Department for Education

Guidance

Further education coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance

Updated 6 April 2021

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Latest updates

The main changes include:

- steps out of lockdown - a summary of the roadmap for easing restrictions and the relationship to further education (FE)
- changes to delivery - setting out our broad expectations for the summer term
- system of controls
  - social distancing review point
  - updated testing information
  - updated face coverings information
- extra-curricular activity and sports - a new section on extra-curricular activity and clarification on sports activities
- education and training delivery
  - setting out our remote education expectations
  - additional information on the college collaboration fund
- educational visits - additional advice on educational day, residential and international visits
- clinically extremely vulnerable - updated information for staff and students who are shielding
- residential providers
  - details on quarantine from red list countries
  - guidance for international students
- free meals in education - further information on how to submit a funding claim
- supported internships - further information and details of how to record these in the individualised learner record (ILR)
- high needs funding - further information on the 2021 to 2022 academic year

Steps out of lockdown

Following the successful return to on-site education from 8 March, this guidance has been updated to focus on priorities for the summer term as restrictions are eased in line with the COVID-19 response - spring 2021.

The steps out of lockdown will be guided by data, not dates, so that we do not risk a surge in infections that would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS. For that reason, all the dates in the roadmap are indicative and subject to change. There will be a minimum of 5 weeks between each step, 4 weeks for the scientific data to reflect the changes in restrictions and to be analysed, followed by one week's advance notice of the restrictions that will be eased.

Only when the government is sure that it is safe to move from one step to the next will the final decision be made.

Alongside the return to face-to-face teaching, the planned easing of restrictions, guided at all stages by data, will allow you to fully reintroduce:

- face-to-face extra-curricular activity
- work placements
- education visits
- reopening of commercial training facilities on-site such as hairdressing salons, gyms and restaurants

By the end of the summer term, we hope providers will be able to open their doors to prospective students for familiarisation events ahead of starting their post-16 study in September.

Subject to the data and the 4 tests set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap, we expect that the following additional activities will be allowed in FE settings in line with the steps in wider society.

Step 1 - from 29 March

As part of step 1:

- outdoor sports and leisure facilities such as tennis courts and open-air swimming pools can reopen
- all students regardless of age can participate in formally organised outdoor sports
- wraparound provision for any reason can take place outdoors for students aged under 18
- clinically extremely vulnerable staff and students can return to work and their education setting from 1 April

Step 2 - not before 12 April

As part of step 2:

- students can return to industry placements, where working from home is not reasonably possible, and commercial activity within colleges can reopen as the corresponding businesses begin to open in wider society, for example, personal care and retail
- indoor leisure facilities including gyms can reopen to the public for individual or household use
- on-site hospitality facilities can reopen to the public for table service if they can serve outside

Step 3 - not before 17 May

As part of step 3:

- indoor adult group sport can return, meaning recreational group sport is permitted on FE premises
- indoor hospitality on-site can reopen to the public
- outside of college more students will be returning to part-time work alongside others outside of their college

Review of social distancing

Before step 4 begins, the government will complete a review of social distancing and other long-term measures that have been put in place to reduce transmission. This will inform decisions on the timing and circumstances under which the advice on 1 metre plus, and other measures may be lifted.

Step 4 - not before 21 June

As part of step 4 open days can be planned.

Introduction

This guidance sets out what FE and skills providers need to know so that students of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full.

It explains the actions college leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their setting. This includes public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE). 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 and 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 current guidance on providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

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

Changes to delivery

For most students, this summer term will be their first full term of face-to-face education since autumn 2019. It marks the start of our education recovery, that will deliver vital support to the students who need it most, making sure everyone has the same opportunity to fulfil their potential no matter their background.

The summer term also provides an opportunity to support students in building their confidence and resilience as we move back to a more normal way of life.

Many schools and colleges might normally incorporate a period of independent study leave in the summer term as exams approach. However, this year the needs of the cohort will be different and this may not be applicable for all. This year's 2021 exams approach for GCSE's, AS and A levels requires teachers to submit grades by 18 June 2021. This process requires considerable resource and we recognise that in practice, for many students, work done after the May half term will not contribute towards their grades.

Students cease to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday of June in the year in which they turn 16. That means that those students (most of whom will be in year 11) are not required to attend school after this date.

We know that this year, many FE providers will already have plans in place for the last half of the summer term to support their current students and to welcome prospective students. We would strongly encourage all FE providers to maximise opportunities that meet the progression needs of their students during this period.

You should consider the following:

- design and plan content to support students to study remotely or independently to embed curriculum content in which they are less secure - use video lessons and summer education recovery resources from Oak National Academy for up to year 11 or other high-quality resources (see digital curriculum content and resources), including the free digital resources in the skills toolkit
- liaise with local schools to support students' transition to A level study or vocational and technical qualifications at your college by helping them identify and prioritise delivery of content deemed essential for the course to cover either in the classroom, remotely, or for students to follow up themselves
- seek access to all year 11 students ahead of the summer to inform their options and choices, and provide taster sessions or induction activities (schools guidance will set out that post-16 providers should be given access to year 11 students)
- work with local authorities and schools to agree how those at risk of being 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) can be referred for intensive support, drawn from the range of education and training support services available locally
- provide support on study skills, other enrichment activity, careers advice and guidance on the options available and other support for students' mental health and wellbeing for all students progressing to further study or employment
- support application and preparation for work, in partnership with employers, including providing work experience, as far as coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions apply

Minimising coronavirus (COVID-19) risks

Public health advice

We have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and PHE to develop this guidance.

Implementing the system of controls, creates a safer environment for students and staff where the risk of transmission of infection is substantially reduced. The way to control this virus is the same, even with the current new variants. We are further strengthening the measures, to provide more reassurance and to help decrease disruption the virus causes to education.

Risk assessment

You have various duties to protect people from harm, as employers, occupiers or due to other responsibilities. 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 FE providers need to do is available in annex A.

System of controls

We know that the predominant new variant of coronavirus (COVID-19) is more transmissible, however, PHE advice remains that the way to control this virus is with the system of controls, even with the current new variants.

In this section where something is essential for public health reasons, as advised by Public Health England (PHE), we have said 'must'. Where there is a legal requirement we have made that clear. This guidance does not create any new legal obligations.

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

If you follow the system of controls, you will effectively reduce risks in your setting and create an inherently safer environment.

Prevention

You must always:

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the setting.

2. Ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances.

3. Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual.

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

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

6. Consider how to minimise contact across the site and maintain social distancing wherever possible.

7. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.

In specific circumstances:

8. Ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary.

9. Promote and engage in asymptomatic testing.

Response to any infection

You must always:

10. Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.

11. Manage and report confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the setting community.

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

1. Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the setting

When an individual develops coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or has a positive test

Students, staff and other adults must not come into the setting if:

- they have one or more coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- a member of their household (including someone in their support bubble or childcare bubble if they have one) has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms
- they are legally required to isolate having recently visited countries outside the Common Travel Area
- they have had a positive test

They must immediately cease to attend and not attend for at least 10 full days from the day after:

- the start of their symptoms
- the test date if they didn't have any symptoms but have had a positive test (whether this was a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) or Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test)

You must follow this process and ensure everyone on-site or visiting is aware of it.

Anyone told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace or by their public health protection team, has a legal obligation to self-isolate, but you may leave home to avoid injury or illness or to escape the risk of harm. More information can be found on NHS Test and Trace: how it works.

If anyone in your setting develops a new and continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), you must:

- send them home to begin isolation - the isolation period includes the day the symptoms started and the next 10 full days
- advise them to follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection
- advise them to arrange to have a test as soon as possible to see if they have coronavirus (COVID-19)

Other members of their household (including any siblings and members of their support or childcare bubble if they have one) should self-isolate. Their isolation period includes the day symptoms started for the first person in their household, or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms, whether this was a Lateral Flow Device (LFD) or Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test, and the next 10 full days. If a member of the household starts to display symptoms while self-isolating, they will need to restart the 10 day isolation period and book a test.

