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Emergency planning and response guidance for education and childcare settings

GUIDANCE

# 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.

Part of:  
[Health and wellbeing in schools](#),  
[Safeguarding children](#) and [School buildings and technology](#)

First published:  
29 January 2025

Last updated:  
12 June 2025

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## Changes to this guidance

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This update includes information on:

- information on support for the workforce and learners through an emergency
- Actions Counters Terrorism (ACT) for Education free bespoke education learning and guidance
- post-incident planning

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## Overview

This non-statutory guidance will help education and childcare settings plan for and respond to emergencies. It applies to:

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

Every emergency is different. However, you should:

- consider educational and wellbeing impacts before taking any emergency and risk management actions
- strive to remain open to as many learners as possible if it is safe to do so
- continuously review and update risk assessments, policies and plans to reflect new and updated guidance
- keep the extent of any disruption to education or childcare to a minimum
- maximise the number of children, learners and students in face-to-face provision

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children remains of paramount importance. This guidance is non-statutory and does not cover every aspect of emergency planning. You must comply with your legal responsibilities, including under health and safety law and statutory safeguarding guidance. You should get legal advice as needed.

The [Prepare](#) website published by UK Government is a useful starting point on how to prepare for and manage emergencies, be more informed about

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hazards and what simple but effective steps you can take to protect you and your community.

**Actions Counters Terrorism (ACT) for Education e-learning** provides bespoke training aimed at all staff working in education settings and will teach learners how to identify security vulnerabilities and suspicious activity as well as how to respond when there is an incident.

## How to report closures or incidents

### Mainstream schools

Schools must report temporary local school closures or incidents to their local authority **director of education**.

Notification of school closures should also be emailed to: **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

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

Notification should be sent to **independentschools@gov.wales**.

### Early years, childcare and play settings, independent residential schools, further education institutions that are registered with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

Inform **Care Inspectorate Wales** (CIW) of any temporary closures.

Those funded to deliver education provision (Childcare Offer for Wales or Flying Start settings) should also report their closure to the relevant local authority officer.

## Making an emergency plan

All education, childcare and play settings should have emergency plans in place.

In an emergency it might not be possible to access digital information. Therefore, you should have paper copies of all:

- plans
- contact information for all staff
- contact information for children, learners and students

Emergency plans should:

- detail the actions to be taken in the event of an emergency
- help setting leaders and staff respond effectively to an emergency at the setting, on a visit or on an outing
- be generic enough to cover a range of potential incidents, which may occur during or outside normal working hours, including weekends and holidays

Incidents to be covered in emergency plans 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 in a transport accident)
- significant damage to property (for example fire or accidental damage)
- criminal activity (for example a bomb threat, an anti-social or threatening attack, an intruder, a cyber security attack)
- the effects of a disaster in the local community
- loss of water or utilities

## Information to include on an emergency plan

A good plan should cover:

- roles and responsibilities
- when and how to seek advice if needed
- details on the types of steps that could 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 wellbeing 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 for returning to normal if possible
- how to respond if advice is not accepted

The plan should also include emergency procedures for:

- wraparound provision (for example for before and after-school activity clubs run by the school)
- open, 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
- 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.

## 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.

On the UK government website you will be able to check:

- whether an [alert is genuine](#)
- how [emergency alerts work](#) and the reasons why people may get an alert

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

## Building partnerships

Part of effective emergency planning includes establishing and maintaining relationships locally which may be needed in an emergency situation.

This might include, for example:

- nearby education and childcare settings
- the police
- your local authority
- the [local resilience forum](#)

Establishing these links, gathering intelligence, and understanding others' plans can inform the development of a plan that reflects local and national arrangements.

## Emergency planning process

Preparing for emergencies is an ongoing process involving:

- awareness
- risk assessment
- contingency planning
- staff training
- exercises and tests (such as fire drills)
- reviewing protocols and communication
- coordination and planning with relevant bodies
- continuous review

Throughout each stage of this process, you should consult with:

- members of staff
- management boards
- committees
- governing bodies (or their equivalent for the setting)

Their involvement and support are important.

