



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE, DOCUMENT

# Emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings

How educational and childcare settings should plan for and deal with emergencies, including significant public health incidents and severe weather.

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# Changes to this guidance

This update includes information on:

- national alerts
- further guidance for special education schools
- information on support for the workforce and learners through an emergency

## Introduction

This is non-statutory guidance that provides information to help all education and childcare settings plan for and respond to a wide range of emergencies.

This guidance does not cover every aspect of what settings should do in relation to emergency planning. Settings must comply with their legal responsibilities, including health and safety law, and should seek legal advice as needed.

This guidance is structured to provide specific advice for:

- schools
- early years, childcare and play settings (including childminding, day care, sessional care, open access play and Flying Start provision)
- further and higher education

## Overview

Every emergency is different. However, in all cases, educational and well-being impacts should be considered when taking any emergency and risk management actions. The well-being and safety of staff and pupil is paramount,

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and childcare and education settings should strive to remain open to as many learners as possible if it is safe to do so. Risk assessments, policies and plans should be continuously reviewed and updated to reflect new and updated guidance.

The extent of any disruption to education or childcare should be kept to a minimum, including maximising the number of children, learners and students in face-to-face provision, in order to avoid longer term impacts on the development and well-being of children and young people. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people remains of paramount importance. Schools and settings should continue to have regard for their normal statutory safeguarding guidance.

Schools are required to communicate details of temporary local school closures or incidents to their local authority Director of Education. Local authorities are responsible for informing the Welsh Government of any temporary local closures.

Notification of closures should be sent to [Education.CorporateBusinessandResilience@gov.wales](mailto:Education.CorporateBusinessandResilience@gov.wales) or, in the event of power loss or loss of connectivity, please telephone 03001 231664. 'Rydym yn croesawu galwadau yn Gymraeg / We welcome calls in Welsh'.

Independent Schools should contact Welsh Government, as the registration body of any school closures.

Notification should be sent to [independentschools@gov.wales](mailto:independentschools@gov.wales)

Early years, childcare and play settings and independent residential schools and further education institutions that are registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) should inform Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) of any temporary closures. Those funded to deliver education provision, Childcare Offer or Flying Start settings should also report their closure to the relevant local authority officer.

## Emergency planning principles

All education, childcare and play settings should have emergency plans in place detailing actions to be taken in the event of an emergency. The aim of an emergency plan is to help setting leaders and staff respond effectively to an emergency at the setting, or on a visit or outing, while continuing to prioritise and maximise face-to-face learning, development and care, where possible. While it is not possible to plan for every emergency, emergency plans should be generic enough to cover a range of potential incidents, which may occur during or outside normal working hours, including weekends and holidays.

These incidents include:

- public health incidents (for example, a significant infectious disease incident)
- severe weather (for example, extreme heat, flooding, storms or snow)
- serious injury to a child, learner, student or member of staff (for example, transport accident)
- significant damage to property (for example, fire, accidental damage)
- criminal activity (for example, bomb threat, anti-social or threatening attack, intruder, cyber security attack)
- the effects of a disaster in the local community
- loss of water or utilities

A good plan should cover:

- roles and responsibilities
- when and how to seek advice should it be needed
- details on the types of steps that might be taken in the event of an emergency and what actions should be taken to enact them quickly
- how to ensure every child, learner or student receives the quantity and quality of education and care to which they are normally entitled, including through remote means where appropriate

- support for the well-being of staff, children, learners and students
- who should be informed (for example: the local authority, insurers, landlords, CIW)
- how changes will be communicated to children, learners, students, parents, carers and staff, with any timescales of returning to usual if possible
- how to respond if advice is not accepted

The plan should also include emergency procedures for:

- extended services (for example, for before and after school activity clubs run by the school)
- open days, transition or taster days
- live performances (including with animals) with an audience
- visitors
- trips outside of the setting

If the setting has wider facilities, emergency plans should cover the whole of the estate. This includes facilities which may not be used for educational purposes, such as accommodation, leisure or entertainment facilities, conference centres, and other facilities which may be rented out. If the site is not owned, such as a childcare setting based at a school, joint planning will be required to ensure emergency plans align.

Paper copies of all plans and contact information for all staff, children, learners and students should be available in the event that it is not possible to access digital information.

## Emergency planning process

Preparing for emergencies is an ongoing process involving:

- risk assessment

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- planning
- training
- exercises
- learning and reviewing

Throughout each stage of this process, it is important that members of staff, management boards, committees and governing bodies (or their equivalent for the setting) are consulted to gain their involvement and support.

## Emergency alerts

The UK Government's emergency alerts system will send alerts to all compatible 4G and 5G devices in England and Wales if there's a danger to life nearby.

You'll be able to check an alert is genuine and find out how emergency alerts work and the reasons why people may get an alert on the UK Government website:

[About emergency alerts \(gov.uk\)](#)

[How emergency alerts work \(gov.uk\)](#)

You should review your emergency plans to include relevant processes in case of an emergency alert in your area.

## Emergency plan template and guidance

An [example of a critical incident management planning guidance is available](#), and includes examples of:

- a template for developing a school emergency plan
- a critical incident management process

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- lockdown procedures for schools

All settings may find these resources helpful to develop appropriate emergency arrangements. It provides a framework which can be adapted to suit the local authority or education setting.

The sample templates and resources do not need to replace any existing arrangements that may already be in place.

## Resources

Sample risk assessment templates can be found in '[Opening schools as well as childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather](#)'.