If anyone tests positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develop symptoms during the isolation period, they must restart the 10 day isolation period from the day they developed symptoms.

In non-residential settings, if a student displays coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or has a positive test, while at their setting they should avoid using public transport and, wherever possible, be collected by a member of their family or household.

Alternatively, if safe, they should walk, ride, cycle or drive wherever possible. If driving they should try to be the only person in the vehicle, but can share a car with their household or support bubble if necessary. They should open windows, wear a face covering and sit far away from others if sharing a car. They should not use public transport or a taxi or private hire vehicle to return home.

In exceptional circumstances, alternative arrangements may need to be organised by the setting. The local authority may be able to help source a suitable vehicle which would provide appropriate protection for the driver, who must be made aware that the individual has tested positive or is displaying symptoms.

If a student is awaiting collection:

- they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the needs of the student, with appropriate adult supervision if required
- a window should be opened for fresh air ventilation if it is safe to do so
- 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
- personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn by staff caring for the student while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a student with complex needs).

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

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 unless advised to.

If a student in a residential setting shows symptoms, they should initially self-isolate in their residential setting household. Most will benefit from remaining in self-isolation in their residential accommodation so that their usual support can continue. Others will benefit more from self-isolating in their home.

The individual should not use public transport if they are symptomatic. If arranging their return to their family home to isolate, settings should follow advice on transport arrangements in the safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings guidance.

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

Further information is available on how to manage and report confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19).

When an individual has had close contact with someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms

Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms, regardless of whether they are wearing PPE, and all other members of staff or students who have been in close contact with that person, 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 self-isolate immediately and arrange to have a test)
- they are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the Public Health England (PHE) advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated), which is a legal obligation
- they have tested positive from an LFD test as part of a community or worker programme

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 the cleaning of non-healthcare settings.

If you are contacted by NHS Test and Trace, or your local health protection team, and told to self-isolate because you have been a close contact of a positive case, you have a legal obligation to do so.

2. Ensure face coverings are used, in recommended circumstances

We recommend that face coverings should be worn by students when moving around the premises, outside of classrooms, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained.

In addition, we also recommend that face coverings should be worn by adults and students in classrooms, workshops and during activities unless social distancing can be maintained, except where exemptions apply. Face coverings do not need to be worn by students when outdoors on the premises.

This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity, for example during sports lessons and physical activity. More information can be found in the face coverings guidance.

Subject to the roadmap process, as part of step 3, we expect these precautionary measures to no longer be recommended. This would be no earlier than 17 May and will be confirmed with one week's notice.

We recommend that face coverings should be worn by staff and visitors in situations where social distancing is not possible (for example, when moving around in corridors and communal areas), except where exemptions apply.

Transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Those who rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals, are currently exempt from any requirement to wear face coverings at the setting or in public places.

Face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings. They may protect against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in preventing aerosol transmission. In an education setting environment, they are unlikely to offer appropriate protection to the wearer and should only be used after carrying out a risk assessment for the specific situation and should always be cleaned appropriately.

FE providers have duties to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils and students, to support them to access education successfully.

Exemptions

Some individuals are exempt from wearing face coverings. This applies to those who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties
- speak to or provide help to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

The same exemptions will apply in education and childcare settings and you should be sensitive to those needs. Some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Access to face coverings

Due to the increasing use of face coverings in wider society, staff and students are already likely to have access to face coverings. PHE has also published guidance on how to make a simple face covering.

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 has become damp, soiled or unsafe
- have forgotten their face covering

No student should be denied 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 when face coverings are worn within your setting and how they should be removed. You should communicate this process clearly to students, staff and visitors and allow for adjustments to be made for students with SEND who may be distressed if required to remove a face covering against their wishes.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

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

Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn, and the face covering should be replaced carefully. Staff and students may consider bringing a spare face covering to wear if their face covering becomes damp during the day.

You must instruct students 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 (not recycling bin)
- place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them
- wash their hands again

More information is available on preventing and controlling infection including the use of PPE in the guidance on safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings.

3. Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual

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

- when they are at their busiest
- when they start break times
- when they change rooms
- before and after school

Consider how other students and staff will need to wash their hands and incorporate time for this.

Staff working with students who self-unroll/unstuck may want more opportunities to wash their hands than other staff.

Students who use salivas as a sensory stimulant or who struggle with 'catch it, bin it, kill it' may need more opportunities than 'catch it, bin it, kill it'.

Continue to help students who need to wash their hands more frequently.

Frequent and thorough hand cleaning should be regular practice. You should consider:

- whether you have enough hand washing or hand sanitiser stations available so that students and staff can maintain hygiene regularly
- if you need to supervise hand sanitiser use given the risks around ingestion - risks around ingestion are lower than for other products containing alcohol
- building these routines into your plans, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure those with complex needs understand the need to follow them

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

The catch it, bin it, kill it approach continues to be very important. There are enough tissues and bins available to support students and staff to follow this. For those with hand cleaning, you must ensure students with complex needs are helped to get tissues, dispose of them and clean their hands afterwards. This may need extra support.

The Blue Coronavirus (COVID-19) website contains clear messages for students to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Ensure students with complex needs still struggle to maintain as good respiratory hygiene as their peers, for example, those who self-unroll/unstuck or use saliva as a sensory stimulant. Consider how you can support them to follow the same routines. Ensure students and their families understand that there's and is not a reason to deny these students the full education they are entitled to.

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

In line with the risk assessment and planning of the day, put in place and maintain an enhanced cleaning schedule. This should include:

- cleaning frequently touched surfaces often and as used by different groups
- frequently touched surfaces are cleaned more often than usual
- cleaning toilets regularly
- encouraging students to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet
- if your site allows, it allowing different groups their own toilet blocks

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

6. Consider how to minimise contact across the site 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 in your school. Your risk assessment and planning of the day should be informed by a broad and balanced approach.

The overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between students and between students and staff. Contacts between students and staff (1-2m) and through maintaining distance between individuals. These are both important options and both measures will help, but the balance between them will change depending on the:

- student's ability to distance
- age of students
- flexibility of teaching (school groups separate while offering a broad curriculum)

As FE providers are different, and some measures will be more appropriate for certain age groups, or more easily manageable in certain buildings.

How to group students

Where class 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 will need to be put in place to reduce contacts and mixing. It is not the number of students that is a minimum, you must keep your groups as small as possible and distance from each other during the day. You will need to think about whether you can group students in ways that minimise the number of other students they come into contact with. Where this is not requirement to minimise contacts, smaller group sizes are preferable. The contact between different groups, this means that if one person in a group tests positive and all their contacts need to be identified, the number of other students they contact with some of all of that group, rather than the whole year group. Some course considerations you will need to make when reaching your decision.

Once groups are established, they should be kept apart and contact with students in other groups should be minimised as far as is reasonable.

Although grouping helps in the corridor or external areas is low risk, you should avoid creating one-way systems or enhanced one-way systems. You should also consider staggered break times and lunch times (see further for cleaning surfaces in the canteens and kitchens). Consider how you can use your site to support students to maintain contacts such as meetings with more than one group you are otherwise trying to keep apart.

Both the supervision of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all or nothing' options and will likely need to be considered in combination. You may keep students in their groups for most of the time, but also allow mixing into safer activities such as PE (assuming indoor sport and transport. Maintain distance in different groups.

We recognise that some staff will need to move between groups, for example, teachers and teaching assistants. Ensure they are not the only people moving between groups or academic subjects. You should take the minimum number of staff members into different groups where possible. but if they need to teach multiple groups, they should adhere to all other measures. You should also be supporting distance from students around them as much as possible.