## Emergency plan template and guidance

An example of a critical incident management planning guidance is available (see Resources section below), and includes:

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

## Resources

This section provides templates and resources for developing emergency arrangements. These do not need to replace any existing arrangements.

An example of a [critical incident management plan](#), developed by a local authority, is available. It provides a framework which can be adapted to suit the setting. Not all settings will operate in the same way, and you should be aware of any guidance, templates or resources that are being used by settings in your area.

A sample [risk assessment template](#) is also in our [guidance for childcare and play settings in extreme bad weather and extreme hot weather](#).

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 Nurseries Association Cymru](#) (day nurseries)
- [Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs](#) (out of school clubs and holiday provision)
- [Mudiad Meithrin](#) (Welsh-medium provision)
- [Play Wales](#) (open-access play)
- [Cwlwm factsheet on temporary or emergency closures of childcare and play settings](#) provides useful advice to all settings

## Significant public health incidents

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

You can manage most infectious diseases by following Public Health Wales guidance, including:

- [Guidance for childcare, preschool and educational settings - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)
- [The Communicable Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales](#)

You should have emergency plans in place that consider:

- the steps to take in the event of a significant public health incident
- when it would be appropriate to seek specialist advice in line with [Public Health Wales's guidance](#)
- advice on measures to use during an outbreak as outlined in the Audit tool in Public Health Wales's [Guidance for childcare, preschool and educational settings](#)
- the procedures that staff should follow in recording an outbreak and notifying relevant bodies such as CIW

Registered medical practitioners in England and Wales have a statutory duty to notify their local authority or local UKHSA health protection team of suspected cases of certain (notifiable) infectious diseases. Your local health protection team will contact you if you need to take any actions.

In large-scale public health incidents where government makes decisions about actions to take at a national level, we'll work with:

- the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- UKHSA
- the Chief Medical Officer
- other government departments, as needed
- relevant local authorities
- directors of public health

If you're a university or other HE institution, discuss any responses to the most serious public health incidents with your local director of public health. Try to get agreement in advance for your response, as part of your contingency planning. For example, at the start of the academic year, agree with them how you'll respond to certain public health incidents if they occur.

Public health advice for schools in relation to respiratory infections, including COVID-19, can be found on the [Public Health Wales website](#). This advice is regularly reviewed and updated.

Public Health Wales have developed Health Protection Teams (HPT) and the All Wales Acute Response Service (AWARe).

The [AWARe website](#) provides information on:

- the All Wales Acute Response Service
- HPT teams and how they can be contacted

It hosts the most recent guidance, information and training available for:

- members of education and childcare settings
- health and social care settings
- local authorities
- GPs
- the public

SEN schools and units should consider additional guidance, such as [guidance for special educational schools regarding acute respiratory infections](#), including COVID-19

HE and FE institutions should consider the latest [public health advice for employers, businesses and organisations in relation to COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases](#). The [Public health control measures checklist for businesses, employers and event organisers: coronavirus](#) guidance includes a useful checklist when considering which control measures to apply.

## Health control measures

### Ventilation and carbon dioxide monitors

The effective use of carbon dioxide monitors and good ventilation provides an effective public health control measure. See:

- [Health and Safety Executive regulations on ventilation in the workplace](#)
- [Carbon dioxide monitors in education settings](#)

### Personal protective equipment (PPE)

You will need to consider the use of PPE as appropriate.

### Flushing of water outlets and unused facilities



We recommend the routine flushing of little used water outlets and unused facilities. This helps to prevent and control legionella bacteria in water systems and cooling systems. Read the [HSE guidance](#) on legionella's disease and managing legionella disease in water systems.

## Updates to this guidance

We will monitor the ongoing public health situation closely and update this guidance where necessary. This will be based on the latest advice from Public Health Wales and the Chief Medical Officer. In the event of a worsening public health situation, we will consider a range of interventions. These will depend on the seriousness of the situation and risk to public health. Options may include the introduction of non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as:

- social distancing
- the wearing of face coverings
- handwashing and personal hygiene measures
- full or partial closures of schools and a move to online learning

## Unexpected loss of power, utilities or water

Policies and processes should be in place for the event of a loss of:

- power
- utilities
- water

There might be little or no warning of these events. You should take the time to consider your responses in advance.