To prepare children, young people, parents and carers for how to handle an emergency situation, resources and information on emergency planning that can be used in the classroom will soon be made available on [hwb.gov.wales](https://www.hwb.gov.wales), which also provides advice and tools for distance learning.

For early years, childcare and play settings, support and guidance is also available from:

- local authority childcare and play teams
- [Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years \(PACEY Cymru\)](#)
- [Early Years Wales](#) (early years settings)
- [National Day Nursery Association Cymru](#) (day nurseries)
- [Clybiau Plant Cymru Kid's Clubs](#) (out of school clubs and holiday provision)
- [Mudiad Meithrin](#) (Welsh-medium provision)
- [Play Wales](#) (open access play)

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A Cwlmw [factsheet on temporary or emergency closures of childcare and play settings](#) provides useful advice to all settings. Further advice can be sought from the sector representative bodies listed above.

## Guidance for schools

### Significant public health incidents

A single suspected outbreak or incident of infectious disease will not normally constitute an emergency. Most infectious diseases in education can be managed by following Public Health Wales' [Infection prevention and control guidance for childcare and educational settings](#). Additional information can also be found in NHS Wales' [Communicable disease outbreak plan for Wales](#).

Emergency plans should include a range of steps that might be taken in the event of a significant public health incident. They should also consider when it would be appropriate to seek specialist advice from public health advisors and the local authority health protection team in line with [Public Health Wales' guidance](#).

In Wales, registered medical practitioners have a statutory duty to notify their local authority or Public Health Wales teams of suspected cases of certain (notifiable) infectious diseases. Schools and settings will be contacted if there are actions required within the setting as part of public health management. Most infectious diseases in education settings can be managed by following the [latest Public Health Wales guidance](#).

In large-scale public health incidents where decisions about actions to take in education settings are made at a national level, the Welsh Government will work with NHS Wales, Public Health Wales, the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief

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Scientific Officer and many other Government departments, as well as local authorities and their public health directors to provide the best possible advice and support to schools.

**Read the latest public health advice for schools in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19).** This advice includes a useful checklist that can support consideration of which control measures remain proportionate to apply in the school or setting.

We have also issued PHW guidance for special education schools regarding respiratory infections, including COVID-19, when we see an increase in the circulation of acute respiratory infections (ARIs) during the autumn and winter months: **Acute respiratory infections including COVID-19: guidance for special educational schools.**

In line with Health and Safety Executive **regulations on ventilation in the workplace** and Public Health Wales advice, the effective use of carbon dioxide (CO<sup>2</sup>) monitors and good ventilation provides an effective public health control measure. '**Carbon dioxide monitors in education settings**' provides guidance on how to use carbon dioxide monitors as an aid to managing ventilation in education settings.

Education settings will also need to consider the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) as appropriate.

Also recommended is the routine flushing of little used water outlets and unused facilities to help the prevention and control of legionella bacteria in water systems and cooling systems, in accordance with this **HSE guidance**. This weblink contains helpful advice and resources on assessing risk and **symptoms and treatment** of legionella and legionella's disease

The Welsh Government monitors the ongoing public health situation closely and will make changes to this advice as necessary, based on the latest advice from

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Public Health Wales and the Chief Medical Officer. In the event of a worsening public health situation, there are a range of interventions that would be considered for deployment depending on the seriousness of the situation and risk to public health. Schools will be aware that these options can include, and have included in the past, the introduction of non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as social distancing or the wearing of face coverings, and full or partial closures of schools and a move to online learning.

## **Unexpected loss of power, utilities or water**

Schools need to think about what to do in event of a failure or loss of power for an extended period of time.

Schools should consider and have policies and processes in place for unexpected events such as loss of power or utilities, in the same way that they do for extreme weather events and other disruptions. By their very nature there will be little or no warning of these events, so should take the time to consider their responses in advance.

Responses will also depend on a range of factors and schools should take these into account when considering their response to unexpected power or water loss. When considering whether or not the school can remain open settings might like to consider:

- whether or not there is sufficient light and heat
- whether or not there is water available for drinking, toilets and handwashing
- whether or not it is possible to safely prepare and provide food

They may want to seek advice from Environmental Health Teams in order to understand the implications regarding the above and the steps they may need to take.

When planning their response, schools should also consider the time of day, the time of year, the wider environmental conditions (heatwave or extreme rain for example) and whether or not it is safer for learners and staff to remain on site or set in place arrangements for learners to be collected or to make their way home. Furthermore, when considering their response to an unexpected loss of power or utilities, schools will need clear policies and procedures for the collection of children. Schools will need to take into account potential impacts of a power loss, for example the loss of phone landlines.

Contingency plans need to be in place in the event of a more widespread power issue that may impact parents or carers' ability to contact the school and potentially to collect their children promptly due to mobile phone access loss and disruption to travel. Schools will need to have a process in place outlining how children will be cared for and kept safe if their parents or carers are delayed in collecting them from the setting.

Where schools close, they should inform their local authority of the temporary closure as soon as they can (using their online account if possible). They will only be able to resume their service when power is restored and/or water supplies resumed and confirmed as safe. As and when it is safe to re-open the school, a risk assessment will need to be undertaken, with the local authority.

In the event of a national loss of power or communications, preparations need to be in place in the school. Schools should consider printing paper copies of registers, emergency contact details and the latest guidance. We also recommend that schools consider a suitable place for holding hard copy documentation and a supply of torches, batteries and a battery operated FM radio for emergency use. In the event of significant power outages, public announcements will be made via FM radio.