Teaching and learning environment measures within rooms and workshops

Maintaining a distance between people which kinds and reducing the amount of time spent in close contact is important. Ensure that students are not sitting in close contact with advice that will contain distance from their students, sharing at the front of the room, or sharing equipment and materials. Consider:

- ideally, staff should maintain 2 metre distance from each other and from students. We know that this is not always possible, particularly where working with small groups or complex needs, or those who need close contact care. Provide educational and care plans for students who need it, and where staff have received training on how to minimise the risk of transmission.

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 roles where groups does not allow. Doing this where you can will help reduce the risk of transmission.

When staff or students cannot maintain distancing, for example, when staff are required to work in close proximity or where there is high use of items such as aprons, gloves, masks and other PPE beyond what is required even when, additional infection measures should be put in place.

Additional mitigation measures

These include:

- increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
- keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
- ensuring that students are not sharing equipment with each other
- seating students side by side rather than face to face, where it is safe to do
- moving unnecessary furniture out of rooms to make more space

Some FE courses, such as vocational training, healthcare related courses and those performing arts may pose particular risks of aerosol, droplet and surface transmission. Ensure you have the additional measures in place. Ensure you have enhanced 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 one-way systems or enhanced one-way systems. Consider staggered break times and lunch times (see further for cleaning surfaces in the canteens and kitchens). Consider how you can use your site to support students to maintain contacts such as meetings with more than one group you are otherwise trying to keep apart.

Ensure students are 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 roles where groups does not allow. Doing this where you can will help reduce the risk of transmission.

Ensure you have the additional measures in place where staff are required to work in close proximity or where there is high use of items such as aprons, gloves, masks and other PPE beyond what is required even when, additional infection measures should be put in place.

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Canteens and kitchens

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Ensure you have the additional measures in place where staff are required to work in close proximity or where there is high use of items such as aprons, gloves, masks and other PPE beyond what is required even when, additional infection measures should be put in place.

Ventilation

Good ventilation reduces the concentration of the virus in the air, which reduces the risks from airborne transmission. This happens when people breathe in small particles (aerosols) in the air contained within the room and droplets that land on surfaces.

When the setting is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and a comfortable temperature is maintained for students and staff.

This can be achieved by a combination of measures including:

- mechanical ventilation systems - these should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible and checked to confirm that their operation meets current guidance and that only fresh outside air is circulated. If possible, ensure that the system is set to 'fresh air' rather than 'recirculation' and operated as normal as long as they are within a single room and operating on an outdoor air supply
- natural ventilation - opening windows (in cooler weather windows should be opened just enough to provide constant background ventilation, and opened more widely during breaks to purge the air in the room). Opening internal doors can also assist with the ventilation of a room
- natural ventilation - if mechanical ventilation opening doors may be an option, but they are not for doors and where safe to do so)

The Health and Safety Executive provides air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and CIBSE coronavirus (COVID-19) advice provides further information.

Tolerance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, consider:

- opening high level windows in cooler weather in preference to low level to reduce draughts
- opening 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 draughts

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

8. Ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary

Face coverings are not mandatory in PPE in educational settings (including in FE), it is used in a limited number of settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks, such as those in healthcare settings, laboratories and manufacturing settings. A face covering is a covering of your face which covers your nose and mouth.

Most staff in FE settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. If a student attends for more intensive care needs that mean they need PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used.

Staff who care for students with COVID-19 may require a very limited number of additional PPE items.

- a student becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, and says then if a carer distance cannot be maintained
- performing aerosol generating procedures (AGP)

When working with students who cough, sneeze or spit but do not have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, only PPE that would be routinely worn should be worn.

The guidance on who should use surgical masks and children's and adult's medical masks provides information on what those presenting and contributing infection. This includes:

- when and how PPE should be used
- what type of PPE to use
- how to source it

9. Promote and engage in asymptomatic testing

Asymptomatic testing

Around 1 in 3 individuals with coronavirus (COVID-19) not display symptoms. Opening testing up to catch these showing no symptoms will help to find positive cases and to break the chain of transmission. Rapid lateral flow tests (LFD) can be used to find people who do not have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and who may be spreading the virus. In some circumstances lateral flow tests can also be used for other diagnostic tests.

The tests are easy to use and give results in 30 minutes. Those who test positive must immediately self-isolate and book a PCR test to confirm the result.

The following provides a logical order for access to rapid lateral flow testing made available to them:

- college students
- staff of colleges
- households, childcare and support bubbles of college students
- households, childcare and support bubbles of staff of colleges

Home testing

Both students and staff will be supplied with LFD test kits to self-swab and test themselves twice a week at home.

You should retain a small on-site capacity in testing site so you can offer testing to those who are unable to undertake testing at home for a range of reasons. Further information about testing available to support this.

Staff and students must report their result to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed, whether it is positive, negative or void. Students should do this with their staff and students should use their home address if they are living away from the college or FE provider to help with contact tracing.

Students aged 18 and over should self-test and report the result, with assistance if needed. Adolescents aged under 17 (and year 12) should self-test and report with adult supervision. The adult may conduct the test if necessary.

Staff students with a positive LFD test result will need to self-isolate in line with the NHS Test and Trace guidance and book a follow-up PCR test to confirm the result. If the PCR test is negative, the individual can end self-isolation. If the PCR test is positive, the individual must self-isolate and the LFD test result can continue to attend college or their FE provider and use protective measures.

Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged.

Testing in independent training providers (ITPs) and adult and community learning providers (ACLs)

Staff in ITPs and ACLs can access to home testing kits through the coronavirus (COVID-19) testing offer. Staff should follow the same guidance as those in FE and that staff and students may use test kits based a week.

A kick has been shared with providers, to access guidance and support materials.

Testing in schools

- guidance to support testing for staff and students, including a 'how to guide'
- in-depth information and videos on how to self-test from home
- a training video
- a webinar recordings
- posters and letter templates for you to use for your students, parents and staff members
- Frequently asked questions

If you do not have access to this document sharing platform, contact the DfE coronavirus (COVID-19) helpline on 0800 046 8687.

Specialist settings

We recognise specialist settings will have additional considerations to take into account when delivering asymptomatic testing. We recognise that self-swabbing may cause significant concerns for some students with SEND.

See the additional guidance on asymptomatic testing in specialist settings for more information.

Testing is voluntary and student will be tested unless informed consent has been given by the appropriate person.

Symptomatic testing

Home testing and testing programme does not replace the current testing arrangements for those with symptoms. Anyone with symptoms (even if they recently had a negative PCR test result), should still self-isolate immediately according to government guidelines.

Those with symptoms are also expected to order a test online or visit a test site to undertake a lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to check if they have the virus.

It remains imperative that the contact of cases is undertaken by local authorities and their local health protection teams (HPTs) to ensure that those who need to self-isolate do so in addition to supporting leaders to maintain the continuity of education through the pandemic.

10. Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process

Staff members, students, parents and carers will need to:

- book a test if they or their child has symptoms - the main symptoms are
  - a high temperature
  - a new continuous cough
  - a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- self-isolate immediately and not come to the setting if
  - they have symptoms
  - they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - they are notified by the test and trace system or childcare bubble develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - they are required to do so having receive a letter from certain other courtesy organisations, such as the Department for Work and Pensions, the local authority or public health teams, which is a legal obligation
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with, if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) through NHS Test and Trace

Booking a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test through HPT

Staff members, students, parents and carers should book a test and should get a test. Tests for asymptomatic Sonus can be booked through the Department for Health and Social Care tests for coronavirus (COVID-19) 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, including those in supporting roles, should be prioritised in accessing a coronavirus test when they are symptomatic.

Any student can be tested if they have symptoms.

Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) for symptomatic testing

Separate to the asymptomatic testing regime, all FE providers were sent an initial allocation of PCR tests to use for those who are symptomatic. This is in line with the current arrangements for those who are testing at another through the public pillar. You should call the NHS Test and Trace helpline on 119 if the kits that you have ordered have not arrived.

