



Department  
for Education

# **Further education coronavirus (COVID- 19) operational guidance**

**March 2021**

# Contents

Introduction	5
Changes to delivery	5
Minimising coronavirus (COVID-19) risks	6
Public health advice	6
Risk assessment	6
System of controls	6
System of controls: prevention	8
Site safety and estates	24
Site safety	24
Estates	24
Off-site provision and work placements	25
External work placements	25
Performing arts	25
Performances	26
Music teaching in colleges including singing and playing wind and brass instruments in groups	26
Physical activity and sports	26
Students who are clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable	27
Education and training delivery	27
What we expect of FE providers	27
Mode of delivery	28
Delivery of remote education	28
Publication of remote education offers	29
Contingency planning	30
Circumstances where it may be necessary to restrict on-site delivery and move to greater remote delivery	30
Decisions to restrict on-site delivery for public health reasons due to a local outbreak	30
Decisions to restrict on-site delivery for operational reasons	31
Support for students who are unable to access remote digital education	31
Digital curriculum content and resources	34
Support from provider associations	35
Transport	35
Dedicated FE and skills provider transport	35
Wider public transport	36
Safe behaviour off-site	37

Temporary staff and visitors	37
Educational visits	37
Workforce	37
Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable	38
Staff who are clinically vulnerable	38
Staff who are pregnant	38
Health and safety, and first aid	39
Recruitment	39
Teacher training	39
Supporting staff	40
Supporting vulnerable students	40
Transition to FE	41
Supporting students with special education needs (SEND)	41
Special post-16 institutions	41
Supporting students with SEND to attend college	42
Safeguarding young people	42
Mental health and wellbeing	43
Residential providers	44
Defining who should self-isolate in your residential setting	45
Funding, assessment and accountability	45
16 to 19 tuition fund	45
16 to 19 funding arrangements (grant-funded providers)	46
In-year growth	46
Student prior attainment in English or maths GCSEs	46
Funding for remote delivery to 16 to 19 students	46
T Levels	48
T Level industry placements	48
Free meals in further education	48
Funding claims and reconciliation	48
Advanced learner loans	49
Adult education budget (AEB) funding (grant-funded providers)	49
Traineeships	49
Supported Internships and Access to Work	49
Recording supported internships in the school census and individualised learner record (ILR)	50
High needs funding	50
Examinations and assessments	51

Regulation, accountability and audit	52
Annex A: Health and safety risk assessment	53
Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific	53
Sharing your risk assessment	53
Monitoring and review of risk controls	53
Roles and responsibilities	53
Wider guidance on the risk assessment process	54
Consulting employees (general)	54
Resolving issues and raising concerns	55
Approach to risk estimation and management	55

## Introduction

This guidance sets out what further education (FE) and skills providers need to know so that students of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full. It explains the actions to take to stay as safe as possible as we continue to respond to the challenges of coronavirus (COVID-19).

This guidance explains the actions college leaders should take to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) in their setting. This includes public health advice, endorsed by Public Health England (PHE). This guidance is for leaders and staff in:

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

This guidance also covers expectations for students with education, health and care plans (EHCP) in mainstream FE settings, and special post-16 institutions.

Special post-16 institutions should also read the [guidance for special schools and other specialist settings](#).

Apprenticeship providers should also read the current guidance on [providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#).

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

## Changes to delivery

From 8 March all students will be able to return to on-site education.

During the period of national lockdown further education providers have remained open to vulnerable students and the children of critical workers.

Continuing to attend are a small number of students who would otherwise be completing their courses or apprenticeships in February or March and who cannot complete them remotely. This includes those due to complete:

- a licence to practise or other occupational competence assessment, including end point assessments
- training for some critical worker roles, for example:
  - engineering
  - health and social care
  - manufacturing technologies
  - nursing & subjects & vocations allied to medicine
  - transportation operations and maintenance
  - agriculture
  - education and training
  - building and construction, where this is connected to utilities and communications

All other students will continue to learn remotely until 8 March.

From 8 March we expect that every 16 to 19 student (or 19 to 25 with an EHCP) will attend their FE provider in person, and will undertake the majority of their planned hours on site.

Adult learners may also return on site. As was the case prior to coronavirus (COVID-19), you should continue to judge the right balance between on-site and remote delivery for adult students in order to provide high quality education and training.

Special post-16 institutions should continue to allow students to attend as per their usual timetable.

Colleges and special post-16 institutions will be able to test students on return, initially on site and then moving towards home testing. For Independent Training Providers (ITPs) and Adult Community Learning providers (ACLPs) home testing will be available for staff and students from the end of March.

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

## Minimising coronavirus (COVID-19) risks

### Public health advice

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

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

### Risk assessment

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

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

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

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

### System of controls

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

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

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

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

These additional measures will be reviewed in partnership with health experts to decide whether evidence suggests that these measures can be eased ahead of the summer term.

## Prevention

### **You must always:**

- 1) Minimise contact with individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do not attend the setting.
- 2) Ensure face coverings are used in recommended circumstances.
- 3) Ensure everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more often than usual.
- 4) Ensure good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- 5) Maintain enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents.
- 6) Consider how to minimise contact across the site and maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- 7) Keep occupied spaces well ventilated.

### **In specific circumstances:**

- 8) Ensure individuals wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) where necessary.
- 9) Promote and engage in asymptomatic testing.

## Response to any infection

### **You must always:**

- 10) Promote and engage with the NHS Test and Trace process.
- 11) Manage and report confirmed cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) amongst the setting community.
- 12) Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

## System of controls: prevention

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

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

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

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

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

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

You must follow this process and ensure everyone onsite or visiting is aware of it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If a student is awaiting collection:

- they should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, depending on the needs of the student, with appropriate adult supervision if required.
- a window should be opened for fresh air ventilation if it is safe to do so
- if it is not possible to isolate them, move them to an area which is at least 2 metres away from other people
- if they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom must be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products before being used by anyone else
- personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn by staff caring for the student while they await collection if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (such as for a student with complex needs). More information on PPE use can be found in the safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings guidance

In an emergency, call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk.