## Severe weather

During severe weather conditions (for example, flooding, storms, snow or heatwave), the Welsh Government's default position is that settings should be kept open for as many children, learners and students as possible. However, it might be necessary to close temporarily due to inaccessibility or risk of injury.

**Opening schools as well as childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather** gives headteachers practical advice about what to consider if faced with having to decide whether to keep a school open in periods of extreme bad weather. It includes generic risk assessment material which can be adapted to suit every school's circumstances.

We know that younger children can be especially vulnerable to extreme heat. Education settings should ensure they take the necessary steps to keep children and young people safe, indoors and outdoors. Our advice to schools and childcare settings to deal with the extreme heat is to avoid vigorous physical activity and to maximise shade, ventilation and hydration. Children should wear loose, light coloured clothing if possible, and wear hats and suncream outdoors. Further downloadable advice on extreme hot weather is available from **Public Health Wales** for the general public and those looking after children. Education settings should ensure they are familiar with the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke, as well as the steps to take should anyone in their learning community, including those working remotely, show signs of heat stroke or heat exhaustion. Further guidance on this can be found on the **NHS 111 Wales website**. Heat stroke should always be treated as an emergency.

Public Health Wales provide further advice on other **extreme weather events**, such as cold weather and flooding.

Where settings are temporarily closed during severe weather, you should consider providing remote education for the duration of the closure in line with learning continuity guidance (see 'Learning continuity' section below). Providing

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remote education does not change the need to remain open or to reopen as soon as possible provided that it is safe to do so.

If flooding or severe weather has significantly impacted the setting and additional support is required, the local authority will be able to provide assistance to get the setting reopened as quickly and safely as possible. It is important to reopen as soon as possible provided it is safe to do so.

Flood warnings and advice on flooding can be found on the [Natural Resources Wales website](#). The Floodline number is 0345 988 1188 (available for 24/7 advice and the latest on flooding in Wales in English and Welsh).

Settings should also be alert to the [Met Office weather warnings](#) and [Air Quality in Wales](#) air pollution forecast.

## Security related incidents in schools

All education settings in Wales have a legal duty to ensure that learners have access to a safe learning environment. Responsibility for the health and safety of learners lies with the governing body of the school, either as the employer of staff or because it controls the premises (or both). Where the governing body does not employ school staff, the local authority has responsibility as the employer.

Learners are protected by the duties imposed under the Health and Safety Act because they are affected by an employer's undertaking or are using school premises. The legislation requires employers to assess and manage risk and is usually enforced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in respect of schools. All schools will therefore have emergency procedures for dealing with rare incidents such as intruders or terrorism. If a drill is to take place, issues should be discussed beforehand with learners sensitively and parents or carers or guardians informed so they can provide support at home if necessary.

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Schools and local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure effective safeguarding of their learners, which includes online safety. Local authorities should consider cyber security, alongside their safeguarding obligations, as part of the Education Act 1996 and the UK Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Schools and local authorities should have appropriate cyber policies and incident management plans in place, developed alongside their safeguarding and security policies. Any **cyber security incidents** should be managed in accordance with the latest **advice and guidance** from the National Cyber Security Centre.

The Welsh Government is responsible for any cyber incidents relating to Hwb. Working closely with stakeholders across the education sector, cyber security incidents related to Hwb will be managed in accordance with the National Cyber Security Centre advice and procedures. The Welsh Government regularly undertake health checks to provide assurances that the integrity and availability of Hwb is protected from threats or attempted unauthorised access.

'**Keeping learners safe**' sets out actions and expectations placed on schools to ensure the safety and well-being of learners.

**Guidance** and resources have been produced by Counter Terrorism Policing Wales.

'**Plan to prepare: prepare to protect**' also provides support to evaluate and manage risk posed by terrorism.

## Post incident planning

Planning for the aftermath of an event and recognising post incidence trauma is critical for ongoing care. Recognition of stress or PTSD following a traumatic incident is important, and support is available for school staff who witness or have been involved in traumatic incidents.

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TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) is a welfare led process intended to assess the response of a member of staff (including certain affiliated groups such as special constables) exposed to a potentially traumatic incident.

**Details of this training and resources that are available can be found on the March on stress website.**

## **Supporting your workforce, children, learners and students through an emergency**

Employers should be able to explain to the workforce any steps taken to keep staff safe at work as part of the emergency plans. The workplace risk assessment should consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers. Employers should discuss concerns with staff.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has more information on **managing risks and risk assessment in the workplace**. Public Health Wales' **Audit Tool For Childcare and Education Settings in Wales** can support providers in the prevention and control of a range of infections. Risk assessments and resulting policies should make clear any action to be taken in an emergency.

Individual settings are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of children, learners and students in the setting. Where unplanned staff absences are being experienced, the usual process for covering absences should be followed in the first instance. '**Effective management of school workforce attendance**' provides further guidance.

Schools considering changing class arrangements should be mindful of guidance of school capacity and the limits placed on infant class sizes. The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (Wales) Regulations 2013 limit the size of an infant class to 30 learners per teacher, subject to a limited number of

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exceptions set out in the [School Admissions Code](#).

## Prioritising places

If, in exceptional circumstances, there is a need to temporarily prioritise places within the setting due to high levels of workforce absence (for example, where a setting is unable to operate at full capacity), priority should be given to vulnerable children and young people (see 'Annex A: Vulnerable children and young people') and children of critical workers (see 'Annex B: Critical workers'). Remaining spaces can be filled by children outside of these priority groups.