Having a test at a testing site will deliver the fastest results for symptomatic cases. Home PCR tests are available for those who are symptomatic and cannot attend a local testing site, including those who are self-isolating and those who may have difficulty accessing testing elsewhere.

You will need to decide how to prioritise the distribution of your test kits.

These kits can be given directly to:

- staff
- parents or carers collecting a student who has developed symptoms on site

These PCR tests kits will also help ensure that symptomatic staff can get a test if they test negative. Step can return to work as soon as they are able and no longer have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Further information on asymptomatic testing in secondary schools and colleges is available.

Ask parents, students and staff to inform you what their result was as soon as they get their results.

NHS COVID-19 app

The app is available to anyone aged 16 and over to download if they choose. For some students and young people in FE with SEND, parents will need to decide whether access of the app is appropriate.

Staff members are also able to use the app.

The guidance for schools and further education colleges is prepared provides information about the app series and guidance for its use.

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

You must liaise with public when also assess cases that someone who has attended your premises or has breached an obligatory college transport has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). Public Health England (PHE) and local authorities (Local Public Health England (PHE) can delivery by the NHS Business Services Authority. This can be reached by calling the DfE helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 followed by option 3. Public Health England (PHE) will work with you to ensure that a team of persons who will inform you what action is needed based on the case and your circumstances.

The advice service will carry out a rapid risk assessment to confirm who has been in close contact with the person testing the positive that they will need to take the actions they are asked to self-isolate. If, following triage, further expert advice is required the advisor will escalate your case to the PHE local health protection team.

The advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) will work with you to ensure that the information is shared with the local health protection team and local authorities, ensure public health is informed and that any actions required are tested positive, advising them to self-isolate immediately are for the next 10 days from the date of the test. The advice service will also ensure that any other actions that are required for an individual to self-isolate if they have been told to do so by NHS Test and Trace.

A risk assessment may be undertaken to determine this, but a close contact can be anyone who:

- lives in the same household as someone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)
- has had any of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) from 2 days before
  - face-to-face contact including being in a room or having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
  - spent a total of 15 minutes or more in a longer without face-to-face contact
  - been within 2 metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one off contact, or added up together over one day)
  - travelled in the same vehicle or a plane

If someone who uses transport feels positive, the assessment is likely to take account of factors such as:

- vehicle size
- the type of journey conducted
- length of time in close proximity
- whether a person concern in a driver

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, as mentioned above, you should have ready to share information about the class or bubble in question to anyone using contained or close contact such as Sonus. This will be proportionate recording processes. You do not need to ask students to record anyone they have been in contact with during the course of their day unless they are a member of a clearly bubble/cohort.

A template letter will be provided to you, on the advice of the advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated) to inform those who need to self-isolate. This will include the reasons for their isolation, a definition of contact and instructions on what actions essential to protect others.

Household members of those who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the student or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). In this case, their public health protection team, in which case they must self-isolate, in line with obligation. If someone in a group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms and tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) during the self-isolation period, they should follow guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

They should get a test, and:

- if someone who is self-isolating because they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) develops symptoms and gets a test for coronavirus (COVID-19) themselves, and the test returns a negative result, they must remain in isolation for the remainder of the 10 days from the day of the last contact they had with the person who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), because they may still develop the symptoms later in the incubation period.
- if the test result is positive, they should inform their setting immediately, and must continue to self-isolate for 10 days from the date of their test. Household members should self-isolate from the day the individual in their household first develops symptoms and the next 14 full days. 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 someone returns to your setting after they have been asked to self-isolate.

The local public health teams will also contact you directly if they become aware that someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) attended your setting, as identifying NHS Test and Trace or PHE local health protection teams.

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

Reporting actual or suspected cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) through the education setting status form (colleges and special post-16 institutions only)

Monitoring attendance

Use the form on Sets to submit the educational setting status form for more information.

The data you supply helps the government monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on colleges.

Test and Trace Support Payments

The DfE will send some students who are eligible for a one-off Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 a week to their college or FE provider.

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

Payment of £500. This is payable in one lump sum from your local authority.

To be eligible for a Test and Trace Support Payment, you must:

- be on a low income
- be unable to work from home
- be at risk of losing income as a result of self-isolating
- be living in England
- meet the eligibility criteria
- have been formally advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, who will provide you with an NHS Test and Trace Account ID

The Department for Health and Social Care has launched a self-isolation service hub (020 3743 6715). The phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, allowing an FE provider to provide contact details of those individuals who have been asked to self-isolate and are likely to be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary payment.

By providing these details, close contacts of positive cases identified at the setting will be formally advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and provided with an NHS Test and Trace Account ID. Individuals who have not been formally advised to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace will not receive an NHS Test and Trace Account ID and will not be able to claim from the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme.

In order for any of your staff or students who may be eligible for a payment from the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme to be able to claim, you must follow these steps.

1. Ensure that you collate a list of appropriate close contacts for the person who has tested positive within your establishment and inform these close contacts that they now need to self-isolate.
2. Call the service hub on 020 3743 6715 as soon as you have the eight-digit NHS Test and Trace Account ID (sometimes referred to as a CTAS number) of the person who has tested positive.
3. Provide the details of the person who has tested positive, along with the details of the relevant close contacts you have identified. If you do not have NHS Test and Trace Account ID for the person who has tested positive, Hub staff will assist in tracing the person in order to register their contacts on the Test and Trace system (CTAS).
4. NHS Test and Trace will then contact individuals to formally advise them of their need to self-isolate and provide them with an NHS Test and Trace Account ID.
5. Following this, individuals who are employed or self-employed, on a low income, unable to work from home and losing income, as a result, may qualify for the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme through their local authority.

12. Contain any outbreak by following PHE 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 should call the dedicated advice service who will escalate the issue to your local health protection team where necessary and advise if any additional action is required. You can reach them 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.

In some cases, health protection teams may recommend that a larger number of other students self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure. This could be the whole site, class or year group.

If you are implementing the system of controls, addressing any issues you have identified and therefore reducing transmission risks, whole site closure will not generally be necessary. You should not consider closing except on the advice of health protection teams.

Admitting students and staff back to the setting

The student or staff member who tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) can return to their normal routine and stop self-isolating after they have finished their isolation period and their symptoms have gone or if they continue to have only a residual cough or anosmia. This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. If they still have a high temperature after 10 days or are otherwise unwell, you should advise them to stay at home and seek medical advice.

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.

In the vast majority of cases, the student, parents and carers will be in agreement that those with symptoms should not attend the setting, given the potential risk to others. In the event that a parent or carer insists on a student attending your setting, you can take the decision to refuse the student if, in your reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect your students and staff from possible infection with coronavirus (COVID-19). Your decision would need to be carefully considered in light of all the circumstances and current public health advice.

Site safety and estates

Site safety

You should take account of public health guidance on staying safe outside one's home and in public spaces.

If you deliver higher education provision in your setting you should also read the higher education coronavirus (COVID-19) operational guidance.

Estates

You should look to maximise the use of your 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.

Performing arts

This section will 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 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 avoid delivering in-person teaching and assessment during the national or local restrictions where possible or 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

You should not host any performances with an audience until stage 3 of the performing arts roadmap. See the guidance on working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in the performing arts for more information.

Consider alternatives such as live streaming and recording performances, subject to the usual safeguarding considerations and permission.

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:

- guidance on working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in the performing arts
- suggested principles for safer singing

Until the relevant stage in the performing arts roadmap, routine 2 metre social distancing should be maintained.

Until the relevant stage in the performing arts roadmap, 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 advises that if the activity is face-to-face and without mitigating actions, 2 metre distance 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

Extra-curricular provision

Since 8 March, extra-curricular activities, including wraparound provision was made available:

- to vulnerable students regardless of circumstance
- for all students where the provision either:
  - supports and is related to the student's education and training provision (including catch-up provision), or
  - is part of the student's efforts to obtain a regulated qualification or meet the entry requirements of an education institution
- to students aged under 18 where the use of the provision is reasonably necessary to:
  - support their parents or carers to work
  - seek work
  - undertake education or training
  - attend a medical appointment
  - address a medical need or attend a support group

Further information can be found in the guidance on other out-of-school settings.