Anyone with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms should not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital, unless advised to.

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

The individual should not use public transport if they are symptomatic. If arranging their return to their family home to isolate, settings should follow advice on transport arrangements in the [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care settings, including the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) guidance](#).

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

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

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

Any member of staff who has provided close contact care to someone with symptoms, regardless of whether they are wearing PPE, and all other members of staff or students who have been in close contact with that person, do not need to go home to self-isolate unless:

- the symptomatic person subsequently tests positive
- they develop symptoms themselves (in which case, they should self-isolate immediately and [arrange to have a test](#))
- they are requested to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the Public Health England (PHE) advice service (or PHE local health protection team if escalated)
- they have tested positive from an LFD test as part of a community or worker programme

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

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

## **2. Ensure face coverings are used, in recommended circumstances**

We recommend that face coverings should be worn by adults and students when moving around the premises, in corridors and communal areas and in classrooms or workshops where social distancing cannot easily be maintained, except where exemptions apply. Face coverings do not need to be worn by students when outdoors on the premises.

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

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

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

Face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings. They may protect against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in preventing aerosol transmission. In an education setting environment they are unlikely to offer appropriate

protection to the wearer and should only be used after carrying out a risk assessment for the specific situation.

The recommendation to wear face coverings in classrooms will be introduced for a limited time until Easter, and as with all measures, we will keep it under review and update guidance at that point.

### **Exemptions**

Some individuals are exempt from wearing [face coverings](#). This applies to those who:

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

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

### **Access to face coverings**

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

You should have a small contingency supply available for people who:

- are struggling to access a face covering
- are unable to use their face covering as it has become damp, soiled or unsafe
- have forgotten their face covering

No student should be denied education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering.

### **Safe wearing and removal of face coverings**

You should have a process for when face coverings are worn within your setting and how they should be removed. You should communicate this process clearly to students, staff and visitors and allow for adjustments to be made for students with SEND who may be distressed if required to remove a face covering against their wishes.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

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

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

You must instruct students to:

- not touch the front of their face covering during use or when removing it
- dispose of temporary face coverings in a 'black bag' waste bin (not recycling bin)
- place reusable face coverings in a plastic bag they can take home with them
- wash their hands again

Separate guidance is available on [preventing and controlling infection, including the use of PPE, in education, childcare and children's social care settings](#).

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

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

- when they arrive at the setting
- when they return from breaks
- when they change rooms
- before and after eating

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

Staff working with students who spit uncontrollably may want more opportunities to wash their hands than other staff.

Students who use saliva as a sensory stimulant or who struggle with 'catch it, bin it, kill it' may also need more opportunities to wash their hands.

Continue to help students with complex needs to clean their hands properly.

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

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

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

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach continues to be very important. Make sure enough tissues and bins are available to support students and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, you must ensure students with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all students understand that this is now part of how the setting operates. The [e-Bug coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#) contains free resources, including materials to encourage good hand and respiratory hygiene.

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

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

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

- more frequent cleaning of rooms or shared areas that are used by different groups
- frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
- cleaning toilets regularly
- encouraging students to wash their hands thoroughly after using the toilet
- if your site allows it, allocating different groups their own toilet blocks

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

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

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

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

- student’s ability to distance
- layout of the building
- feasibility of keeping distinct groups separate while offering a broad curriculum

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

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

contact with some or all of that group, rather than the whole year group. These are considerations you will need to make when reaching your decision.

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

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

Both the approaches of separating groups and maintaining distance are not 'all or nothing' options and will still bring benefits, even if implemented partially. You may keep students in their groups for most of the time, but also allow mixing into wider groups for specialist teaching, wraparound care and transport. Siblings may also be in different groups.

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

## **Teaching and learning environment measures within rooms and workshops**

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

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

Everyone should avoid close, direct face-to-face contact and minimise time spent within 1 metre of anyone. We know that this is not always possible, particularly when working with many students who have complex needs or who need close contact care. These students' educational and care support should be provided as normal, with other increased hygiene protocols in place to minimise the risk of transmission.

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

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

## Additional mitigation measures

These include:

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

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

## Measures elsewhere

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

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

You should also plan how shared staff spaces are set up and used to help staff to distance from each other. You can read [social distancing to make your workplace COVID secure](#) to help you plan. Use of staff rooms should be minimised although staff must still have a break of a reasonable length during the day.

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

Where institutions have kitchens on-site, these are able to operate as normal, but they and any external catering contractors must comply with the [guidance for food businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Restaurants and food service facilities can remain open for use by staff and students.

Other on-site facilities such as gyms, swimming pools, and 3G pitches can remain open for use by staff and students solely for the purposes of education and training.

## Public facing facilities

Public facing facilities that are used for the purposes of training can operate in line with any local or national restrictions. Regardless of any local or national restrictions you can remain open:

- for education and training, including where education providers use sports, leisure and community facilities where that is part of their normal provision
- for childcare purposes and supervised activities for those children eligible to attend
- for use by elite sports persons to train and compete

A full list of exemptions can be found in the [national lockdown guidance](#).

## Moving between settings

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

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

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

However, where it is essential for workers to attend their workplace, on-the-job and off-the-job training and assessment can continue in the workplace for apprentices.

See current guidance on [providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#).

## 7. Keep occupied spaces well ventilated

Good ventilation reduces the concentration of the virus in the air, which reduces the risks from airborne transmission. This happens when people breathe in small particles (aerosols) in the air after someone with the virus has occupied an enclosed area.

When the setting is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and a comfortable teaching and learning environment is maintained.