Exceptional circumstances may include a local authority or government enforced closure in the local or national interest. This does not include bank holidays, but could include:

- widespread illness within the school community resulting in a full closure
- safe staffing levels unable to be achieved
- short-term building closure because of safety issues (for example, heating failure, issues with power supply, minor fire or flood)
- long-term building closure because of major safety issues (for example, structure of the building, major fire or flood)

## Recording attendance during an emergency

Schools and settings should keep a record of attendance and families should notify their school if their child is unable to attend and explain the reason for this to enable the school to record attendance correctly.

Schools that remain open must continue to record pupil absence in the attendance register using the most appropriate code. The code must be in line with the school attendance guidance.

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Where pupils are unable to attend school:

- in some exceptional circumstances you can use code Y (unable to attend in exceptional circumstances) unless a more appropriate code applies.
- because they are ill or have an infectious illness you should use code I (illness)

## Recording attendance for remote education

You should refer to the guidance on providing remote education. Where a pupil is absent but is receiving remote education, you must record this in the attendance register using the most appropriate code. You should continue to keep a record and monitor pupils' engagement with remote education. You do not need to formally track this in your attendance register.

**Attendance guidance** is available on the Welsh Government's website and '**Guidance on school attendance codes**' sets out the list of attendance codes for use in all schools in Wales

## Vulnerable children and young people

For children and young people who require additional support (for example, learners with special educational needs (SEN), additional learning needs (ALN) or disabilities), schools and settings should continue to work with the local authority, as well as with parents and carers, to decide how best to continue supporting these children to stay healthy.

In all circumstances, schools and local authorities should work with the family to reassure them of the safety measures in place with a view to supporting their return to school. In all circumstances, it is vital the school continues to engage regularly with the learner remotely.

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**‘Keeping learners safe’** contains guidance for local authorities and governing bodies on arrangements for safeguarding children.

## Safeguarding

Every local authority in Wales must have a single point of contact for those working with children to raise concerns about a child at risk. Everyone working in an education setting should be familiar with the local authority contact and the details of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) within their setting to raise such a concern.

Every school must ensure that there is a safeguarding policy that clearly sets out the contact details for the local authority first point of contact. This policy should be readily available to all staff and is effective practice for all education settings.

## Provision of food for eFSM learners or pupils

Schools should speak to their local authority and school catering team or provider about the best arrangements for providing a school meal provision for pupils in the event of emergency school closures. They should continue to provide meal options for all pupils who are in school, and meals should continue to be available free of charge to all pupils who meet the benefits-related free school meals eligibility criteria.

In the event of emergency school closures, for pupils eligible for benefits-related free school meals, we would encourage schools to work with their local authority and school catering team or food provider to put in place arrangements to provide a provision in lieu of a school meal to these learners where practical and possible; having considered the implications of doing so. This will help to ensure that eligible pupils continue to be supported for the short period where they are unable to attend school.

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Schools should make sure that they identify pupils with any medically prescribed dietary requirements, including allergies, to ensure that all pupils are able to eat a school lunch safely. This is particularly important in circumstances where caterers are not serving meals to pupils directly but where, for example, pupils are being served food in the classroom.

## Wellbeing and support

The Welsh Government has published [statutory guidance](#) for maintained education providers, which may also be utilised by non-maintained providers, including nurseries, further education and higher education, on supporting the mental health and wellbeing needs of learners, students and staff.

There is also additional support to accompany and support learners, students and staff to implement the whole-school approach framework:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in-reach support via health boards provides supervision and guidance to school staff on issues that learners and students present
- additional counselling provision is available for children and young people, as well as staff
- training for school staff to utilise interventions to support children and young people
- additional funding for schools to access therapeutic interventions
- online resources for learners, students and staff hosted on Hwb
- [young person's mental health toolkit](#)
- guidance for professionals and schools on [responding to issues of self-harm and thoughts of suicide in young people](#)
- CALL 24-hour telephone and text message [helpline](#)

## Examination and assessment disruption

Should there be a substantial period of national disruption to face-to-face teaching and learning, or a public health situation that prevents the running of the full examination series, the Welsh Government will work with Qualifications Wales and WJEC to plan for scenarios where it is not possible to rely on a full examination series to award grades.

An [Exam system contingency plan\(gov.uk\)](#) is available to deal with any major disruption that may affect examination candidates and should there be a need to implement alternative assessment arrangements.

In the event of significant disruption, further advice and support will also be available from the [WJEC](#) and [Qualifications Wales](#).

## Additional learning needs (ALN) and specialist settings

Statutory guidance on '[Supporting learners with healthcare needs](#)' requires local authorities and education settings in Wales to have a healthcare needs policy in place which should seek to ensure that learners with any medical condition are properly supported. Schools should continue to consult parents and carers about specific support needs and use their discretion flexibly in agreeing the way forward for specific learners.

We would encourage a practical and flexible approach to ensure individual needs are met. This should be considered as part of any risk assessment. For example, timetabling and scheduling one-to-one support over a longer cycle, in order to maintain overall levels of support while minimising close interactions between individuals, may be appropriate. While schools are not advised to maintain contact groups, we acknowledge that some schools may wish to tailor provision for some learners with ALN as a result of specific health needs

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identified as part of the risk assessment process.

## **Residential settings in independent schools and independent specialist post-16 institutions (ISPIs)**

We would encourage a practical and flexible approach to ensure individual needs are met. This should be considered as part of any risk assessment. For example, timetabling and scheduling one-to-one support over a longer cycle, in order to maintain overall levels of support while minimising close interactions between individuals, may be appropriate.

