

Guidance for schools on addressing the concerns of individual staff (including risk assessment and support plan, where appropriate)

Purpose

To support the process for staff who have concerns in the present COVID-19 period. These may be in regard to underlying health condition or have concerns relating to their age, gender, ethnicity, medical condition, or other that may lead to an individual risk assessment and support plan.

Schools already have a general COVID-19 risk assessment and initial planning framework document which is available separately at www.eqfl.org.uk/coronavirus

A Staged Approach

We are proposing that schools adopt a staged approach to addressing the concerns that staff may have.

1. In the first instance schools should make sure that staff are aware that if they have a concern about returning (or continuing to work) to school that they should take the opportunity to discuss their concerns with the headteacher or member of the SLT (for some schools with large staff numbers it may not be practical for one person to manage all of the conversations). It is acknowledged that many schools are already doing this.
2. The discussion should be confidential and supportive, and its purpose is to allow the headteacher or manager to understand the concerns that the member of staff has. The more supportive and reassuring the tone of the discussion, the more likely it is that the member of staff will feel comfortable sharing their concerns. The appropriate staffing guidance should be followed for categories of staff.
3. It may be that once the concerns are detailed that the manager is able during the discussion to provide the assurance and support that leads to the member of staff feeling more confident about returning. It may also be necessary, depending on the concerns that are aired, to advise the employee to seek medical advice. If in the opinion of the headteacher/manager or the employee, the concerns have not been addressed then an individual risk assessment and support plan can be undertaken.
4. This risk assessment and support plan should be completed alongside a member of staff who may wish to take advice from their trade union.
5. Measures to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus should be taken for staff at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease. This includes maintaining social distancing (2m) where possible.
6. The outcome of the risk assessment and support plan should be that the employee is ready to return or that more evidence/adjustment/advice is needed (e.g. medical advice) or that it is not considered that the employee is ready to return at this time.

Individual risk assessment and support plan template can be found at www.egfl.org.uk/coronavirus

Risk factors for severe COVID-19

- **Age**
Age is the strongest risk factor for severe COVID-19 disease. COVID-19 death rates increase exponentially with age.
- **Clinical vulnerability**
Those members of staff who have a **long-term medical condition**, such as diabetes, hypertension, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and kidney disease, are at greater risk of severe COVID-19 disease. **Pregnant women** are also considered clinically vulnerable.

Some members of staff will be '**extremely clinically vulnerable**' to severe Covid-19 disease and will be shielding until 1st August.

- **Gender**
Being male is a risk factor for severe COVID-19 disease.
- **BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) staff**
People from BAME backgrounds have higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease particularly for Black and Asian backgrounds.

There is currently no risk calculator to enable staff to understand their individual personal risk of severe COVID-19 disease. However, from the current evidence, in general, a combination of risk factors such as being male, from a BAME background and having a long-term medical condition significantly increases the age-related risk (this may be higher for those who are 'extremely clinically vulnerable'). Having multiple risk factors increases risk further.

Disability

it is important to consider how disabled staff are likely to manage their disability during this period through the application of reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments will need to be made for any further challenges presented due to the COVID-19 pandemic.