This can be achieved by a variety of measures including:

- mechanical ventilation systems – these should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible, and checked to confirm that normal operation meets current guidance and that only fresh outside air is circulated. If possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air or, if not, then systems should be operated as normal as long as they are within a single room and supplemented by an outdoor air supply
- natural ventilation – opening windows (in cooler weather windows should be opened just enough to provide constant background ventilation, and opened more fully during breaks to purge the air in the space). Opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air
- natural ventilation – if necessary external opening doors may also be used (as long as they are not fire doors and where safe to do so)

The [Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) and [CIBSE coronavirus \(COVID-19\) advice](#) provides more information.

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

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

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

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

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

Most staff in FE settings will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work. If a student already has routine intimate care needs that involve the use of PPE, the same PPE should continue to be used.

Additional PPE for coronavirus (COVID-19) is only required in a very limited number of scenarios, for example, when:

- a student becomes ill with coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, and only then if a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained
- performing [aerosol generating procedures \(AGPs\)](#)

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

The guidance on [safe working in education, childcare and children's social care](#) provides more information about preventing and controlling infection. This includes:

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

## **9. Promote and engage in asymptomatic testing**

### **Coronavirus (COVID-19) asymptomatic testing in schools and colleges**

Rapid testing using Lateral Flow Devices (LFD)s will support the return to education by helping to identify people who are infectious but do not have any coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms. For secondary school and college staff and students we are moving to a home testing model (for students, following the first 3 on-site tests). The lateral flow devices used have received regulatory approval from the MHRA for self-use. Home test kits will be available for all staff on return. Once students have been tested three times at college, they will be provided with home test kits for regular testing. For Independent Training Providers (ITPs) and Adult Community Learning providers (ACLPs) home testing will be available from the end of March. Testing remains voluntary but is strongly encouraged.

### **Testing on-site through an Asymptomatic Testing Site (ATS)**

Colleges should offer students three tests at an on-site ATS, three to five days apart, upon their return from 8 March. Testing should start when students return but it can be phased to manage the number of students passing through the test site at any one time.

Colleges have the flexibility to consider how best to deliver testing on a phased basis, depending on circumstances and local arrangements but suggest vulnerable students are prioritised.

Where a test is taken, students may return to face-to-face education following their first negative test result.

Testing is voluntary but encouraged. If consent is provided, students will be asked to self-swab at the on-site ATS and after 30 minutes they should be informed of their results.

Individuals with a positive LFD test result will need to self-isolate in line with the stay-at-home guidance. Those with a negative LFD test result can continue to attend college unless they have individually been advised otherwise by NHS Test and Trace or Public Health professionals (for example as a close contact). They should continue to apply the measures in the system of controls to themselves and the wider college setting.

Colleges should retain a small on-site ATS so they can offer testing to students who are unable or unwilling to test themselves at home. We will provide further information about funding available to support this.

### **Home testing**

Both students and staff will be supplied with LFD test kits to self swab and test themselves twice a week at home. This will also apply to Independent Training Providers and Adult and Community Learning Providers from the end of March. Staff and students must report their result to NHS Test and Trace as soon as the test is completed either online or by telephone as per the instructions in the home test kit. Staff and students should also share their result, either positive or negative, with their college or FE provider to help with contact tracing.

Students aged 18 and over should self-test and report the result, with assistance if needed. Adolescents aged under 17 (and over 11) should self-test and report with adult supervision. The adult may conduct the test if necessary.

Staff or students with a positive LFD test result will need to self-isolate in line with the stay-at-home guidance. They will also need to arrange a lab-based polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test to confirm the result if the test was done at home. Those with a negative LFD test result can continue to attend college or their FE provider and use protective measures.

## Testing in Independent Training Providers (ITPs) and Adult and Community Learning Providers (ACLPs)

A new solution will be developed to provide home testing for independent training providers and adult and community learning providers and this will provide home testing kits for staff and students from the end of March. For staff attending these providers before the 31 March a number of local authorities are offering asymptomatic testing to workers who cannot work from home.

## Specialist Settings

We recognise specialist settings will have additional considerations to take into account when delivering asymptomatic testing and additional guidance will be published and circulated. We recognise that self-swabbing may cause significant concerns for some students with SEND. Testing is voluntary and no student will be tested unless informed consent has been given by the appropriate person.

## Symptomatic testing

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

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

It remains imperative that the system of controls continues to be rigorously applied to enable the safest possible environment. The testing programme is an important addition to supporting leaders to maintain the continuity of education through the pandemic.

## System of controls: response to any infection

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

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

- [book a test](#) if they or their child has symptoms - the main symptoms are:
  - a high temperature
  - a new continuous cough
  - a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- [self-isolate](#) immediately and not come to the setting if:
  - they develop symptoms
  - they have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - anyone in their household or support or childcare bubble develops symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - they are required to do so having [recently travelled from certain other countries](#)

- they have been advised to isolate by NHS test and trace or the PHE local health protection team, which is a legal obligation
- provide details of anyone they have been in close contact with, if they test positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or if asked by NHS Test and Trace

## **Polymerase Chain Reaction tests (PCR) for symptomatic testing**

### **Booking a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test through 119**

Anyone who displays symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) can and should get a test. Tests for symptomatic illness can be booked online through the [NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\) website](#), or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

Essential workers, which includes anyone involved in education or childcare, including students undertaking work placements in [essential occupations](#), have priority access to testing.

Any student can be tested if they have symptoms.

## **Polymerase Chain Reaction tests (PCR) contingency supply**

### **Polymerase Chain Reaction tests (PCR) for symptomatic testing**

Separate to the asymptomatic testing regime, all schools and FE providers were sent an initial supply of 10 PCR test kits before the start of the autumn term in 2020. You can replenish these kits when they run out by making an order through the online portal. You should call the Test and Trace helpdesk on 119 if the kits that you have ordered have not arrived.