Statutory guidance on '[Supporting learners with healthcare needs](#)' requires local authorities and education settings in Wales to have a healthcare needs policy in place which should seek to ensure that students with any medical condition are properly supported. Schools should continue to consult parents and carers about specific support needs and use their discretion flexibly in agreeing the way forward for specific learners.

We would encourage independent school and ISPIs settings, where safe to do so, to continue to care for young people where possible.

Independent schools and ISPIs who are registered with CIW should inform them inspectorate if they temporarily close their residential provision.

The '[Independent schools registration and operational guidance](#)' will be updated as part of the work to strengthen the independent school standard regulations. [Provides further information for independent schools.](#)

## **Learning continuity**

During periods of disruption, it is critical that the learning and well-being of all

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children and young people in our schools in Wales is maintained. In order to ensure that learning continuity is planned for, and that the impact of any disruption to the learning of children and young people is mitigated, all schools in Wales should set out their contingencies for learning continuity and include these within their routine business continuity planning or school development plan arrangements.

**A learning continuity planning template and learning continuity guidance** have been developed to provide additional support to schools.

## **Guidance for early years, childcare and play settings**

This section is relevant for early years, childcare and play settings, which includes childminding, day care, sessional care, open access play and Flying Start provision.

### **Significant public health incidents**

A single suspected outbreak or incident of infectious disease will not normally constitute an emergency.

In Wales, registered medical practitioners have a statutory duty to notify their local authority or Public Health Wales teams of suspected cases of certain (notifiable) infectious diseases. Settings will be contacted if there are actions required within the setting as part of public health management.

Most infectious diseases in childcare settings can be managed by following Public Health Wales' **Infection prevention and control guidance childcare and educational settings** in addition to using the **Audit tool for childcare and**

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**education settings in Wales**, which provides guidance in relation to infection prevention and control practice, including the cleaning of toys and equipment and how to deal with waste. Additional information can also be found in the Public Health Wales **guidance** and NHS Wales' **Communicable disease outbreak plan for Wales**.

However, settings should have an emergency plan in place to cover significant public health incidents. The plan should include a range of steps that might be taken in the event of a significant public health incident, such as:

- when it would be appropriate to seek specialist advice from public health advisors and the local authority health protection team in line with the Public Health Wales' **Infection prevention and control guidance for childcare and educational settings**
- the use of Public Health Wales' **advice on measures to use during an outbreak** as outlined in the **Audit tool**
- the procedures that staff should follow in recording an outbreak and notifying relevant bodies such as CIW

In large-scale public health incidents where decisions about actions to take in childcare settings are made at a national level, the Welsh Government will work with NHS Wales, Public Health Wales, the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Scientific Officer and many other Government departments, as well as local authorities and their public health directors to provide the best possible advice and support to childcare settings.

**Read the latest public health advice for childcare and play settings in relation to COVID-19**. This advice includes a useful checklist that can support the setting in considering which control measures remain proportionate to apply in the school or setting.

The Welsh Government monitors the ongoing public health situation closely and will make changes to this **advice** as necessary, based on the latest advice from

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Public Health Wales and the Chief Medical Officer. In the event of a worsening public health situation, there are a range of interventions that would be considered for deployment depending on the seriousness of the situation and risk to public health.

## Severe weather

Childcare and play settings cannot offer remote provision and so those settings who may need to close as a result of severe weather should re-open when it is safe to do so. Childcare settings should contact their local authority childcare and play team for help and advice where the setting and its operation has been impacted by severe weather.

We know that younger children can be especially vulnerable to extreme heat. Settings should ensure they take the necessary steps to keep children safe, indoors and outdoors.

Our advice to childcare settings to deal with the extreme heat is to avoid vigorous physical activity and to maximise shade, ventilation and hydration. Children should wear loose, light coloured clothing if possible, and wear hats and suncream outdoors. Further downloadable [advice](#) is available from Public Health Wales for the general public and those looking after children.

Childcare and play settings should ensure they are familiar with the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Further guidance on this can be found on the [NHS 111 Wales website](#). Heat stroke should always be treated as an emergency.

Public Health Wales provide further advice on other [extreme weather events](#), such as cold weather and flooding. Childcare and play providers who have had to move to temporary premises due to severe weather should inform CIW and check to see if they need to register the new premises.

Where a setting has to close as a consequence of adverse weather, decisions on payments regarding any childcare booked under the Childcare Offer will be made by the local authority on a case-by-case basis as outlined in the [Childcare Offer for Wales guidance](#).

If severe weather has significantly impacted a Flying Start setting, the local authority should be contacted for advice and support.

## Unexpected loss of power, utilities or water

Settings should consider and have policies and processes in place for unexpected events such as loss of power or utilities, in the same way that they do for extreme weather events and other disruptions. By their very nature there will be little or no warning of these events and so settings should take the time to consider their responses in advance.

Responses will also depend on a range of factors and settings should take these into account when considering their response to unexpected power or water loss. When considering whether or not the setting can remain open settings might like to consider:

- whether or not there is sufficient light and heat
- whether or not there is water available for drinking, toilets and handwashing
- whether or not it is possible to safely prepare and provide food.

Settings may want to seek advice from Environmental Health Teams in order to understand the implications regarding the above and the steps they may need to take.

When planning their response settings should also consider the time of day, the time of year, the wider environmental conditions (heatwave or extreme rain for example).

When considering their response to an unexpected loss of power or utilities, settings will need clear policies and procedures for the collection of children. Settings will need to take into account potential impacts of a power loss, for example loss of mobile networks. A more widespread power issue could impact parents or carers' ability to contact the setting and potentially to collect their children promptly. Settings will need to have a process in place outlining how children will be cared for and kept safe if their parents or carers are delayed in collecting them from the setting.