Responses will depend on a range of factors, such as whether or not:

- there is sufficient light and heat
- there is water available for drinking, toilets and handwashing
- it is possible to safely prepare and provide food

You may want to seek advice from environmental health teams to understand the implications and the steps you may need to take.

When planning your response, you should also consider:

- the time of day
- the time of year
- the wider environmental conditions (heatwave or extreme rain for example)
- whether or not it is safer for learners and staff to remain on site
- putting arrangements in place for learners to be collected or to make their way home

## Collection of children

You will need clear policies and procedures for the collection of children in the event of an unexpected loss of power, utilities or water. This should include plans for how children will be cared for and kept safe if their parents or carers are delayed in collecting them from the setting.

You should consider the impacts of widespread power issues, such as:

- loss of phone landlines and access to the internet
- loss of mobile phone access
- on public transport and travel
- on medical storage and apparatus

## School and other setting closures

You should inform your local authority of the temporary closure as soon as you can (use your online account if possible). You will only be able to resume your service when power or water supply is restored and confirmed as safe. When it is safe to reopen the setting, a risk assessment will need to be undertaken with the local authority.

You should prepare for the event of a national loss of power or communications.

You should consider printing paper copies of:

- registers
- emergency contact details
- the latest guidance
- emergency plans

You should consider a suitable place for holding hard copy documentation and a supply of:

- torches
- batteries
- battery-operated FM radios for emergency use

In the event of significant power outages, public announcements will be made by the BBC via FM radio.

## Severe weather

You should keep your setting open for as many children, learners and students as possible, where safe to do so. You should take the necessary steps to keep children and young people safe, indoors and outdoors.

Severe weather conditions include:

- extreme heat
- flooding
- storms
- snow

However, it might be necessary to close temporarily due to inaccessibility or risk of injury.

Use the [Met Office's severe weather warning system](#) to check for severe weather conditions in your area.

You can find flood warnings and advice on flooding on the [Natural Resources Wales website](#). The Floodline number is 0345 988 1188. This is available for 24/7 advice and the latest information on flooding in Wales.

[Air Quality in Wales](#) provides information on air quality and gives an air pollution forecast.

## Schools

Our [severe weather guidance](#) gives headteachers practical advice on what to consider when deciding on whether to keep a school open.

You should consider providing remote education if you are temporarily closed due to severe weather. You should do all you can to reopen as soon as possible.

Your local authority will be able to support you reopen as quickly and safely as possible.

## Childcare and play settings

Childcare and play settings cannot offer remote provision. Settings who need to close as a result of severe weather should reopen 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.

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

If severe weather has significantly impacted on a Flying Start setting, you should contact your local authority for advice and support

## Further education (FE)

FE institutions are responsible for carrying out risk assessments in their organisation. You also need to decide how you will continue to operate safely across your teaching and learning environments.

## Dealing with extreme heat

Staff should be familiar with the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. They should know what to do if anyone show signs of heat stroke or heat exhaustion. We know that younger children can be especially vulnerable to extreme heat. Further guidance on this can be found on the [NHS 111 Wales website](#). Heat stroke should always be treated as an emergency.

During extreme heat:

- avoid vigorous physical activity
- maximise shade, ventilation, and hydration
- children should wear loose, light-coloured clothing if possible
- children should wear hats and suncream outdoors

Further downloadable advice on extreme hot weather is available from the [Public Health Wales website](#).

## Cold weather and flooding

Public Heath 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.

Further information is provided in the 'Learning continuity' section below.

## Security related incidents

All education settings in Wales have a legal duty to ensure that learners and students have access to a safe learning environment. This includes online safety. Consideration should be given to the safety of staff and visitors.

It is important to have a policy and plan in place to manage and respond to security-related incidents.

Your security policy should complement your safeguarding policy. This is important for any measures you put in place to protect children and young people. It should also address the threat of serious violence. It should form part of your suite of policies to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff.