Having a test at a testing site will deliver the fastest results for symptomatic cases. These PCR test kits are provided to be used in the exceptional circumstance that an individual becomes symptomatic and you believe they may have barriers to accessing testing elsewhere.

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

These kits can be given directly to:

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

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

Further information on [test kits for schools and further education providers](#) is available.

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

## NHS COVID-19 app

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

Staff members are also able to use the app.

The [guidance for schools and further education colleges in England](#) provides information about how the app works and guidance for its use within schools in England.

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

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

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

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

Close contact includes:

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

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

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

Household members of those contacts who are sent home do not need to self-isolate themselves unless the student or staff member who is self-isolating subsequently develops symptoms, or they have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace or their public health protection team, in which case they must self-isolate. If someone in a group that has been asked to self-isolate develops symptoms themselves within 10 days from the day after the individual tested positive, they should follow [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

They should get a test, and:

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

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

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

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

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

### **Monitoring attendance**

From 11 January, we asked you to resume completing an educational setting status form. The form will be amended to reflect wider opening. The data you supply helps the government monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on colleges.

See guidance on how to submit the [educational settings status form](#) for more information.

### **Test and Trace Support Payments**

Some FE staff and some students may be eligible for a one-off Test and Trace Support Payment of £500. This is payable in one lump sum from your local authority.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

You should call the dedicated advice service who will escalate the issue to your local health protection team where necessary and advise if any additional action is required. You can reach them by calling the DfE Helpline on 0800 046 8687 and selecting option 1 for advice on the action to take in response to a positive case.

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

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

## Admitting students and staff back to the setting

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

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

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

## Site safety and estates

### Site safety

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

If you deliver higher education provision in your setting you should also read the [higher education reopening buildings and campuses](#) guidance.

### Estates

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

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

Additional advice on safely reoccupying buildings can be found in the [CIBSE guidance on emerging from lockdown](#).

# Off-site provision and work placements

## External work placements

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

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

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

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

## Performing arts

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

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

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

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

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

## Performances

You should not host any performances with an audience. You may wish to consider alternatives such as live streaming and recording performances, subject to the usual safeguarding considerations and permission.

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

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

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

Further measures that you can take include:

- playing instruments and singing in groups should take place outdoors wherever possible
- if indoors, use a room with as much space as possible, for example, larger rooms, rooms with high ceilings are expected to enable dilution of aerosol transmission
- if playing indoors, limiting the numbers to account for ventilation of the space and the ability to social distance - it is important to ensure good ventilation, advice on this can be found in the HSE guidance on [air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](#) students should be positioned back-to-back or side-to-side when playing or singing (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible
- position wind and brass players so that the air from their instrument does not blow into another player
- use microphones where possible or encourage singing quietly

## Physical activity and sports

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

Organised indoor and outdoor sport is permitted where it is part of education or training provision for students eligible to attend. Further detail on national current restrictions in place for sport and physical activity can be found in the [national lockdown guidance](#).

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

For sport provision, outdoor sports should be prioritised where possible, and large indoor spaces used where it is not, maximising natural ventilation flows (through opening windows and doors or using air conditioning systems wherever possible), distancing between students, and paying

scrupulous attention to cleaning and hygiene. This is particularly important in a sport setting because of the way in which people breathe during exercise. External facilities can also be used in line with government guidance for the use of, and travel to and from, those facilities. Where you are considering team sports you should only consider those sports whose national governing bodies have developed guidance under the principles of the government's guidance on team sport and been approved by the government i.e. sports on the list available at [grassroots sports guidance for safe provision including team sport, contact combat sport and organised sport events](#). Competition between different colleges should not take place until wider grassroots sport is permitted for relevant the age group.

Please refer to:

- guidance on [grassroot sports for public and sport providers, safe provision and facilities](#), and guidance from [Sport England](#)
- advice from organisations such as the [Association for Physical Education](#) and the [Youth Sport Trust](#)
- guidance from Swim England in the [returning to pools guidance](#) documents
- guidance on [using changing rooms safely](#)

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

## Students who are clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable students are advised to not attend their FE provision, until 31 March at the earliest, because the risk of exposure to the virus may remain high. You should make appropriate arrangements for students to be able to continue their education at home.

All 16 to 18 year olds with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality will be offered a vaccine in priority group 6 of the vaccination programme. At present, these students should continue to shield, and self-isolate if they have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if they have been vaccinated

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

Further guidance for the [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) is available.

## Education and training delivery

### What we expect of FE providers

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

- fully deliver planned hours for students of all ages including those with SEND (with or without an EHC plan)

- ensure that on-site delivery resumes. This may be supplemented by high quality remote delivery recognising that some providers delivered aspects of provision remotely prior to coronavirus (COVID-19).

## Mode of delivery

For much of the autumn term FE providers delivered the majority of 16 to 19 planned hours on-site, supplemented by remote learning, often described as ‘blended learning’. It is reasonable for you to continue to deploy a blended delivery model provided that:

- education delivered remotely meets the expectations set out in the ‘delivery of remote education’ section of this guidance below
- the remote element of the programme complements and does not undermine the overall quality of education and engagement with students
- on-site delivery counts for the majority of planned learning hours for all 16 to 19 students (other than in exceptional circumstances such as when restrictions are in place to contain local outbreaks or if individuals need to self-isolate)

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

## Delivery of remote education

The FE sector responded impressively to deliver substantial remote education to students, continually improving their provision in line with expectations and emerging best practice. This reflects excellent leadership and governance, and the huge strides teachers have made to adapt their delivery.

From 8 March we expect all students to return to on-site provision, with blended learning to be provided where appropriate as set out above, with the exception of students unable to attend on-site for coronavirus (COVID-19) related reasons, for example because they need to self-isolate or are shielding. For these students we expect you to provide remote education to minimise disruption to their learning and progression.