Where settings close, those settings registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), should inform CIW of the temporary closure as soon as they can (using their online account if possible).

In the event of a widespread loss of power or communications, preparations need to be in place in the setting. Settings should consider printing paper copies of registers, emergency contact details and the latest guidance. We also recommend that settings consider a suitable place for holding hard copy documentation and a supply of torches, batteries and a battery operated FM radio for emergency use. In the event of significant power outages, public announcements will be made on the radio.

Settings will only be able to resume their service when power is restored and/or water supplies resumed and confirmed as safe.

## **Security related incidents in childcare settings**

Children and staff are protected by the duties imposed under the Health and Safety Act because they are affected by an employer's undertaking. The legislation requires employers to assess and manage risk. It is therefore important for childcare settings to have policies and plans in place to manage and respond to security related incidents.

A setting's security policy should complement their safeguarding policies, particularly where plans put in place measures to protect children. Security policies should form part of a suite of policies to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children and staff.

Settings should have appropriate cyber policies and incident management plans in place, developed alongside their safeguarding and security policies. Any **cyber security incidents** should be managed in accordance with the latest **advice and guidance** from the National Cyber Security Centre.

'**Plan to prepare: Prepare to protect**' also provides support to evaluate and manage risk posed by terrorism.

## **Supporting your workforce and children through an emergency**

As an employer, you should be able to explain to your workforce any steps taken to keep staff safe at work as part of the emergency plans. The workplace risk assessment should also consider risks to staff in the setting, with due regard to vulnerable members of staff as well as new or expectant mothers.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has more information on **managing risks and risk assessment in the workplace**. Public Health Wales' **Audit tool for childcare and education settings in Wales** can support providers in the prevention and control of a range of infections.

Risk assessments and resulting policies should make clear any action to be taken in an emergency.

Settings should also consider how they maintain communication with their families to keep them up to date with developments, and provide potential support (for example, provision of activity ideas) for children.

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## Staff shortages during an emergency

The '[National minimum standards for regulated childcare](#)' set the requirements that childcare and play settings must meet for the development and care of children from birth to age 12. Childcare and play settings, including after school and holidays providers, who experience staff shortages will need to ensure that they can remain within the requirements of group sizes and the staff:child ratio outlined in the National Minimum Standards.

## Prioritising places

If there is a need to temporarily prioritise places in the setting due to high levels of workforce absence (for example, where a setting is unable to operate at full capacity), priority should be given to vulnerable children and young people (see 'Annex A: Vulnerable children and young people') and children of critical workers (see 'Annex B: Critical workers'). Remaining spaces can be filled by children outside of these priority groups.

## Vulnerable children

For children who require additional support (for example, children with ALN or disabilities), settings should continue to work with the local authority, as well as with parents and carers, to decide how best to continue supporting these children to stay healthy. In all circumstances, settings and local authorities should work with the family to reassure the family of the safety measures in place with a view to supporting their attendance at a setting.

## Safeguarding

Every local authority in Wales must have a single point of contact for those working with children to raise concerns about a child at risk. In line with the requirements of the [National minimum standards for regulated childcare](#), registered providers are responsible for ensuring that everyone working in their childcare and play setting are familiar with the local authority contact and the details of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) within their setting to raise such a concern.

Each setting must ensure that there is a safeguarding policy and procedure that clearly sets out the contact details for the local authority first point of contact. This policy should be readily available to all staff.

Non-registered childcare and play settings (for example, childcare and play sessions and/or after-school clubs operating under 2 hours) are expected to follow the advice in the Welsh Government's voluntary code of practice '[Working together to safeguard people: code of safeguarding practice](#)'.

Further advice is available from the [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) and your [regional safeguarding boards](#).

## Wellbeing and support

Support for settings and staff is available via Social Care Wales' [Health and Wellbeing Framework](#).

Settings should think carefully about how they can communicate with staff and families during a closure. Agree methods for keeping in touch with staff on a regular basis and supervising staff to support any work being undertaken.

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For early years, childcare and play settings, the following can also offer support and guidance:

- local authority childcare and play teams
- **Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY Cymru)**
- **Early Years Wales** (early years settings)
- **National Day Nursery Association Cymru** (day nurseries)
- **Clybiau Plant Cymru Kid's Clubs** (out of school clubs and holiday provision)
- **Mudiad Meithrin** (Welsh-medium provision)
- **Play Wales** (open access play)
- local Family Information Service

## Guidance for further education settings

### Significant public health incidents

A single suspected outbreak or incident of infectious disease will not normally constitute an emergency. Most infectious diseases in education can be managed by following Public Health Wales' **Infection prevention and control guidance for childcare and educational settings**. Additional information can also be found in the **NHS Wales communicable disease outbreak plan for Wales**.

Emergency plans should include a range of steps that might be taken in the event of a significant public health incident. They should also consider when it would be appropriate to seek specialist advice from public health advisors and the local authority health protection team in line with the **Public Health Wales guidance**.

The latest **public health advice for employers, businesses and**

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**organisations** in relation to COVID-19 includes a useful **checklist** that can support consideration of which control measures remain proportionate to apply in the college.

In line with **Health and Safety Executive regulations on ventilation in the workplace** and Public Health Wales advice, the effective use of carbon dioxide (CO<sup>2</sup>) monitors and good ventilation provides an effective public health control measure. '**Carbon dioxide monitors in education settings**' provides guidance on how to use carbon dioxide monitors as an aid to managing ventilation in the college.

