

# Operational Protocol for Covid

## Further Education Colleges in Wales

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***These protocols have been developed by the FE sector in consultation with all unions to ensure that the protocols are flexible and are able to reflect the current threat levels from Covid.***

1. College leaders must consult with union representatives including health and safety representatives in a timely manner on plans and proposed safe systems of working.
2. Colleges must establish a mechanism to monitor and review the implementation of these protocols and matters that arise from their operation.
3. Publish plans to all staff using College Intranets and provide effective mechanisms for feedback
4. Risk assessments must be completed by a competent person and developed in consultation with relevant staff, or partners and wherever possible with recognised union health and safety representatives. Such assessments must include all identified Covid-19 related hazards and pay particular attention to risks that may impact on specific groups (e.g. pregnant women, older workers, BAME workers, those designated as 'vulnerable'. These need to be published without delay for perusal on college intranets.
5. Colleges should establish a process for signing off Covid-19 risk assessments and safe systems of working, led ideally by a Level 5 Health & Safety qualified or other suitably competent<sup>1</sup> senior member of staff. In deciding on the control measures the 'competent person' must always adopt the 'hierarchy of measures' approach set out in the management of health and safety regulations.
6. All signed off risk assessments and safe working practice instructions for workspaces should be published and made available to staff before work is undertaken in a particular workspace
7. Ensure frequent monitoring and review of risk assessments to ensure they remain relevant and any changes in government alert levels or public health guidance are incorporated into control measures.

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<sup>1</sup> A competent person is someone who has sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities that allow them to assist you properly. The level of competence required will depend on the complexity of the situation and the particular help you need. (HSE)

- 8.** When the alert level announced by government changes all college will review their safe systems of working in line with the requirements of this protocol, and take the necessary actions where possible, particularly in relation to staff previously shielding.
- 9.** Risk assessments for activities within a shared venue (e.g. a community venue) should be made accessible for staff and learners within the venue.
- 10.** Colleges must create a register<sup>2</sup> of those employees and workers who previously were formerly shielding and others who have been risk assessed as being at a higher risk as a result of their underlying health conditions, to ensure Managers are aware of this.
- 11.** Individual risk assessments should be undertaken by a 'competent person', for each member of staff identified at clause 10.
- 12.** A risk assessment must be conducted for expectant or breastfeeding mothers prior to any return to the workplace in respect of Covid-19 related hazards.
- 13.** Where it is practicable for employees / workers who were formally shielding or assessed as being at a higher risk should be encouraged to work from home.
- 14.** College leaders must designate a member of the Management Team to monitor changes in Government alert levels and advice, informing College leaders and staff of changes that may impact appropriate measures for staff who were previously shielding and or assessed as being at a higher risk.
- 15.** Contractual Sick Pay will be payable, subject to the provisions of College's Sick Pay Policies in respect of the SSP Covid-19 provisions above.
- 16.** Risk assessments should include consideration of available staffing to support specific planned activity taking account of sickness absence levels or absence of key individuals including safety-critical staff.
- 17.** Colleges must inform all staff of eligibility for testing; provide information on how to book a test and clear instructions regarding non-attendance in the workplace pending test results and to follow government guidelines on self-isolation.
- 18.** Any Covid-19 related absence arising from compliance with regulations regarding self-isolation will not be counted as a period of sickness absence in relation to Sickness Management Policies.

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<sup>2</sup> Such register, if it includes sensitive personal data to be processed and controlled in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations

19. Colleges must record and monitor confirmed positive cases, ensuring where appropriate that RIDDOR reporting is undertaken and appropriate steps actioned where it is known the infection was linked to the workplace.
20. Share Government guidance with staff, learners and unions and consult unions over proposed measures to implement social distancing, when required.
21. Ensure risk assessments take account of availability of PPE to protect members of the public, learners and employees following Government guidance and in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and ensure availability of PPE prior to relevant activities taking place.
22. Ensure appropriate signage to assist in designating social distancing measures
23. Conduct equality impact assessments to ensure the needs of different types of learners are considered in determining access to facilities.
24. Continue flexibility for staff, where practicable to work from home and deploy digital technology.
25. Colleges must keep the appropriate maintenance records for their ventilations systems and share those with trade union reps when requested.
26. Account must be taken of the evidence that regular air exchange is crucial to ensure a safe working environment. Where the teaching spaces are not suitably ventilated, the air in each teaching space must be changed by opening the windows wide every twenty minutes, to protect against infectious particles.
27. Regular air exchange is crucial to ensure a safe working environment. Where the competent person identifies a teaching or work space where there may be a lack of fresh air because it is an enclosed space and not suitably ventilated, a risk assessment should be undertaken to establish protocols such as ensuring time to change the air in those spaces before, during and after teaching as appropriate. For such spaces portable carbon dioxide monitors could be used to assess the level of fresh air.
28. Wearing face coverings is not a suitable mitigation for properly ventilated teaching spaces. However ventilation will have little or no impact on droplet or contact transmission routes. **Therefore, face coverings of a minimum standard of three layers, must be worn by all learners and staff during all alert levels.** While working in shared offices where there is adequate ventilation and a minimum 2m distance between desks, staff can make the personal decision to remove face coverings when seated for reasons of comfort or practicability (eg during online meetings).