In planning and delivering your remote education, you should:

- **Expectations on participation:** Set clear expectations of students concerning their participation in remote education, so they know when and how they are expected to engage and demonstrate their learning
- **Quantity of provision:** For students needing to self-isolate, use your best endeavours to deliver as much of students’ planned hours as possible. We recognise for some students this may not be possible for example where a student is undertaking a course involving practical teaching and training which necessitates the use of specialist equipment and supervision or with respect to work experience and placements
- **Mode of delivery:** As far as possible provide students live online teaching in lieu of face-to-face classes. This is advised given Ofsted and many providers found during the first lockdown that learners generally prefer interactive ‘live’ online lessons and that it results in greater engagement. Alternatives to live lessons may include recorded lessons

- **Feedback and assessment:** confirm with students the different ways in which they will receive assessment and feedback and provide students with individual assessment and feedback to support progress in their learning. The nature and frequency of assessment and feedback should reflect the individual need and the courses they are enrolled on. It should be at least once every week for academic study programmes and at least fortnightly if undertaking technical or applied general study programmes
- **Monitoring attendance:** have systems in place to check, at least weekly, for persistent non-attendance or lack of engagement with remote education and to quickly agree ways in which attendance and participation can be improved

You should teach planned and well sequenced remote education and training programmes to give students the best chance to build their knowledge and skills. You should also consider how to transfer what we already know about effective face-to-face teaching into remote education, for example:

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

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

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

## Publication of remote education offers

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

Your offer could include:

- what remote education will be made available for different learner cohorts (14 to 16, 16 to 19, apprentices, adult learners)
- delivery arrangements, such as timetabling, digital platforms (sometimes referred to as virtual learning environments) and assessment arrangements
- expectations of students
- arrangements for students studying courses that require specialist equipment or facilities
- support for students without devices, connectivity or a suitable environment for learning
- support for students with SEND who may not be able to access remote education without support

## Contingency planning

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

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

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

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

Nationally education settings have been prioritised for re-opening ahead of other parts of the economy. This reflects the importance of young people's education. You should only restrict on-site delivery if:

- you have received written public health advice to do so
- it is strictly necessary for operational reasons, with all other mitigations having been exhausted

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

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

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

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

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

## Decisions to restrict on-site delivery for operational reasons

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

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

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

- a planned reduction of the number of 16 to 19 students who are on-site during busy exam and assessment periods when it would otherwise be more difficult to implement established infection control measures. Any restrictions should be proportionate to the need, and we would normally expect significant restrictions to last no longer than the period of exams and assessments
- in the event of a very high level of staff absence. It may be appropriate to consider a mixed model, with some teachers delivering lessons remotely to students who are on-site and supervised by other staff. A reduction in on-site delivery should be proportionate to the scale of the staffing challenge

## Support for students who are unable to access remote digital education

The [Get Help with Technology service](#) has been extended to provide support with devices and connectivity for 16 to 19 year olds. This forms part of a £400 million investment to help children and young people continue their education at home and access online social care services.

You are eligible to receive devices where you have students that are aged 16 to 19 who are in receipt of free meals, and where you have students aged 19 and over with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are also in receipt of free meals. Eligible providers were invited to order devices in January 2021. Any provider who has students in receipt of free meals and who has not received an invitation to order devices should alert the Department by contacting [covid.technology@education.gov.uk](mailto:covid.technology@education.gov.uk).

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

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

You can state a preference for the types of device you will receive, based on the [four types of device available](#) and subject to availability. Ownership of laptops and tablets provided under this scheme rests with FE providers. You may lend these to the young people who need them the most. These devices must only be used for publicly funded students aged 16 to 19 and those aged 19 and over with an Education Health and Care Plan.

FE providers eligible to receive devices can also request support for connectivity for financially disadvantaged students who do not have broadband at home. You will need to request access to 4G wireless routers through the Get Help With Technology Service and provide information about how you have identified the number of learners requiring connectivity solutions. DfE will seek confirmation that you have identified which disadvantaged learners do not have broadband at home, through for example, contact with students/parents and/or surveys. In providing evidence of need you should not include any personal information about the students such as their names, addresses or date of birth.

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

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a number of mobile network operators are offering free data for financially disadvantaged families who do not have broadband at home and rely on mobile data to access the internet to help children participate in education remotely. Although, from the 8 March, the majority of students will be expected to return to onsite education, this offer may continue to be important for students who, for example, need to self-isolate or shield during this period.

The majority of mobile networks have now extended their data offer to students aged 16 to 19 and those aged 19 to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Further Education institutions can visit the [Get Help with Technology Service](#) to check which providers are supporting requests for students in further education.

This means that FE providers who have registered with the Get Help with Technology Service will be able to request free data for financially disadvantaged 16 to 19 year olds and those aged 19 to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan who:

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

Requests must be made by someone who has been [nominated to order devices through the Get Help with Technology Service](#).

Providers will need to submit student's mobile information through [our online service](#). There is an [online guide to help you gather mobile information](#). Mobile network providers will vary in how quickly requests are processed.

If you have any questions, please email [COVID.TECHNOLOGY@education.gov.uk](mailto:COVID.TECHNOLOGY@education.gov.uk) using the subject line 'Increasing data allowances'.

If increasing mobile data is not a suitable option for some young people, or if a request for additional data is unsuccessful, FE providers can also [request 4G wireless routers](#) through the Get Help With Technology Service.

When providers request support, DfE will seek confirmation about how you have identified the number of disadvantaged students without broadband at home, who are experiencing disruption to their onsite education, through for example, contact with students/parents and/or surveys. In

providing evidence of need you should not include any personal information about the students such as their names, addresses or date of birth.