## Severe weather

During severe weather conditions (for example, flooding, storms, snow or heatwave), the Welsh Government's default position is that settings should be kept open for as many students as possible. However, it might be necessary to close temporarily due to inaccessibility or risk of injury.

It is the responsibility of the college to carry out risk assessments in their organisation and make decisions around how they continue to operate safely across their teaching and learning environments.

## Security related incidents in further education settings

The safety of students and staff are the responsibility of the college and should consider security alongside safeguarding responsibilities and the legal obligations you have as employers under the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA)** and the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR)**. As employers, colleges should ensure that their staff and students are familiar with what is required by their security policy and plan.

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Security-related incidents, including cyber security incidents, should form part of the operational risk management register and be tested under business continuity plans. Colleges can also access support from [Jisc](#) to deal with cyber and other systems security incidents.

## Supporting your workforce and students through an emergency

Employers have a [general legal responsibility](#) to maintain the health and safety and welfare of workers and others attending their premises.

The [public health advice for employers, businesses and organisations](#) is intended to be used as a guide for safely mitigating against the most common communicable diseases (including flu, norovirus and COVID-19) risks. This does not replace business and employer statutory responsibilities, and it is important you continue to comply with legal obligations relating to Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, Equality Act 2010 and any other employment regulations.

Workplace risk assessments should also consider risks to staff in the college with due regard to vulnerable members of staff as well as new or expectant mothers.

## Staff shortages during an emergency

Further education settings are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of students.

Colleges should remain open and operational for in-person learning where it is safe to do so. Where further education settings experience staff absences, in the

first instance, they should follow their usual process for covering absences.

As a further education provider, if some staff cannot get to work consideration may be given to:

- continuing to make use of temporary staff
- the way in which staff are deployed and existing staff can be used more flexibly
- bringing together groups and classes with practitioners and support staff working together
- using blended learning practices or delivering digitally to ensure the continuation of education

## Wellbeing and support

Some young people and adults may experience a variety of emotions in response to an emergency situation, such as anxiety, stress, or low mood. As employers, colleges have a duty of care to their staff and students, and should provide the necessary support for individuals experiencing well-being issues.

We recommend that colleges work collaboratively with their staff, students and their families who are anxious to reassure them. Discussions should have a collaborative approach, focusing on the welfare of the student and responding to the concerns of the parent, carer or student.

## Examination and assessment disruption

In the event of students being unable to attend the college to take examinations as normal, the college will liaise with students to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) guidance on

alternative site arrangements can be accessed through the [JCQ website](#).

An [Exam System Contingency Plan \(gov.uk\)](#) is available to deal with any major disruption that may affect examination candidates and should there be a need to implement alternative assessment arrangements.

## **Additional learning needs (ALN) and specialist settings**

Statutory guidance on '[Supporting learners with healthcare needs](#)' requires local authorities and education settings in Wales to have a healthcare needs policy in place which should seek to ensure that students with any medical condition are properly supported.

We would encourage a practical and flexible approach to ensure individual needs are met. This should be considered as part of any risk assessment. For example, timetabling and scheduling one-to-one support over a longer cycle, in order to maintain overall levels of support while minimising close interactions between individuals, may be appropriate.

We would encourage specialist further education settings, where safe to do so, to continue to care for young people where possible.

Specialist further education settings should inform the Welsh Government immediately if a young person is absent from college, regardless of reason. More information about what colleges need to do in these situations can be found in their funding agreement letters from the Welsh Government.

If a student is unable to complete their agreed programme of study, colleges can refer to guidance contained in the '[Securing provision for young people with learning difficulties at specialist further education establishments](#)' policy. It is the college's responsibility to review a student's programme of study and, if necessary, submit an extension request for consideration by the Welsh

Government. Requests to extend a student's placement beyond the programme's original agreed end date will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances.

Further education institution and specialist further education settings should inform CIW if they temporarily close their residential provision.

## Guidance for higher education settings

### Significant public health incidents

A single suspected outbreak or incident of infectious disease will not normally constitute an emergency. As autonomous institutions, higher education settings can operate in compliance with national public health guidance. Higher education providers should ensure that responses to the most serious public health incidents are discussed with their local director of public health and agreed in advance as part of their contingency planning, for example for the start of academic years.

The latest [public health advice for employers, businesses and organisations](#) in relation to COVID-19 includes a useful [checklist](#) that can support consideration of which control measures remain proportionate to apply in the higher education setting.

In line with [Health and Safety Executive regulations on ventilation in the workplace](#) and Public Health Wales advice, the effective use of carbon dioxide (CO<sup>2</sup>) monitors and good ventilation provides an effective public health control measure. '[Carbon dioxide monitors in education settings](#)' provides guidance on how to use carbon dioxide monitors as an aid to managing ventilation in the higher education setting.

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## Severe weather

During severe weather conditions (for example, flooding, storms, snow or heatwave), the Welsh Government's default position is that settings should be kept open for as many students as possible. However, it might be necessary to close temporarily due to inaccessibility or risk of injury.

As universities are autonomous institutions, it is their responsibility to carry out risk assessments in their organisation and make decisions around how they continue to operate safely across their teaching and learning environments.

## Security related incidents in higher education settings

The safety of students and staff are the responsibility of the university and you should consider security alongside your safeguarding responsibilities and the legal obligations you have as employers under the **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA)** and the **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR)**. As employers, universities should ensure that their staff and students are familiar with what is required by their security policy and plan.

Security-related incidents, including cyber security incidents, should form part of the operational risk management register and be tested under business continuity plans. Universities can also access support from **Jisc** to deal with cyber and other systems security incidents.

