delivery for your 16 to 19 provision to as close to a normal level as possible. If you have any concerns about your ability to transition to face-to-face learning, contact your ESFA territorial team to discuss this.

A minority of remote education can be used if:

- you actively consider how you can maximise the amount of on-site education to as close to a normal level as possible, and regularly review the scope to increase on-site education
- you ensure that students are attending on-site education regularly and not operating a 'week on, week off' rota for face-to-face learning - FE providers currently operating such a model should consider how they can move as quickly as possible to all students having time on site every week
- it complements the overall offer and can be demonstrated to not undermine the quality of education and engagement with students, evidence from Ofsted is that some students struggle to engage with remote education and this can be best mitigated by minimising time spent learning remotely, as well as additional support for students who need it
- 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
- you provide students with clarity on the arrangements for how remote education will be delivered, timetabling, the use of virtual learning environment and the expectations on students to participate in remote education, so they know when and how they are expected to engage and demonstrate their learning
- you confirm with students the different ways in which they will receive assessment and feedback to support their remote education and how often it will be provided - the nature and frequency of assessment and feedback should reflect the individual need and the courses they are enrolled on
- you maintain regular communication with vulnerable young people to ensure that they are safe and are accessing remote education
- you take account of home learning environments and the support that students may need to engage and learn remotely and safely
- you are sensitive to the wellbeing of students when they are learning remotely
- you consider whether more post-19 learning can be delivered remotely, but only if this provides good quality education

Provision of education and training for self-isolating students

For students who have been advised to self-isolate, but are well enough to learn, we expect you to continue their education remotely as far as is reasonably possible.

In circumstances where students need to undertake their learning remotely, they should benefit from the same amount of teaching and guided work that they would normally receive on-site. We recognise for some students this may not be possible, for example where a student is undertaking a course involving practical teaching and training which necessitates the use of specialist equipment and supervision or with respect to work experience and placements. You should use your best endeavours to deliver as much of students' planned hours as possible.

We expect you to:

- adapt and sequence education and training programmes to give students the best chance to build their knowledge and skills
- provide students with individual assessment and feedback to support progress in their learning at least once every week for academic study programmes and at least fortnightly if undertaking technical or applied general study programmes
- have systems in place to check, at least weekly, for persistent non-attendance or lack of engagement with remote education and to quickly agree ways in which attendance and participation can be improved
- give particular consideration on how best to support vulnerable and disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs

Publication of remote education offers

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

The information you should publish could include:

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

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

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

We have introduced a change to the adult education budget (AEB) funding rules for the 2020 to 2021 academic year. This is to enable you to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices for students (aged 19 and over) and to help you 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 your existing AEB for 2020 to 2021.

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

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

Support for high-quality remote and blended education

This section of the guidance sets out support available to:

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

EdTech demonstrator programme

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

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

Developing EdTech and online teaching skills

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

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

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

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

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

- using devices
- handling information
- staying safe online

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

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

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

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

Digital curriculum content and resources

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

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

- hairdressing

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

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

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

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

The College Collaboration Fund is funding several sector projects to develop high-quality digital curriculum content and resources. This content is being published as it becomes available over the course of the year.

Support from provider associations

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

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

Transport

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 young people can travel to college. It also includes information on the measures you should take where you provide dedicated transport for students.

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

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

Dedicated FE and skills provider transport

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wider public transport

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

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

Encourage staff and students to walk or cycle where possible.

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

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

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

Safe behaviour off-site

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

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

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

Temporary staff and visitors

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

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

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

Educational visits

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

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

We recognise the enormous benefits that overnight residential educational visits can provide and the expertise and skills of those working in this sector that enables students to benefit from those visits.

You can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits unless national or local restrictions prevent this. This should include any trips for students with SEND connected with their preparation for adulthood (for example, workplace visits, travel training). You should also make use of outdoor spaces in the local area to support the delivery of the curriculum.

As normal, you should undertake full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they can be done safely. 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 you travel insurance provider.

Workforce

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

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

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

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

Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

There is guidance for everyone who has been identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. You will have previously received a letter from the NHS or from your GP telling you this. The guidance provides advice on what additional measures individuals in this group can take tailored to each local restriction tier.

All staff can continue to attend at all local restriction tiers. Under tier 3, staff and employers may wish to discuss flexibilities that support clinically extremely vulnerable staff, such as staggered start times to reduce travel during rush hour.