For adults aged 19 and over we introduced a change to the ESFA Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding rules for the 2020 to 2021 academic year to enable you to use learner support funds to purchase IT devices and/or internet access for disadvantaged students to help them meet technology costs, where these costs are a barrier to accessing or continuing in their training. The introduction of this additional flexibility into the funding rules will be accommodated within your existing AEB for 2020 to 2021. See the [AEB funding rules 2020 to 2021](#) for full details. This flexibility is only for providers funded by ESFA. In areas where the AEB budget is devolved, contact the relevant mayoral combined authority / Greater London Authority concerning adult student support arrangements.

Where providers are unable to secure suitable access to devices and connectivity for their students, they should consider:

- distributing any available provider-owned laptops accompanied by a user agreement or contract
- defining these students as vulnerable and expecting them to attend on-site provision

## Support for high-quality remote and blended education

This section of the guidance sets out support available to:

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

## Get help with remote education service

Our [Get Help With Remote Education service](#) provides a one-stop-shop for teachers and leaders seeking help with delivering remote education. This package includes helping schools and FE providers to access technology that supports remote education, as well as peer-to-peer training and guidance on how to use technology effectively. It also includes practical tools, a good practice guide and provider-led webinars to support effective remote delivery.

## EdTech demonstrator programme

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

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

## Developing EdTech and online teaching skills

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

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

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

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

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

- using devices
- handling information
- staying safe online

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

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

- [how to teach online](#)
- [blended learning essentials](#)
- [use of technology in evidence-based teaching](#)

[Microsoft](#) [Google](#) and [Apple](#) also provide free training to help teachers use their platforms to build interactive lessons. Certification is subject to a fee.

## Digital curriculum content and resources

[Jisc provides curriculum content](#) mapped against qualifications and national standards for 5 vocational subject areas:

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

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

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

WorldSkills UK has launched a '[Skills Development Hub](#)' which provides free learning resources across a range of vocational areas for use with students and apprentices remotely and in the classroom.

Through the College Collaboration Fund, DfE has funded seven college partnerships to produce a range of high quality digital content and resources for the FE sector. The content consists of free, Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM) compliant resources for use across the FE curriculum. The first tranche of content is now published and can be accessed via the [Remote Education Service](#).

## Support from provider associations

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

- [Association of Colleges](#)
- [Sixth Form Colleges Association](#)
- [Association of Employment and Learning Providers](#)
- [Holex](#)
- [Natspec](#)

## Transport

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

We advise you to work with your local transport authority to identify when it might be necessary to manage demand on public transport or to arrange additional transport. Local transport authorities have received additional [funding for school and college dedicated transport](#) to support children and students in their region.

## Dedicated FE and skills provider transport

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

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

- minimise disease transmission risks

- maintain consistent reinforcement of public health messaging to students and staff, particularly at the point where they are leaving college and heading back into the community each day

Dedicated provider transport services may include:

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

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

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

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

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

## Wider public transport

In many areas, students make extensive use of the wider public transport system, particularly public buses, to travel to education. Students' use of public transport should be kept to an absolute minimum, particularly in peak times.

Where possible:

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

Work with your local authority to:

- consider alternative safe transport arrangements where you have concerns about students' ability to access public transport
- consider the transport needs of students with SEND and those with an EHC plan

## Safe behaviour off-site

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

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

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

You should develop guidance to promote safe behaviour in the wider community with local community leaders as well as staff and students. You can encourage student organisations to lead in promoting coronavirus (COVID-19) safety.

## Temporary staff and visitors

Consider how to minimise the number of visitors to your setting where possible. Supply staff and visitors such as sports coaches must follow your arrangements for managing and minimising risk based on the system of controls. A record should be kept of all visitors with sufficient detail to support rapid contact tracing if required by NHS Test and Trace.

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

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

## Educational visits

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

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

## Workforce

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

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

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

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

## Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

CEV staff are advised not to attend the workplace, until 31 March at the earliest. Staff who are CEV will previously have received a letter from the NHS or their GP telling them this, and there is [guidance for everyone in this group](#). It provides advice on what additional measures individuals in this group can take.

Employers should talk to their staff about how they will be supported, including to work from home where possible. You should continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms. Those living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable can still attend work where home-working is not possible.

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

CEV individuals (over 18) have been prioritised for vaccination in phase 1 before the general population and in line with the priority ordering set by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Current DHSC guidance, informed by PHE, advises that CEV individuals should continue to shield even after they have been vaccinated. This may change as we get further data on the effects of vaccination.

## Staff who are clinically vulnerable

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

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

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

## Staff who are pregnant

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

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

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

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

You should be aware that pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation, or with underlying health conditions at any point of gestation, may be at greater risk of severe illness if they catch

coronavirus (COVID-19). This is also the case for pregnant women with underlying health conditions that place them at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19).

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

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

## Health and safety, and first aid

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

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

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

## Recruitment

You can continue recruiting members of staff.

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

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

## Teacher training

We strongly encourage you to continue delivering initial teacher education (ITE) including hosting initial teacher training in education (ITE) trainees during any type of restrictions. ITE trainees are included in the definition of a critical worker. This means that trainees can continue with their qualifications and to go into their provider on placement. Trainees who continue to go into their host provider should be offered coronavirus (COVID-19) testing in the same way as the wider staff.

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

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

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

## Supporting staff

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

Because some staff may be particularly anxious about attending, you may need extra systems in place to support staff wellbeing. Read about the [extra mental health support for pupils and teachers](#).

## Supporting vulnerable students

Vulnerable students are those who:

- are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including students who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
- have an EHC plan
- have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (including children's social care services) - this includes:
  - students on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services
  - adopted children
  - those at risk of becoming 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET)
  - those living in temporary accommodation
  - those who are young carers
  - those who may have difficulty engaging with remote education at home (for example due to a lack of devices or quiet space to study)
  - others at the provider and local authority's discretion, including students who need to attend to receive support or manage risks to their mental health

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

If vulnerable students do not attend, you should:

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

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

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

You should work collaboratively with other education providers and local partners (including the local authority, social workers, police, youth services, key workers etc) to maximise opportunities for face-to-face provision for vulnerable students.