## Supporting your workforce and students through an emergency

Employers have a **general legal responsibility** to maintain the health and

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safety and welfare of workers, and others attending their premises.

The **public health advice for employers, businesses and organisations** is intended to be used as a guide for safely mitigating against the most common communicable diseases (including flu, norovirus and COVID-19) risks. This does not replace business and employer statutory responsibilities, and it is important you continue to comply with your legal obligations relating to Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, Equality Act 2010 and any other employment regulations.

Workplace risk assessments should also consider risks to staff in the setting with due regard to vulnerable members of staff as well as new or expectant mothers.

## **Staff shortages during an emergency**

Higher education settings are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of students.

Higher education settings should remain open and operational for in-person learning where it is safe to do so. Where settings experience staff absences, in the first instance, they should follow their usual process for covering absences.

## **Wellbeing and support**

Some young people and adults may experience a variety of emotions in response to an emergency situation, such as anxiety, stress, or low mood. As employers, universities have a duty of care to their staff and students, and should provide the necessary support for individuals experiencing well-being issues.

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We recommend that universities work collaboratively with their staff, students and their families (where appropriate) who are anxious to reassure them. Discussions should have a collaborative approach, focusing on the welfare of the student and responding to the concerns of the parent, carer or student.

We would advise any student in higher education is experiencing mental or physical health issues to contact their student union who can help explore the student support and welfare services available to them by their university provider.

## **Annex A: Example Critical incident management planning guidance**

An example of a critical incident management planning guidance is available at Annex A and includes examples of:

- a template for developing a school emergency plan
- a critical incident management process
- lockdown procedures for schools

All settings may find these resources helpful to develop appropriate emergency arrangements. It provides a framework which can be adapted to suit the local authority or education setting.

The sample templates and resources do not need to replace any existing arrangements that may already be in place.

## Annex B: Vulnerable children and young people

A wide definition of vulnerable and disadvantaged learners was adopted during the COVID-19 emergency response. It includes, but is not limited to, learners who are in one or more of the following groups:

- learners with special educational needs (SEN) or additional learning needs (ALN)
- learners from minority ethnic groups who have English or Welsh as an additional language (EAL/WAL)
- care-experienced children, including looked after children
- learners educated other than at school (EOTAS)
- children of refugees and asylum seekers
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children
- learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM)
- young carers
- children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect

This list is not exhaustive and not all learners from these groups will face barriers to learning or be vulnerable to underachieving. Learners from these groups may face a range of barriers to achieving their potential and will, therefore, require different solutions and support targeted towards meeting each of their individual needs. In addition, learners may belong to several of the above groups at the same time, depending on their individual circumstances.

Learners not in these groups may be considered vulnerable or disadvantaged, including specifically as a result of COVID-19. For example, some learners who would not have been considered vulnerable or disadvantaged pre-COVID-19 may require additional support when they return to school because of their experience during lockdowns.

Learners educated though the medium of Welsh from homes where Welsh is not



spoken may also require additional support, especially where they also face other barriers to learning. This may also be the case for those learners where English or Welsh is not their first language.

## Annex C: Critical workers

Education settings should seek to maximise the number of children, learners and students who are in face-to-face provision during an emergency. If the impact of an emergency means that not everyone can attend face-to-face provision, parents and carers should be informed as part of emergency communications of the impact. Communications should set out the groups that are prioritised for face-to-face provision and should invite parents and carers to notify the setting if they meet one of the critical worker categories.

Parents and carers whose work is critical to an emergency response include those who work in health and social care and in other key sectors outlined in the following sections. If exceptional circumstances mean that attendance is temporarily limited, children with at least one parent or carer who is a critical worker can go to their setting if required, but parents and carers should keep their children at home if they can.

### Health and social care

This includes, but is not limited to:

- doctors
- nurses
- midwives
- paramedics
- social workers

- care workers
- other frontline health and social care staff, including volunteers
- support and specialist staff required to maintain the UK's health and social care sector
- those working as part of the health and social care supply chain, including producers and distributors of medicines and medical and personal protective equipment

## Education and childcare

This includes:

- childcare
- support and teaching staff
- social workers
- specialist education professionals who must remain active during an emergency response to deliver this approach

## Key public services

This includes:

- those essential to the running of the justice system
- religious staff
- charities and workers delivering key frontline services
- those responsible for the management of the deceased
- journalists and broadcasters who are providing public service broadcasting

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## Local and national government

This only includes those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of:

- an emergency response
- essential public services, such as the payment of benefits including in government agencies and arm's length bodies (ALB)

## Food and other necessary goods

This includes those involved in food:

- production
- processing
- distribution
- sale and delivery
- those essential to the provision of other key goods (for example, hygienic and veterinary medicines)

## Public safety and national security

This includes:

- police and support staff
- Ministry of Defence civilians
- contractor and armed forces personnel (those critical to the delivery of key defence and national security outputs and essential to an emergency response)
- fire and rescue service employees (including support staff)

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- National Crime Agency staff
- those maintaining border security, prison and probation staff and other national security roles, including those overseas

## Transport

This includes:

- those who will keep the air, water, road and rail passenger and freight transport modes operating during an emergency response
- those working on transport systems through which supply chains pass

## Utilities, communication and financial services

This includes:

- staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure)
- the oil, gas, electricity and water sectors (including sewerage)
- information technology and data infrastructure sector and primary industry supplies to continue during an emergency response
- key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals, telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services)
- postal services and delivery
- payments providers
- waste disposal sectors

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