- 29.** Colleges should establish appropriate arrangements led by a senior member of staff to monitor and reviewing cleaning operations to ensure that sufficient resources and frequency of cleaning is undertaken and aligned to risk assessments.
- 30.** Communicate to employees and learners the information regarding the additional hygiene/ cleaning measures that are to be implemented and encourage openness of reporting any concerns or shortcomings.
- 31.** Colleges should establish appropriate monitoring arrangements to ensure the availability of suitable and sufficient disinfectant cleaning materials for all areas of all campuses.
- 32.** Colleges should give consideration to implementing a clean desk policy and self-sanitising policy for staff ensuring staff are empowered to keep their own equipment and areas clean.
- 33.** Colleges must ensure that workspaces that are currently designated as 'hot-desk' facilities shared by staff, are taken out of service.
- 34.** Learners, visitors, contractors and staff must have access to hand sanitisers where there are no hand-washing facilities, located in prominent areas across campuses , such as entrances and exits, offices, classrooms, staff rooms, workshops, sports centres, nurseries, reception areas, or places of drop off /collection.
- 35.** Teams must discuss and implement appropriate hygiene measures within their workspaces and take active ownership to assist where they can in ensuring high levels of hygiene are maintained.
- 36.** Visual display notices regarding hand hygiene should be displayed in toilets, kitchens, laboratories and all other workshop areas. Signs should include reference to also ensuring hands are dried properly.
- 37.** Visual display notices regarding Respiratory hygiene should be placed across college campuses, to remind staff and learners of the importance that all sneezes, coughs or blows of the nose are caught in tissues and should be disposed of immediately and hands washed after in accordance with public health advice. This is also known as "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it" by the NHS
- 38.** Visual display notices regarding cleaning down of tools, switches, equipment in workshops and other practical settings where manual skills are taught.
- 39.** Colleges to implement contactless payment methods and eliminate cash handling wherever practicable, whilst ensuring that learners or staff are not disadvantaged.

40. Colleges must prepare a protocol and safe systems of work for Managers and Staff on dealing with a member of staff, visitor or learner who develops symptoms of coronavirus in a College environment following government guidance. An appropriate person will be given responsibility for each college area and the responsible person must have appropriate PPE and procedures in place.
41. Ensure all Managers are aware of the RIDDOR requirements in respect of cases of Covid-19 caused by exposure in the workplace.
42. During alert level four, visitor access to College sites is strictly limited to essential visitors only. Colleges must develop and publish clear guidance relating to visitor access and the associated measures linked to hygiene and social distancing. This needs to include public areas such as cafes and gyms that are on site.
43. Colleges must review updated risk assessments that relate to learners in the workplace to ensure that appropriate hygiene and social distancing arrangements are in place and that accord with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 before any on-site instruction or assessment is undertaken.
44. During alert level four visits to multiple employers or sites in one activity should be avoided wherever possible.
45. Colleges must develop a protocol to manage the safe and hygienic use of College vehicles, ensuring all users receive clear guidance on hygiene measures before and after use and access to hygiene supplies and PPE as required.
46. Colleges to produce guidance on appropriate procedures to be undertaken before and after visits including handwashing etc, to include staff who are conducting visits directly from their home.
47. Staff will need to comply with employers' and other third parties' procedures and guidance, and employers will need to provide any specialist training or guidance required to those staff.
48. Colleges must provide PPE where deemed essential by risk assessments. Stock levels and availability of PPE must be kept under close review by management and supplies of these must be secured before relevant activities take place.

**Agreed 25 March 2021**