## Transition to FE

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

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

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

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

## Supporting students with special education needs (SEND)

### Special post-16 institutions

Special post-16 institutions should plan for all students to have access to on-site education using blended learning models that ensure that for 16 to 19 students a majority of taught hours are on site, and for adults (19+) you determine the appropriate balance of on-site and remote education and training based on the type of programme and the student's ability to engage with the programme remotely.

A young person attending a special post-16 institution may decide they do not want to attend despite a place being available for them. Where the young person is not able to make this decision for themselves, the education setting should discuss attendance with the young person's parent or legal guardian. Young people themselves should be given the opportunity to express their views and preferences to the extent that they are able. If a young person or their parent or legal guardian decides they will not attend their education setting, the education provider should move the young person onto remote education and should ensure that they have a system in place to meet the young person's learning programme, including regular reviews and pastoral support.

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

On occasion special post-16 institutions may encounter circumstances where they cannot provide their usual interventions and provision at adequate staffing ratios, or with staff with vital specialist training. In these circumstances they should seek to resume as close as possible to the student's specified provision as soon as possible. Student level risk assessments, which were used last spring, should not be used to filter young people in or out of attendance, but could be helpful to prioritise the provision a young person can get if full provision for all is not possible.

Where it is necessary to take this approach, education settings should work collaboratively with young people and their families to make these assessments and agree an approach that is in the young person's best interests. This should take into account the support that the young person needs and the specific circumstances affecting the family, and their views as to what would be appropriate. Any decisions taken should be regularly reviewed.

## Supporting students with SEND to attend college

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

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

## Safeguarding young people

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

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

Continue to work with and support:

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

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

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

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

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

## Mental health and wellbeing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New and updated [Wellbeing for Education Return](#) resources are now available for education staff who do not have access to locally adapted training and support, or to supplement existing local offers. These include a short, recorded webinar - '[Every interaction matters](#)'. It introduces a simple framework for promoting wellbeing, resilience and mental health, building on education staff's existing roles, skills and personal qualities. It is intended for use by education leaders with all staff in staff or INSET sessions, or for education staff to work through individually. This sits alongside the original [Wellbeing for Education Return content](#) covering issues such as

bereavement, loss, anxiety, stress and trauma and signposting to free [information and resources](#) for education staff, children and young people, parents and carers.

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

Other resources include:

- [MindEd](#), which includes e-learning modules about young people's mental health
- the [Every Mind Matters](#) platform, which has specific advice for adults and young people on maintaining good mental wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- the Association of College's (AoC) [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resource hub](#), which includes advice for students and staff
- the Education and Training Foundation's [mental health and emotional wellbeing advice](#) for FE staff
- Education Support's [mental health and wellbeing support services for all education staff](#)
- free apps available on the [NHS App Store](#) for mental health and wellbeing support
- [Digital Wellbeing of Students guide from Jisc](#), which curates a number of resources and guides
- the [Samaritans' website](#) provides guidance on how to prepare for and respond to a suspected suicide in FE colleges
- through the College Collaboration Fund, DfE has funded a number of college partnerships to develop learner support and safeguarding, including producing resources to support [student and staff mental health](#) and wellbeing
- mental health is also covered in [keeping children safe in education](#) and these principles continue to apply

Consider supporting students with their mental health and wellbeing through:

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

## Residential providers

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

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

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

You can read the [NHS guidance on how to prevent germs from spreading](#).

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

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

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

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

You will need to remain open to those who:

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

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

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

## Defining who should self-isolate in your residential setting

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

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

Consider who shares a kitchen, bathroom, dormitories, and staffing arrangements and read the [isolation guidance for residential settings](#)

## Funding, assessment and accountability

We have issued the [funding rules and guidance for 2020 to 2021](#) and the funding regulations for 2021 to 2022. Given the unprecedented circumstances, we will continue to review the guidance and will notify you of changes.

### 16 to 19 tuition fund

We have provided extra funding for the academic year 2020 to 2021 to help mitigate the disruption to learning arising from coronavirus (COVID-19) and to support students to catch up. The funding is provided to support small group tuition for 16 to 19 students in English, maths, or other elements of technical or academic study programmes to help address gaps in knowledge required for 16 to 19 qualifications. A further round of funding will be made available for the academic year 2021 to 2022 and details will be announced in due course.

We have issued guidance on how the [funding should be used](#) and allocations have been made.

## 16 to 19 funding arrangements (grant-funded providers)

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

### Retention factor

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

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

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

### In-year growth

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

Exceptional in-year growth is a data-driven exercise based on the individualised learner record (ILR) R04 and autumn school census data returns. We do not have a business cases process, it is solely data-driven. All exceptional in-year growth is however subject to affordability and we have now published [further details on how we will fund in-year growth for this academic year](#).

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

### Student prior attainment in English or maths GCSEs

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

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

We will calculate these elements using the 16 to 19 funding formula and the grades awarded to students in the absence of GCSE exams in summer 2020.

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

### Funding for remote delivery to 16 to 19 students

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

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

## Examples of eligible provision

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

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

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

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

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

## Ineligible provision

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

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

## Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

## T Levels

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

Read more about the tolerance and [how T Levels will be funded in 2020 to 2021](#).

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

## T Level industry placements

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

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

See the [industry placements delivery guidance](#) for information about delivering high-quality industry placements.

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

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

## Free meals in further education

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

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

Read further guidance on [free meals in further education funded institutions for 2020](#).

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

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

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

## Funding claims and reconciliation

Information for education and skills training providers on [submitting funding claims](#) to ESFA.