Extra-curricular provision which supports a student's achievement in their main programme of study or future course of study or job is considered as part of a student's education and training provision, and therefore is not subject to age restrictions. For example, provision that contributes to essential life skills training, preparing for work, catch up learning or helps a student build life skills.

From 29 March, extra-curricular activities and wraparound provision is available outdoors, without restrictions on the purpose for which they may attend, to students who were aged under 18 on 31 August 2020.

Where extra-curricular or wrap-around provision is formally organised, outdoor sports or physical activity students aged 18 or over may also attend. Indoor sports and physical activity for students aged 18 and over is not permitted unless they are a vulnerable student, it is part of their education and training or is part of the student's efforts to obtain a regulated qualification or meet the entry requirements of an education institution.

From step 2 and no earlier than 12 April, students aged under 18 (or who turn 18 this academic year) can participate in indoor extra-curricular activity but the same care should be taken to implement the system of controls and in line with government guidance on sport and physical activity. Where indoor facilities are permitted to be open, such as gyms, students aged 18 and over participating in extra-curricular activity will need to adhere to social contact rules in place at the time, for example, individually or within household groups.

All students will need to adhere to social contact rules when accessing indoor facilities where the sport is not formally organised see the guidance on understanding organised sport for more information.

From step 3 and no earlier than 17 May, students can access indoor or outdoor extra-curricular provision, including sport and physical activity.

Physical activity and sports

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

Organised indoor and outdoor sport continues to be permitted where it is part of education or training provision for students.

Disability sports provision and disabled students participation in sports provision continues to be permitted.

In addition, all other formally organised outdoor sport is permitted from 29 March, including competition between different colleges.

No earlier than 12 April, and in line with wider easing of national restrictions, all students may begin to use indoor sports and leisure facilities for purposes not related to education and training but will need to adhere to social distancing restrictions for example, individually or within household groups.

Indoor competition between different FE providers should not take place until indoor wider grassroots sport is permitted for the relevant age group.

Residential students who stay in residential accommodation provided by you overnight, during the week and at weekends, may whilst staying in their education accommodation use on-site indoor and outdoor facilities and amenities (for example film rooms, swimming pools, gyms, golf, tennis courts and 3G pitches) outside of timetabled lessons.

Outdoor recreational and social activity should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not. You should:

- maximise distancing between consistent student household groups
- pay scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene
- use maximum fresh air ventilation through either opening doors and windows or ventilation systems

Student residential groups should not mix whilst using college facilities.

Further detail on national current restrictions in place for sport and physical activity can be found in the guidance on grassroot sports for public and sport providers.

You have the flexibility to decide how sport and physical activity will be provided while following the measures in your system of controls. Students should be kept in consistent groups and sports equipment thoroughly cleaned between each use by different individual groups. You can hold sports and activity lessons indoors, including those that involve activities related to team sports, for example practising specific techniques, within your own system of controls.

For sport provision, outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not. You should:

- maximise natural ventilation flows (through opening windows and doors or using air conditioning systems wherever possible)
- ensure there is distancing between students
- pay scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene

This is particularly important in a sport setting because of the way in which people breathe during exercise.

External facilities can also be used in line with government guidance for the use of, and travel to and from, those facilities. You should only consider team sports:

- whose national governing bodies have developed guidance under the principles of the government's guidance on team sport
- which have been approved by the government such as sports on the list for safe provision including team sport, contact combat sport and organised sport events

Refer to:

- national lockdown guidance
- guidance on grassroot sports for public and sport providers, safe provision and facilities, and guidance from Sport England
- advice from organisations such as the Association for Physical Education and the Youth Sport Trust
- guidance from Swim England on returning to pools
- guidance on using changing rooms safely

You can work with external coaches, clubs and organisations for curricular and extra-curricular activities, where these are permitted. You must be satisfied that it is safe to do.

Education and training delivery

What we expect of FE providers

From 8 March, on-site delivery resumed, allowing students of all ages to benefit from their education and training in full. This means we expect you to:

- fully deliver planned hours for students of all ages including those with SEND (with or without an EHC plan)
- ensure that on-site delivery resumes - this may be supplemented by high-quality remote delivery recognising that some providers delivered aspects of provision remotely prior to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- subject to testing, ensure that students spend significant time on-site prior to Easter, and from the start of the summer term move back to the normal balance of delivery, including all 16 to 19 students spending time on-site every week

Mode of delivery

While FE providers have been highly successful in delivering remote education during the pandemic, we know that remote education is not a full replacement for on-site education. Remote education, however well delivered, cannot replicate the building of relationships between students and teachers nor the close supervision and hands-on training vital to developing vocational competence. Ofsted has also found in their interim visits during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that some students have struggled to engage with remote education and have suffered from feelings of isolation at home, impacting their mental health.

Therefore, whilst FE providers should build on the significant strides made during the pandemic in remote delivery and the wider use of technology in education, on-site delivery should once again become the primary mode of delivery, with all 16 to 19 students benefiting from on-site education every week. Any FE providers operating a 'week on, week off' rota for face-to-face learning should move as quickly as possible to all students having time on-site every week.

The following guidelines seek to encourage providers to maximise the ability for learners to receive face-to-face education whilst also ensuring that innovation in digital learning can continue to be capitalised on where remote provision is high quality, meets students' needs, is proportionate and complements face-to-face delivery:

- on-site delivery should count for the large 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)
- where there are elements of remote delivery, providers should:
  - ensure they enhance the overall quality of education and are designed to add educational value to a course.
  - meet the expectations set out in remote and blended education expectations

Adult students have always been offered a wider variety of delivery models in comparison to 16 to 19 year olds. You should continue to judge the right balance between on-site and remote delivery for adult students in order to provide high-quality education and training.

Remote and blended education expectations

If you deliver aspects of your curriculum remotely, you should ensure you meet the following expectations.

Expectations on participation

Set clear expectations of students concerning their participation in the remote elements of their programme, so they know when and how they are expected to engage and demonstrate their learning.

Live teaching

As far as possible provide live online teaching. This is advised because Ofsted and many providers found during the first lockdown that learners generally prefer interactive 'live' online lessons and that it results in greater engagement. Alternatives to live lessons may include recorded lessons.

Feedback and assessment

Confirm with students the different ways in which they will receive individual assessment and feedback when learning remotely to support their progression. The nature and frequency of remote assessment and feedback should reflect the individual need and the courses they are enrolled on.

It should be at least:

- once every week for academic study programmes
- fortnightly if undertaking technical or applied general study programmes

Monitoring attendance

Have systems in place to:

- check, at least weekly, for persistent non-attendance or lack of engagement with remote education
- quickly agree ways in which attendance and participation can be improved

When opting for blended delivery, you should teach planned and well sequenced education and training programmes to give students the best chance to build their knowledge and skills. You should also ensure that fundamental principles of effective face-to-face teaching are deployed in the delivery of remote education, for example:

- providing frequent, clear explanations of new content, delivered by a teacher or through high-quality curriculum resources
- providing opportunities for interactivity and intentional dialogue, including questioning, eliciting and reflective discussion
- enabling students to receive timely and frequent feedback on how to progress, using digitally facilitated or whole-class feedback where appropriate
- using assessment to ensure teaching is responsive to students' needs

You should give particular consideration on how best to support vulnerable and disadvantaged students and students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We recognise that some students with SEND may not be able to access remote education without support and so expect FE providers to work with families to deliver an ambitious curriculum for their level of need.

You should have a named senior leader with overarching responsibility for the quality and delivery of remote education, who should ensure that provision meets the expectations for remote education.