Make sure your staff and students are familiar with your security policy and plan. Senior staff should have an awareness of relevant security networks. They should be able to evaluate and assess the impact of any new initiatives on your security policy and its day-to-day operation.

If a drill is to take place, you should discuss issues with learners sensitively beforehand. You should inform parents and carers so they can provide support at home if necessary.

When considering your plan, you may find it useful to read the following advice and guidance.

- **'Plan to prepare: Prepare to protect'** provides support to evaluate and manage risk posed by terrorism.
- **'Keeping learners safe'** sets out actions and expectations placed on schools to ensure the safety and wellbeing of learners.
- Guidance and resources provided by Safer Communities Wales include the free online **Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) e-learning package**.

## Legal responsibilities for security-related incidents

### Schools

Responsibility for the health and safety of learners lies with the governing body of the school. This is 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. This is 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 must have emergency procedures for dealing with rare incidents such as intruders or terrorism.

### Childcare settings

Children and staff are protected by the duties imposed under the Health and Safety Act. This is 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.

### Further education institutions

Further education institutions should consider security alongside safeguarding responsibilities and the legal obligations they have as employers. They should ensure that their staff and students are familiar with what is required by their security policy and plan.

They must comply with both of these pieces of legislation:

- **Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA)**
- **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR)**

Security-related incidents, including cyber security incidents, should form part of the operational risk management register and be assessed under business continuity plans.

## Cyber security

A cyber security incident can have a profound effect on your setting's ability to function, its reputation and the security of its data.

With the increasing reliance on education technology, it is essential that settings are prepared to minimise any disruption to school operations and have a clear strategy on how to manage a cyber security incident.

This strategy should be a core part of school planning and management arrangements. Cyber security should be considered, and referenced, across the relevant school policies, including safeguarding and security policies. It is also important schools to have an incident management plan in place.

When considering how you will respond to cyber-attacks and what mitigating steps you can take to secure any data that may be at risk, you may wish to consider the following steps in your strategy:

- understanding your authentication model and appropriate security controls you have in place
- roles, responsibilities and reporting lines in the event of an incident
- documented disaster recovery plans.
- established processes for remote wiping of end user devices and resetting network and user access credentials
- considering the education digital standards for **network and data security**.

You can access advice and guidance from the **National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)** and the **Welsh Government** to help you plan, develop and maintain an effective cyber incident response capability.

Cyber incidents related to the national Hwb platform are the responsibility of the Welsh Government and local authorities. Any cyber incident will be managed in accordance with the NCSC advice and procedures, working closely with stakeholders across the education sector. The Welsh Government regularly undertakes health checks to provide assurances that

the integrity and availability of Hwb is protected from threats or attempted unauthorised access.

## Cyber training resources for staff

Awareness and understanding of cyber security risks and how to ensure devices and services are safe and secure can help reduce the risk of a cyber incident occurring.

This [training module](#) produced by the NCSC is designed to support staff to improve their setting's cyber resilience.

Phishing is a common method of cyber-attack and staff can complete a Phishing [training module](#) to help them be alert to some of the techniques used by cyber criminals to gain access to devices and services.

There are other training resources, such as the NCSC's [Practical tips guide](#), and also those available on Hwb.

Schools can also use the bilingual [360 Safe Cymru](#) to self-assess their wider online safety provision, while the technology element will help to support the development of your school's cyber security policies.

## Post-incident planning

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

TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) is a welfare-led process intended to assess the response of a member of staff exposed to a potentially traumatic incident.

You can find resources and details of this training on the [March on Stress website](#).

Additional advice and support can be sought from the [South Wales Trauma Network](#) and the [North-West Midlands and North Wales Trauma Network](#).

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

### Workforce

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

You should be able to explain to your workforce how you will keep them safe at work. Your workplace risk assessment should consider any risks to:

- female employees of childbearing age
- **new and expectant mothers**

You should discuss concerns with staff.