## Advanced learner loans

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

Contact SLC if a student's circumstances change.

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

Currently, approximately 50% of the AEB is devolved to 7 mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Tees Valley, North of Tyne, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, West Midlands, East of England) and to the Mayor of London (acting where appropriate through the Greater London Authority (GLA). Sheffield and West Yorkshire get their powers on 1 August 2021. These authorities are now responsible for providing AEB-funded adult education for their residents and allocating the AEB to providers.

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

In recognition that 2019 to 2020 was a challenging year, we introduced an end of year reconciliation process for ESFA AEB grant funded providers which lowered the threshold for reconciliation to be in line with providers' average delivery (68%) and operated a business case process for providers which delivered below 68% and where they considered there were extenuating circumstances related to their under-delivery. This achieved a balance between maintaining provider stability whilst ensuring the proper use of public funds through an approach that was fair, open and transparent. Full details were given in [2019 to 2020 funding claim guidance](#).

In view of the ongoing impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), including the transfer to remote education and the reduced attendance on-site with effect from 5 January, we are currently reviewing the end of year reconciliation position for 2020 to 2021. Any changes to the published arrangements will be communicated in the ESFA's Weekly Update publication in due course.

In areas where the AEB has been devolved MCAs/GLA are responsible for considering any provider flexibilities in their areas.

## Traineeships

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

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

## Supported Internships and Access to Work

Supported internships are structured study programmes based primarily at an employer. During periods of local or national restrictions, placements should happen remotely wherever possible, but young people can continue to attend covid-secure settings for work placements where the young person, the learning provider and the employer all agree this is necessary.

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

Students taking part in a supported internship who are unable to attend their work placements due to coronavirus (COVID-19) can apply for Access to Work funding until 31 August 2021 for work-related activities where:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **High needs funding**

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

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

Local authorities will continue to receive their high needs budgets and should continue to pay top-up and other high needs funding so that the employment and payment of staff supporting young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can continue. High needs funding will therefore continue to be paid, whether from local or central government.

Funding should not be reduced because some or all young people are not in attendance (either because of self-isolation, or where the institution has temporarily closed, or is temporarily only

able to staff part time provision due to staff absences). Where you need to make temporary changes to the education and support of young people with education, health and care (EHCP) plans due to staff absence, they should both let the local authority know and keep these changes as short as possible.

## Examinations and assessments

### Delivering exams

We have confirmed that exams and assessments for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) that require a student to demonstrate professional or occupational competence, scheduled to take place in February and March can continue to proceed with protective measures in place in line with PHE measures. The position on exams and assessments scheduled for April onwards was considered in our [joint consultation with Ofqual](#).

Exams and assessments that are going ahead can take place in a controlled environment where risk of transmission is low. You should have protective measures in place, in line with [public health measures guidance to support exams](#).

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

On-demand exams and assessments, such as those for Functional Skills Qualifications, can also continue to proceed with protective measures put in place to ensure they are conducted in line with PHE measures, including remotely. For students who cannot access assessments, alternative arrangements, as proposed in the consultation, should be put in place to award results.

The Department for Education and Ofqual recently consulted on arrangements for exams and assessments for 2021. The consultation had two parts, one setting out proposals for GCSE, AS and A levels and one for vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) and other general qualifications. Read the [analysis and consultation responses for the GCSE, AS and A levels](#). For GCSEs, AS and A levels, exams will not go ahead this summer as planned. We have published guidance that explains the decisions that have been made and the actions that schools and colleges need to take.

Read the [consultation analysis and decisions for VTQs and other general qualifications](#). For awarding in 2021, we have identified 3 broad groups of VTQs that will have different awarding approaches described below. Ofqual is currently consulting on the technical framework needed to implement the arrangements for each of these groups and the qualifications in scope for each. Awarding organisations will confirm and communicate the final arrangements shortly.

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

For VTQs used to enter directly into employment, exams or assessments should continue where they are critical to demonstrate occupational or professional competence and can be delivered in line with public health measures. Exams and assessments can take place in a controlled environment where risk of transmission is low. You should have protective measures in place, in line with Public Health England (PHE) guidance to support exams. Where the assessment cannot take place safely it will need to be delayed.

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

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

## Accountability expectations

All exams that were due to take place in schools and colleges in England in summer 2020 were cancelled. We will not publish any provider-level educational performance data based on tests, assessments or exams for 2020. This includes the 2019 to 2020 qualification achievement rates. No provider will be judged on data based on exams and assessments from 2020.

We will not publish data based on exams and assessments from summer 2021 on school and college performance tables or publish qualification achievement rates.

See guidance on [school and college performance measures](#) and [qualification achievement rates](#) for more information.

## Regulation, accountability and audit Inspection

In order to ensure that leaders are focusing on what will best meet the needs of students, Ofsted is carrying out the following inspection activities:

- progress monitoring visits (PMVs) to providers judged to require improvement for overall effectiveness that have not yet received a monitoring visit since their last full inspection
- PMVs to providers judged inadequate for overall effectiveness that have not yet received a monitoring visit since their last full inspection or that are due their second re-inspection monitoring visit (if they continue to be publicly funded)
- PMVs to new providers that are due a full inspection and have received a new provider monitoring visit 2 years ago or more (subject to a provider's individual circumstances)

Ofsted may also carry out PMVs to other providers on a case-by-case basis.

Future inspection activity remains under review and more guidance will be published in due course.

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

# Annex A: Health and safety risk assessment

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) specific

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

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

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

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

## Sharing your risk assessment

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

## Monitoring and review of risk controls

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

## Roles and responsibilities

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Wider guidance on the risk assessment process

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

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

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

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

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

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

- staff
- students
- visitors
- contractors

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

## Consulting employees (general)

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

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

## Resolving issues and raising concerns

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

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

## Approach to risk estimation and management

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

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

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

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



Department  
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