Full and short inspections by Ofsted remain suspended for the time being. Ofsted continue to carry out progress monitoring visits remotely, and will shortly confirm arrangements for the summer term. As set out in the FE and skills inspection handbook all publicly funded provision is in scope for an inspection regardless of the mode of delivery deployed, for example face-to-face, remote or online, or blended learning. Inspectors may visit any sessions involving learners either on-site, or at other locations, including online.

Provision of remote learning to students unable to attend on-site for coronavirus (COVID-19) related reasons

For students unable to attend on-site for coronavirus (COVID-19) related reasons, for example, because they need to self-isolate or are shielding, we expect you to provide remote education to minimise disruption to their learning.

While students are unable to attend on-site, you should use your best endeavours to deliver as much of students' planned hours as possible and meet the expectations set out above concerning participation, live teaching, feedback, assessment, attendance and engagement.

We recognise that for some students the full delivery of planned hours 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.

Publication of remote education offers

So that students (and parents of students aged 19 and below) know what to expect of you if they need to learn remotely, you should set out details of your remote education offer on your website.

Your offer could include:

- what remote education is available for different learner cohorts (14 to 16, 16 to 19, apprentices, adult learners)
- delivery arrangements, such as timetabling, assessment and use of digital platforms, sometimes referred to as virtual learning environments
- 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 who may not be able to access remote education without support

Contingency planning

For individuals or groups of self-isolating students and student who are shielding following government guidance related to coronavirus (COVID-19), remote education plans should be in place.

You should continue to operate as normally as possible. In the event that restrictions in education are needed to help contain the spread of the virus, you may be asked to revise your delivery models for a short period of time. To help with this, we have published a contingency framework, which outlines how you should operate in the event of any restrictions.

Any decision that there should be local restrictions in any education settings will be made by central government on a case-by-case basis.

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

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

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, contact your ESFA territorial lead or caseload manager.

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.

may need to be implemented quickly.

Decisions to restrict on-site delivery for operational reasons

We recognise that providers may have operational reasons where for a short period of time, the level of on-site learning for 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 significantly reduce on-site delivery, contact your ESFA territorial leads or caseload managers. You should do this before communicating any decision, so they can understand the position and discuss the mitigations you are putting in place.

Examples of circumstances in which providers may find it necessary to make adjustments

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.

Support for students who are unable to access remote digital education

The get help with technology service is providing support with devices and connectivity for 16 to 19 year olds. This forms part of a £400 million investment to help children and young people continue their education at home and access online social care services.

Although the majority of students are now expected to return to on-site education, this offer may continue to be important for students who, for example, need to self-isolate or shield during this period.

You are eligible to receive devices where you have students:

- aged 16 to 19 who are in receipt of free meals
- aged 19 and over with an EHC plan who are also in receipt of free meals

Eligible providers were invited to order devices in January 2021. Any provider who has students in receipt of free meals and who has not received an invitation to order devices can email covid.technology@education.gov.uk.

Allocation of devices have been based on estimates of the number of:

- students in receipt of free meals in FE aged 16 to 19 and those over 19 with an EHC plan where they are also in receipt of free meals in FE
- devices that providers already own

You can state a preference for the types of device you will receive, based on the 4 types of device available and subject to availability.

Ownership of laptops and tablets provided under this scheme rests with FE providers. You may lend these to the young people who need them the most. These devices must only be used for publicly funded students aged 16 to 19 and aged 19 and over with an education, health and care plan.

FE providers eligible to receive devices can also receive connectivity support for financially disadvantaged students who do not have broadband at home.

The majority of mobile networks have now extended their free data uplift offer to students aged 16 to 19 and those aged 19 to 25 with an EHC plan. You can visit the get help with technology service to check which network providers are supporting requests for free data uplifts for students in further education. Providers can request free data for financially disadvantaged 16 to 19 year olds and those aged 19 to 25 with an EHC plan who:

- do not have fixed broadband at home
- cannot afford additional data for their devices
- are experiencing disruption to face-to-face education

Requests must be made by someone who has been nominated to order devices through the get help with technology service.

You will need to submit student's mobile information through our online service. There is an online guide to collecting mobile information.

If you have any questions, please email COVID.TECHNOLOGY@education.gov.uk using the subject line 'Increasing data allowances'.

If increasing mobile data is not a suitable option for some young people, or if a request for additional data is unsuccessful, you can also request 4G wireless routers through the get help with technology service.

You can also continue to use the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund to provide 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.

For adults aged 19 and over we introduced a change to the Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding rules for the 2020 to 2021 academic year. This enables you to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices or internet access for disadvantaged students to help them meet technology 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. This flexibility is only for providers funded by ESFA. In areas where the AEB budget is devolved, contact the relevant mayoral combined authority or Greater London Authority concerning adult student support arrangements.

Support for high-quality remote and blended education

Get help with remote education service

Get help with remote education provides:

- guidance for teachers and leaders seeking help with delivering remote education
- help to access technology to support remote education
- peer-to-peer training and guidance on how to use technology effectively
- links to practical tools, a good practice guide and provider-led webinars to support effective remote delivery

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 students 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 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.

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.

Through the college collaboration fund, we have funded college partnerships that have produced resources to support the development of teachers' digital skills and confidence in delivering remote learning. These can be accessed via resources: college collaboration fund.

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 has launched a skills development hub which provides free learning resources across a range of vocational areas for use with students and apprentices remotely and in the classroom.

Through the college collaboration fund, we have funded 7 college partnerships to produce free, high-quality digital content and resources for the FE sector. The content is suitable for use through multiple types of learning platforms. As of 16 March, 406 learning objects and resources covering a range of vocational subjects, PSHE, English and maths have been published. These can be accessed via the get help with remote education service.

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

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

We advise you to work with your local transport authority to identify when it might be necessary 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 students in their region.

Dedicated FE and skills provider transport

Students on dedicated transport services do not mix with the general public on those journeys and generally carry the same group of students on a regular basis. This helps limit the number of other people with whom they come into contact and therefore the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) are likely to be lower.

Local authorities are not required to uniformly apply the social distancing guidelines for public transport on dedicated FE transport. However, social distancing should still be put in place within vehicles where possible. This will help:

- minimise disease transmission risks
- 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 may include:

- coaches regularly picking up the same students each day
- minibuses
- services that are consistently used by different groups of students on different specified days
- services for students with SEND

The 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 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. 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. Students' use of public transport should be kept to an absolute minimum, particularly in peak times.

Where possible:

- consider staggered start times
- encourage students and staff to walk or cycle where possible
- refer students and staff using public transport to the safer travel guidance for passengers
- remind students and staff that it is the law that they wear a face covering when travelling in England on public transport unless they are exempt from wearing face coverings

Work with your local authority to:

- consider alternative safe transport arrangements where you have concerns about students' ability to access public transport
- 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.

People are more likely to follow guidance on how to behave if:

- they understand the reasons they are asked to take certain actions
- it is co-produced with the staff and students who will be affected by it

You should develop guidance to promote safe behaviour in the wider community with local community leaders as well as staff and students. You can encourage student organisations 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 based on the system of controls. A record should be kept of all visitors with sufficient detail to support rapid contact tracing if required by NHS Test and Trace.

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 recognise the significant benefits of educational visits for educational development as well as mental health and wellbeing and are taking steps to unlock visits in line with the roadmap.

The government's roadmap is driven by data, not dates. The government will only move from one step to the next when it is safe to do so and based on 4 tests in the COVID-19 response - spring 2021.

For that reason, all dates are indicative and subject to change. This advice has now been updated to reflect the Prime Minister's announcement regarding step 2. Advice will continue to be updated in line with the roadmap.

Educational day visits

In line with the roadmap, you can resume educational day visits from 12 April.

Any educational day visits must be conducted in line with relevant COVID-secure guidelines in place at that time, such as maintaining consistent groups, and the COVID-secure measures in place at the destination.