Further guidance:

- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance on managing risks and risk assessment in the workplace**
- **PHW audit tool for preventing and controlling infections in childcare and education settings**
- **Public health advice for employers, businesses and organisations: coronavirus**

Your risk assessments and resulting policies should clearly state any actions that need to be taken in an emergency.

You should also consider how you will maintain communication with families. You should keep them up to date with developments. If possible, you should also provide support, for example providing ideas for activities and work sheets for learners during school closures.

## Staff shortages during an emergency

You are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of children, pupils and students in your setting.

Where you are experiencing staff absences, follow your usual process for covering these. Guidance is available on the **effective management of school workforce attendance**.

If you are considering changing class arrangements, be mindful of guidance on 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. This is subject to a limited number of exceptions set out in the **School admissions code**.

Schools and childcare settings must comply with the '**National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare**'. During staff shortages, you will need to ensure that you can remain within the requirements of group sizes and the staff-to-child ratio.

The standards apply to:

- schools
- childcare settings
- play settings



- wraparound care before and after school
- holiday provision

## Further education institutions

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

As an FE institution, if some staff cannot get to work, you may want to consider:

- 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

## Prioritising places

In exceptional circumstances you may need to temporarily prioritise places within the setting. In this case, priority should be given to:

- vulnerable children and young people
- children of critical workers
- learners taking exams

Any 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 or childcare community resulting in a full closure
- being unable to achieve safe staffing levels
- a short-term building closure because of safety issues (for example heating failure, issues with power supply, minor fire or flood)
- a 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. Families should notify their school if their child is unable to attend. They should explain the reason for the absence to enable the school to record attendance correctly.

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

Where learners are unable to attend school:

- use code I if learners are ill or have an infectious illness
- use code Y if learners are unable to attend in exceptional circumstances, unless a more appropriate code applies

## Recording attendance for remote education

You should refer to the guidance on providing remote education. Where a learner 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 learners' engagement with remote education. You do not need to formally track this in your attendance register.

**Attendance guidance** is available. '**Guidance on school attendance codes**' sets out the list of attendance codes for use in all schools in Wales

## Childcare settings

Childcare and play settings must comply with the '**National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare**'. During staff shortages, you will need to ensure that you can remain within the requirements of group sizes and the staff-to-child ratio. The standards also apply to after-school and holidays providers.

## Learners with disabilities, special educational needs or additional learning needs

Settings should work with their local authority as well as with parents and carers to support vulnerable young people.

Children and young people who require additional support include learners with:

- special educational needs (SEN)
- additional learning needs (ALN)
- disabilities

Schools and local authorities should always work with the family. They should 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.

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

## Safeguarding

Every school and childcare setting must have a safeguarding policy. This policy should be readily available to all staff.

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. Contact details must be included in the safeguarding policy.

Everyone working in a school or registered childcare setting should know how to raise a concern about a child at risk. This is in line with the requirements of the **National Minimum Standards for regulated childcare**. They should be familiar with the:

- local authority contact
- details of the designated safeguarding person (DSP) within their setting to raise such a concern

Non-registered childcare and play settings are expected to follow the advice in the voluntary code of practice **'Working together to safeguard people'**. This includes:

- childcare and play sessions
- after-school clubs operating under 2 hours

Further advice is available from the **Wales Safeguarding Procedures** website and your **regional safeguarding boards**.

## Provision of food for learners entitled to free school meals

You should continue to provide meal options for all learners who are in school. Meals should continue to be available free of charge to all learners who are eligible for free school meals under the benefits-related criteria or under the Universal Primary Free School Meal offer.

In the event of an emergency school closure, we would encourage settings to continue to provide free school meals to the eligible learners identified. You should speak to your local authority and school catering team to see whether this is practical or possible. You should also consider the implications of doing so. This will help to ensure that eligible learners continue to be supported for the short period where they are unable to attend school.