In tier 4 areas, individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to work from home and where this is not possible, they should not to go into work. Individuals in this group will have been identified through a letter from the NHS or from their GP and may have been advised to shield in the past, most recently in November 2020.

The government will write to individuals to inform them if they are advised to follow formal shielding and not attend the workplace.

Staff should talk to their employers about how they will be supported, including to work from home where possible. FE providers should continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms.

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 considered ‘clinically vulnerable’ or in some cases ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ to coronavirus (COVID-19) and therefore require special consideration as set out in the guidance for pregnant employees.

Employers should carry out a risk assessment to follow the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW). More information is available on workplace risk assessment for vulnerable people vulnerable people working in other industries. Information contained in the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, Royal College of Midwives guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) in pregnancy should be used as the basis for a risk assessment.

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

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

Health and safety, and first aid

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

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

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

Recruitment

You can continue recruiting members of staff.

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

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

Teacher training

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

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

Supporting staff

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

Because some staff may be particularly anxious about 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
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services) - this includes:
  - young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services
  - adopted children
  - those at risk of becoming 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET)
  - those living in temporary accommodation
  - those who are young carers
  - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
  - others at the provider and local authority's discretion

Attendance

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

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

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

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

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

Supporting students with special education needs (SEND)

General FE settings

From September 2020, all young people with SEND, with or without education, health and care (EHC) plans, should have returned to full education in their FE setting. Following the restricted attendance of educational settings in March, we asked local authorities to consider the needs of all students with an EHC plan and to carry out a risk assessment. These risk assessments may prove useful to help identify any additional support these students need to make a successful return. They may also prove useful if:

- students have to self-isolate
- there is a local outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Risk assessments should inform a plan of action which focuses on supporting attendance and engagement and should incorporate the views of the young person. Where a student with an EHC plan has a social worker, the social worker should also be involved in the risk assessment.

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 sessions 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

Transition of students with SEND back to college

Many young people will have found restrictions exceptionally difficult socially and emotionally.

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

Special post-16 institutions

All students returned 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 local or national restrictions or personal circumstances

(for example, those under active specialist care are advised to self-isolate) prevent it.

Safeguarding young people

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

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

Try to give designated safeguarding leads and their deputies more time to support staff and students with new safeguarding and welfare concerns as students return.

Continue to work with and support:

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

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

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

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

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

Mental health and wellbeing

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

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

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

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

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

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

We have also provided a wellbeing for education return grant. This consists of training and resources for teachers and staff to respond to the wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19).

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

Local authorities have received funding to employ skilled staff to deliver the training to education settings and provide ongoing advice and support from the autumn through to March 2021.

Education settings can prepare by agreeing a nominated lead who will receive the training and will have the capability to then disseminate the learning and practice to staff and students within the setting.

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

Other resources include:

- MindEd, which includes e-learning modules about young people's mental health
- the Every Mind Matters platform, which has specific advice for adults and young people on maintaining good mental wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- the Association of College's (AoC) coronavirus (COVID-19) resource hub, which includes advice for students and staff
- the Education and Training Foundation's mental health and emotional wellbeing advice for FE staff
- Education Support's mental health and wellbeing support services for all education staff
- free apps available on the NHS App Store for mental health and wellbeing support
- Digital Wellbeing of Students guide from Jisc, which curates a number of resources and guides
- the Samaritans' website provides guidance on how to prepare for and respond to a suspected suicide in FE colleges

Mental health is also covered in keeping children safe in education and these principles continue to apply.

Consider supporting students with their mental health and wellbeing through:

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

Residential providers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You will need to remain open to those who:

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

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

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

Defining who should self-isolate in your residential setting

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

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

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

Funding, assessment and accountability

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

16 to 19 tuition fund

We have provided extra funding for one year for 2020 to 2021. This is to mitigate the disruption to learning arising from coronavirus (COVID-19). You will need to opt-in to receive an allocation on 16 to 19 tuition funding.

16 to 19 funding arrangements (grant-funded providers)

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

Retention factor

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

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

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

In-year growth

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

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

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

Student prior attainment in English or maths GCSEs

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

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

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

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

Funding for remote delivery to 16 to 19 students

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

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

Examples of eligible provision

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

If students are unable to attend timetabled remote delivery for a good reason, such as caring responsibilities or not having access to a device or connectivity, you can pre-record timetabled lessons and allow them to study outside the normal working pattern. You must get evidence of participation and make sure you support and supervise time-shifted delivery appropriately.