You should undertake full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they can be done safely. As part of this risk assessment, you will need to:

- consider what control measures need to be used
- ensure you are aware of wider advice on visiting indoor and outdoor venues
- consult the health and safety guidance when considering visits

Domestic residential educational visits

In line with the roadmap, the department is advising against domestic residential educational visits until step 3 and no earlier than 17 May 2021.

Existing bookings

Should step 3 commence as planned, domestic residential education visits that are already booked may go ahead at step 3 and no earlier than 17 May 2021. Any domestic residential educational visits must be conducted in line with relevant COVID-secure guidance in place at that time.

New bookings

You can plan for new domestic residential educational visits. Should step 3 commence as planned no earlier than 17 May 2021.

You are advised not to enter into any new financial or contractual commitments at this stage. This advice will remain under review and updated at the earliest opportunity.

Any new domestic residential educational visits must be conducted in line with relevant COVID-secure guidance and coronavirus (COVID-19) regulations in place at that time.

We are working with Public Health England and the sector on what coronavirus (COVID-19) safe residential visits will look like at step 3. We will provide further advice.

International Visits

The Global Travel Taskforce has been commissioned to set out how to facilitate a return to international travel as soon as possible while managing the risk from imported variants of concern. It is due to report on 12 April 2021. This advice will be updated following the publication of the report.

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

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff were advised not to attend the workplace, until 31 March. From 1 April CEV individuals are no longer advised to shield but must continue to follow the rules in place for everyone under the current national restrictions. CEV staff who were previously shielding can now attend the workplace, where they are unable to work from home. There is guidance for everyone in this group. It provides advice on what additional measures individuals in this group can take.

Employers should talk to their staff about how they will be supported, including working from home where possible.

You may wish to continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms. Those living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable can still attend work where home-working is not possible.

The shielding guidance is reviewed regularly. CEV individuals will be advised in advance of any extension or end date to inform them of changes or continuation of the guidance.

Staff who are clinically vulnerable

Clinically vulnerable staff can attend 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

You will need to follow the specific guidance for pregnant employees because pregnant women are considered clinically vulnerable. In some cases, pregnant women may also have other health conditions that mean they are considered CEV, where the advice for clinically extremely vulnerable staff will apply. COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding contains vaccination advice.

Your workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers. If you are notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding, or has given birth within the last 6 months, you should check the workplace risk assessment to see if any new risks have arisen. An assessment may help identify any additional action that needs to be taken to mitigate risks.

Any risks identified at that point, or later during the pregnancy, in the first 6 months after birth, or while the employee is still breastfeeding, must be included and managed as part of the general workplace risk assessment. You must take appropriate sensible action to reduce, remove or control the risks.

As part of your risk assessment, you should consider whether adapting duties or facilitating home working may be appropriate to mitigate risks.

You should be aware that pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation, or with underlying health conditions at any point of gestation, may be at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19). This is also the case for pregnant women with underlying health conditions that place them at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19).

We recommend that you follow the same principles for pregnant students, in line with your wider health and safety obligations.

Read more guidance and advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) and pregnancy from the Royal College of Gynaecologists.

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 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

We strongly encourage you to continue delivering initial teacher education (ITE) including hosting initial teacher training in education trainees during any type of restrictions. ITE trainees are included in the definition of a critical worker. This means that trainees can continue:

- with their qualifications
- to go into their provider on placement

Trainees who continue to go into their host provider should be offered coronavirus (COVID-19) testing in the same way as the wider staff.

Trainees can also support in other ways, including supporting remote education, developing lesson materials and offering pastoral support. ITE providers should continue to provide theoretical input for trainees that enables them to deliver education using a range of different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. This should enable them to provide high quality learning through a range of different methods and approaches.

Where you are hosting placements ITE providers may be able to give extra support to host trainees at this time. You should contact relevant ITE providers directly to discuss what support is available. Trainees will be expected to follow your control measures.

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 attending, you may need extra systems in place to support staff wellbeing. Read about the extra mental health support for pupils and teachers.

Supporting vulnerable students

Vulnerable students are those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including students 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

- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers of local authorities (including children's social care services) - this includes:
  - students on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services
  - adopted children
  - those at risk of becoming 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, including students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

During any restrictions to in-person education delivery, you will remain open to vulnerable students, including vulnerable adult students such as adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. Vulnerable students are strongly encouraged to attend on-site provision. In particular, young people with a social worker or EHC plans are expected to attend provision (subject to public health advice), because of their safeguarding and welfare needs.

If vulnerable students do not attend, you should:

- work together with the local authority and social worker (where applicable) to follow up with the parent or carer to explore the reason for absence and discuss their concerns
- work closely with other professionals, where appropriate, to support attendance
- notify the student's social worker, if they have one, particularly where the social worker (where applicable) agrees that the student's attendance would be appropriate

If the vulnerable student wishes to be absent from face-to-face education during local or national restrictions, they should let their setting know. The young person should not be included in the coronavirus (COVID-19) attendance monitoring data as 'expected to attend'. Further guidance is available on how to complete the educational setting status form.

Where you have had to close, you should inform the local authority to discuss alternative arrangements for vulnerable students and work towards reopening as soon as possible.

You should work collaboratively with other education providers and local partners to maximise opportunities for face-to-face provision for vulnerable students. This includes:

- the local authority
- social workers
- police
- youth services
- key workers

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.

Students who are clinically extremely vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable students were advised to not attend their FE provision, until 31 March. From 1 April, all CEV students should attend their college unless they are one of the very small number of students under paediatric or other specialist care and have been advised by their GP or clinician not to attend.

Where a student is unable to attend education because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we expect you to offer them access to remote education.

Students who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves should still attend their educational setting if eligible for face-to-face education.

Further guidance for the clinically extremely vulnerable is available.

Clinically vulnerable students

Clinically vulnerable students can attend their setting.

Supporting students with special education needs (SEND)

Special post-16 institutions

From 8 March we expect that every 16 to 19 student (or 19 to 25 with an EHC plan) undertakes the majority of their planned hours on site. Special post-16 institutions should continue to allow students to attend as per their usual timetable.

Where a young person at a special post-16 institution or their parent or legal guardian has decided that they will not attend their education setting, the education provider should keep a record of how the decision on attendance was made. Further information is available on how to complete the educational setting status form.

You may encounter instances where you cannot provide your usual interventions and provision at adequate staffing ratios, or with staff with vital specialist training. You may need to alter the way in which you deploy your staff and use existing teaching and support staff more flexibly. If having pursued all the immediate options available, you still have concerns about staffing capacity, you should talk to your local authority. You should continue to work collaboratively with families to agree on an approach that is in the young person's best interests.

Supporting students with SEND to attend college

Many students will have found restrictions exceptionally difficult socially and emotionally.

Speak to the student 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. Reasonable adjustments should be provided to support a disabled young person to access education successfully.

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.

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 engage with them and their representatives to understand their needs 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.

Wellbeing for Education Return is intended to help local areas to support schools and colleges promote wellbeing and good mental health, responding to the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19). The £8 million initiative comprises training materials and funding for local experts to support the delivery of training and resources into all schools and colleges in each local area, and ongoing support, until the end of March 2021.

In recognition of the significant pressures on your staff, local areas are tailoring their support, and offering interactive training sessions on key themes to support the mental health and wellbeing of staff and pupils in response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

The training will give staff increased confidence to support their colleagues, young people, and local knowledge so that they know how and where to access appropriate specialist support where needed.

Wellbeing for Education Return resources are available for education staff who do not have access to locally adapted training and support or to supplement existing local offers. These include a short, recorded webinar - Every interaction matters. It introduces a simple framework for promoting wellbeing, resilience and mental health, building on education staff's existing roles, skills and personal qualities. It is intended for use by education leaders with all staff in staff or INSET sessions, or for education staff to work through individually. This sits alongside the original Wellbeing for Education Return content covering issues such as bereavement, loss, anxiety, stress and trauma and signposting to free information and resources for education staff, young people, parents and carers.