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

## Wellbeing and support

Maintained education providers must follow [statutory guidance](#) on supporting the mental health and wellbeing needs of:

- learners
- students
- staff

This may also be used by non-maintained providers, including:

- nurseries
- FE institutions
- HE institutions

There is additional support on implementing the whole-school approach framework, including:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in-reach support via health boards which provides supervision and guidance to school staff on issues that learners and students present
- additional counselling provision, which is available for children and young people, as well as staff
- training for school staff to use 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
- the '[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](#)
- the CALL 24-hour telephone and text message [helpline](#)
- Social Care Wales' [health and wellbeing framework](#) sets out support for settings and staff.

You should think carefully about how you can communicate with staff and families during a closure. You should agree methods for keeping in touch with staff on a regular basis.

## Early years, childcare and play settings

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 Nurseries Association Cymru](#) (day nurseries)
- [Clybiau Plant Cymru Kids' Clubs](#) (out-of-school clubs and holiday provision)
- [Mudiad Meithrin](#) (Welsh-medium provision)
- [Play Wales](#) (open-access play)
- local Family Information Service

## Further education institutions

Some young people and adults may experience a variety of emotions in response to an emergency situation, such as:

- anxiety
- stress
- low mood

FE institutions have a duty of care to their staff and students. They should provide the necessary support for individuals experiencing wellbeing issues.

HE institutions should work with anxious staff, students and their families to reassure them. Discussions should have a collaborative approach. They should focus on the welfare of the student and respond to the concerns of the parents, carers or students, especially where students are living independently.

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

## Examination and assessment disruption

The Welsh Government works with Qualifications Wales and the WJEC to plan for scenarios where:

- there is a national disruption to face-to-face teaching or learning
- a public health situation prevents the running of a full examination series
- 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
- causes 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.

You should ensure that learners with any medical condition are properly supported. You should continue to consult parents and carers about specific support needs and use your discretion flexibly in agreeing the way forward for specific learners.

We would encourage a practical and flexible approach to ensure individual needs are met. You should consider this 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. This may be due to specific health needs identified as part of the risk assessment process.

Additional consideration may be needed should:

- a child be looked after
- a child be the responsibility of a different local authority
- a child cross local authority boundaries
- learners or school staff cross from Wales to England and vice versa to attend classes or work

You may also need to be familiar with the process when different nations or neighbouring local authorities take a different approaches to school closures and emergencies

## 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. You should consider this 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.

Statutory guidance on ‘[Supporting learners with healthcare needs](#)’ requires local authorities and education settings in Wales to have a healthcare needs policy in place. These should ensure that students with any

medical condition are properly supported. You should continue to consult parents and carers about specific support needs and use your discretion flexibly in agreeing the way forward for specific learners.

We would encourage independent school and ISPI 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 their inspectorate if they temporarily close their residential provision.

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

## Learning continuity

During periods of disruption, it is critical that the learning and wellbeing of all children and young people in our schools in Wales is maintained.

All schools in Wales should set out their contingencies for learning continuity. You should include these within your routine business continuity planning or school development plan arrangements.

This will ensure that learning continuity is planned for, and that the impact of any disruption to the learning of children and young people is mitigated.

[Our learning continuity planning template and learning continuity guidance](#) provides additional support to schools.

## Example critical incident management planning guidance

An example of a [critical incident management planning guidance](#) is available that 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. They provide 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.

# 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 SEN or ALN
- learners from minority ethnic groups who have English or Welsh as an additional language (EAL or 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. 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. Therefore, they will 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. This will depend on their individual circumstances.

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

Learners educated through the medium of Welsh from homes where Welsh is not spoken may also require additional support. This is particularly important 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.

## 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. You should inform parents and carers of the impact if not everyone can attend face-to-face provision due to the nature of the emergency. You should set out the groups that are prioritised for face-to-face provisions and invite parents and carers to notify the setting if they meet one of the critical worker categories.



Parents and careers whose work is critical to an emergency response include those who work in:

- health and social care
- 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. However, 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

## 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

plus 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)
- 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
- 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 suppliers needed to continue during an emergency response
- key staff working in the civil nuclear, chemicals and telecommunications (including but not limited to network operations, field engineering, call centre staff, IT and data infrastructure, 999 and 111 critical services) industries
- postal services and delivery
- payments providers
- waste disposal sectors



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