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

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

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

Ineligible provision

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

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

Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

T Levels

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

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

2021.

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

T Level industry placements

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

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

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

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

We have structured the roll-out of T Levels so that the first cohort is relatively small, and the majority of these students will not undertake their placements until the 2021 to 2022 academic year. We continue to monitor the challenges that coronavirus (COVID-19) is causing to identify what additional guidance and support providers and employers might need in order to ensure every placement is delivered in a physical workplace and to a high standard.

Free meals in further education

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

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

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

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

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

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

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, following a review of their EHC plans and appropriate risk assessments.

Local authorities should confirm the funding associated with high needs placements as soon as possible after the placements are agreed.

Funding claims and reconciliation

Information for education and skills training providers on submitting funding claims to ESFA.

Advanced learner loans

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

Contact SLC if a student's circumstances change.

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

Currently, approximately 50% of the AEB is devolved to 7 mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) and to the Mayor of London, acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA). These authorities are now responsible for providing AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocating the AEB to providers.

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

Traineeship delivery from September 2020

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

Supported internships and Access to Work

Supported internships are structured study programmes based primarily at an employer. You should consider how best to meet the aims of the supported internship while following:

- the system of controls
- guidance on off-site provision and work placements

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

High needs funding

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

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

Examinations and assessments

Exams and assessments for general, vocational and technical qualifications will take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

On 12 October 2020, the Secretary of State for Education announced that all exams across England will go ahead in the summer of 2021. This was reconfirmed on 3 December. The government is clear that exams are the fairest and most accurate way to measure attainment.

The government has engaged widely with the sector in considering the range of scenarios which might affect students' ability to sit exams. Plans have been developed with Ofqual and the awarding organisations at a national, local and individual student level to address any potential disruption.

We recognise students have experienced unprecedented disruption to their education this year and this disruption has not fallen equally across the country.

Additional guidance to support the summer 2021 exams outlines measures that have been agreed to ensure students have the confidence they will be treated fairly and that exams can take place safely.

Ofqual has consulted on proposed adaptations to exams and published proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A Levels in 2021. They have also confirmed the arrangements for vocational and technical qualifications and other general qualifications. Ofqual has extended the extraordinary regulatory framework for vocational and technical and other general qualifications so we can expect some adaptions to assessments to continue into 2020 to 2021.

It is expected that, for the majority of vocational and technical qualifications that are taken alongside or instead of GCSEs, AS and A levels, awarding organisations will look to align timetables with 2021 exams.

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 provider-level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020.?This includes the 2019 to 2020 qualification achievement rates.?No provider will be judged on data based on exams and assessments from 2020.

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

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

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

Regulation, accountability and audit

Inspection

For FE and skills providers, the intention is for full routine inspections to remain suspended and to be reintroduced from April 2021.

From January 2021, Ofsted will start to reintroduce some inspection activity and will resume monitoring visits of providers focusing on those most in need of support, in particular, requires improvement, inadequate and new providers. These visits will look at a provider's progress against specific weaknesses identified at their previous inspection or against standard themes for new providers. They will result in progress judgements and Ofsted will publish a report following the visit.

The full range of inspection activity to be reintroduced from Summer 2021.

Ofsted may carry out support and assurance visits to colleges and providers with 16 to 19 provision that are graded good. These will not result in a published report.

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

Audit

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

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

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

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

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

Annex A: Health and safety risk assessment

Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific

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

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

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

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

Sharing your risk assessment

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

Monitoring and review of risk controls

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

Roles and responsibilities

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wider guidance on the risk assessment process

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

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

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

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

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

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

- staff
- students
- visitors
- contractors

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

Consulting employees (general)

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

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

Resolving issues and raising concerns

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

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

Approach to risk estimation and management

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

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

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

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

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Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

Check how the new rules affect you

Services and information

Benefits

Births, deaths, marriages and care

Business and self-employed

Childcare and parenting

Citizenship and living in the UK

Crime, justice and the law

Disabled people

Driving and transport

Education and learning

Employing people

Environment and countryside

Housing and local services

Money and tax

Passports, travel and living abroad

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Departments and policy

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