The Department for Education, Public Health England and NHS England also hosted a webinar for school and FE providers staff to set out how to support returning pupils and students.

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
- the Digital Wellbeing of Students guide from Jisc, which curates a number of resources and guides
- the Samaritans' website which provides guidance on how to prepare for and respond to a suspected suicide in FE colleges
- resources to support student and staff mental health and wellbeing produced by college partnerships funded through the college collaboration fund

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 (PSHE) 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 you have any students travelling from or through a red list country please follow the quarantine arrangements for boarding school students from red list countries which also covers FE 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 can read the NHS guidance on how to prevent germs from spreading.

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 student with symptoms gets a test and the result is positive:

- contact the PHE 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 and 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.

International students

If you have any international students, aged 18 or over, please follow the guidance higher education providers: coronavirus (COVID-19). This applies to international students in FE too.

Funding, assessment and accountability

We have issued the 16 to 19 funding regulations and funding rates and formula 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 the academic year 2020 to 2021 to:

- help mitigate the disruption to learning arising from coronavirus (COVID-19)
- support students to catch up

The funding is provided to support small group tuition for 16 to 19 students in English, maths, or other elements of technical or academic study programmes to help address gaps in knowledge required for 16 to 19 qualifications.

We have issued guidance on how the funding should be used and allocations have been made.

A further round of funding is available for the academic year 2021 to 2022 and details will be announced in due course.

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.

You must make sure virtual or distance learning elements of the study programme are planned, timetabled and organised. 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. 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.

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.

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).

16 to 19 funded providers with a free meals in FE allocation will be able to apply to ESFA for retrospective additional funding (up to £3.50 per eligible student per week) for the latest period of attendance restrictions, 4 January to 5 March 2021.

Institutions will need to submit a funding claim to ESFA for consideration to apply for additional funding if they meet the criteria. Funding claims must be for meal costs that could not be serviced from existing free meals in FE or 16 to 19 discretionary bursary allocations. More information can be found in the free meals in further education guide.

The claims window will open in April 2021 and further details about how to claim will be added to the free meals guide shortly.

On 8 March, students returned to their 16 to 19 providers and normal free meals in FE arrangements apply. However, where students eligible for free meals are self-isolating at home, institutions should seek to ensure they continue to be supported for the short period where they are unable to attend in person. To support the transition back, institutions who are providing lunch parcels only for eligible free meals students who are self-isolating, will continue to be able to claim for additional funding. This is in line with the criteria set out in the guide up until the Easter break, no later than week ending 2 April.

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

Local authorities have received 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 food and essential utility costs.

Funding claims and reconciliation

Information is available 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) (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Tees Valley, North of Tyne, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, West Midlands, East of England) and 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
- allocating the AEB to providers
- considering any provider flexibilities in their areas

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

ESFA AEB grant funded providers

For 2019 to 2020, we:

- introduced an end of year reconciliation process which lowered the threshold for reconciliation to be in line with providers' average delivery (68%)
- operated a business case process for providers which delivered below 68%, where they considered there were extenuating circumstances related to their under-delivery

This achieved a balance between maintaining provider stability whilst ensuring the proper use of public funds through an approach that was fair, open and transparent. Full details were given in 2019 to 2020 funding claim guidance.

In view of the ongoing impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), we have reviewed the end of year reconciliation position for 2020 to 2021. Changes to the published arrangements have been communicated in ESFA update.

Traineeships

As part of the Plan for Jobs, the Chancellor announced a significant expansion of traineeships to help an increased number of young people to prepare for and find work. The traineeships framework for delivery sets out these reforms.

Whilst these reforms enable providers to deliver a more flexible and tailored programme during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, training and assessment should happen remotely wherever possible during periods of local or national restrictions.

Supported Internships and Access to Work

Supported internships are structured study programmes based primarily at an

employer. During periods of local or national restrictions, placements should happen remotely wherever possible. The young people can continue to attend COVID-secure settings for work placements where they, the learning provider and the employer all agree this is necessary.

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 are unable to attend their work placements due to coronavirus (COVID-19) can apply for Access to Work funding until 31 August 2021 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.

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 receive up to an additional 39 weeks of Access to Work support in the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

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

Supported internships returners

Supported interns who were not able to meet the core aim of their internship in the 2020 to 2021 academic year may continue their internship into the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

It is not envisaged that all supported interns will need to extend their internship for a full year. Providers should determine the length of time that a learner will require based on the needs of the individual, and in agreement with the local authority. Please note that the legislative and funding arrangements for EHC plans do not allow for a plan to be extended beyond the age of 25.

Where necessary and appropriate, priority for accessing work placements in the 2021 to 2022 academic year should be given to supported interns who were enrolled on a supported internship in 2020 to 2021.

Recording returning supported internships in the school census and individualised learner record (ILR)

Record these supported internship students in the ILR or school census as completed at the end of the academic year 2020 to 2021. 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 2021 to 2022. 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 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022. 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 the year beginning April 2021.

Local authorities should continue to pay high needs top-up funding for the students with high needs whose placements they have agreed, following completion or any necessary review of their EHC plans, if a plan is required, and appropriate risk assessments.

Where you need to make temporary changes to the education and support of young people with EHC plans due to staff absence, self-isolation or the closure or partial closure of a setting on public health grounds, let the local authority's SEND team know and keep these changes as short as possible.

For high needs placements and top-up funding that has not been confirmed before the start of the term in which the student is expected to start or continue their education or training programme, you should speak to the commissioning local authorities to see if you can be paid on account, with later reconciliation of top-up funding amounts when the placements and funding levels are finally agreed. This will ensure staff can remain in employment and be available for when the special provision is needed. Local authorities should confirm the funding associated with high needs placements as soon as possible after the placements are agreed.

Awarding qualifications for summer 2021

In January we consulted on arrangements for exams and assessments for 2021. The consultation had 2 parts, one setting out proposals for GCSE, AS and A levels and one for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications.

The analysis of the consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021 is available. For GCSEs, AS and A levels, exams will not go ahead this summer. We have published guidance that explains the decisions that have been made for awarding qualifications in summer 2021 and the actions that providers need to take.

The analysis of the consultation on alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021 is available. For 2021, we have identified 3 broad groups of VTQs that will have different awarding approaches. Ofqual has consulted on the technical framework needed to implement the arrangements for each of these groups and the qualifications in scope for each.

Qualifications used for progression to further or higher education

Exams will no longer be going ahead for VTQs most similar to GCSE, AS and A levels that are used for progression to further or higher education. This will include many performance table qualifications.

Qualifications used to enter directly into employment

VTQs used to enter directly into employment, exams or assessments should continue where they:

- are critical to demonstrate occupational or professional competence
- can be delivered in line with public health measures

Exams and assessments can take place in a controlled environment where risk of transmission is low.

You should have protective measures in place, in line with Public Health England (PHE) guidance to support exams.

Where the assessment cannot take place safely it will need to be delayed.

Other qualifications

For smaller qualification taken for mixed purposes, such as Functional Skills qualifications and ESQL, exams and assessment should continue in line with public health measures, in person or remotely. You should have alternative arrangements available for those who cannot access the assessments.

The Ofqual Explainer Tool sets out how qualifications will be assessed and awarded in the period up to 31 August 2021.

> Students due to take exams can be prioritised for asymptomatic testing using the kits that we have delivered to colleges. If a student tests positive, they should return home to self-isolate.

Performance data

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.

We will not publish data based on exams and assessments from summer 2021 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.

Inspection

New provider monitoring visits will continue throughout the summer term to new providers that have not received a monitoring visit. Full education inspection framework (EIF) inspections of new providers that have had a new provider monitoring visit will also begin in the summer term.

From 4 May, monitoring visits to requires improvement and inadequate providers will also resume, where appropriate.

Ofsted will continue to conduct emergency monitoring visits or full inspections of providers where serious concerns are identified.

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