

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, disability, 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.egfl.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. If the discussions establish that the member of staff fits a medical category, such as being clinically vulnerable, then the relevant Government and staffing guidance for that category should be followed. 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. 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.
3. This risk assessment and support plan should be completed alongside a member of staff who may wish to take advice from their trade union.

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.

Some of the issues that may give staff a cause for concern include:

Age

There are reports that COVID-19 has a greater impact in older age groups. Therefore, older staff may be more at risk as a result of increased age and likelihood of long-term conditions.

Gender

There are reports to suggest that COVID-19 may impact more on men than women and this factor, as well as others, is being explored further by Public Health England.

BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) staff

There are reports that BAME communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Reports suggests that the impact may also be higher among men and those in the higher age brackets.

Disability

Disabled staff are likely to manage their disability through the application of reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments will need to be made for any further challenges presented due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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