



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

GUIDANCE

Guidance for safe operation of post-16 learning from 01 September 2021

Guidance setting out the arrangements for the safe delivery of learning in the further education, work-based and adult learning sectors.

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Contents

Introduction

Application of Alert Level 1 Restrictions

Planning for the safe attendance of learners and staff

Safeguarding vulnerable learners and staff

Protective measures

Provider operations

Transport

This guidance is national guidance that applies across Wales. Any local restrictions need to be adhered to as well as the contents of this guidance.

Introduction

This guidance sets out arrangements for the delivery of learning from 1 September 2021 onwards in the further education, work-based learning and adult learning sectors. We will publish a Local Covid-19 Infection Control Decision Framework for autumn 2021 to guide local decision-making by learning providers, supported by advice from Incident Management Teams (IMTs) and Public Health Wales. This framework is being developed in partnership with the sector, joint trade unions, public health experts and other key stakeholders. It will enable learning providers to tailor some measures to reflect the level of risk identified locally. Further updates to this guidance will be issued to reflect this approach. Meanwhile, this guidance should be used to plan delivery for the

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autumn term.

We recognise that learning providers will have to strike a balance between meeting the educational needs of learners, and ensuring the health and safety of both learners and staff. We expect providers to follow the protective measures in this guidance and to prioritise actions that will help to minimise the transmission of COVID-19. For learning providers, this means applying a hierarchy of controls that will be different for different types of learning and learners.

It is not possible, even with the most careful planning, to eliminate the risk of operating learning settings. However, all workplaces and premises open to the public must take reasonable measures to **minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19**. In planning their delivery, providers should follow the principle of ensuring that robust control measures are in place, so that learners and staff are not exposed to a greater risk of COVID-19 in their learning setting compared to the ongoing background risk of COVID-19 in their local community. Following this guidance, and complying with their statutory health and safety duties, will help providers to identify and mitigate risks as far as they can. Providers should proactively inform learners, parents and staff of the measures they are taking, and be prepared to discuss individual concerns.

Some aspects of this guidance relate specifically to learning which takes place on college campuses, or in other learning centres (including community-based adult learning, “off the job” elements of apprenticeship programmes, and centre-based delivery of employability programmes). In these cases, learning providers have control over the learning environment and are responsible for ensuring that it is safe for learners and staff. For employed learners, including apprentices, whose learning takes place in the workplace, the responsibility for the safety of the learning environment rests with the employer; but the learning provider must satisfy itself of the safety of its staff who are undertaking workplace delivery. Where providers are arranging work placements for learners, they must carry out risk assessments to help ensure the learners’ safety.

Application of Alert Level 1 Restrictions

At the time that this guidance is issued the restrictions set out at Alert Level 1 of

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the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 (as amended) (“the Regulations”) apply. Those restrictions are to be found principally in Schedule 1 to the Regulations.

Further relaxations of those restrictions may be made as a result of the 21 day reviews at which the restrictions in the Regulations are considered and, if appropriate, amended.

Those who need to apply this guidance must, therefore, read the guidance subject to the legal requirements that apply from time to time. This section is designed to refer to the key parts of the Regulations that apply at Alert Level 1 but those applying the guidance will need to ensure that they are familiar with all the relevant provisions that apply to the activity in question from time to time.

- Regulation 15 sets out what is meant by “responsible person” in relation to “regulated premises”
- Regulation 16 sets out the requirement to take all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus
- Regulation 17 sets out specific measures applicable to licensed premises
- Regulation 20 sets out the requirement to wear a face covering in certain indoor public places
- Regulation 57 sets out various defined terms used in the Regulations. This includes, for example, what is a “gathering”, an “event” and what is meant by “regulated” in the context of regulated gatherings or regulated events
- Schedule 1 to the Regulations set out the restrictions that apply at Alert Level 1
- Part 1 of Schedule 1 sets out the rules on gatherings. It makes provision about who can gather and in what numbers in different premises (including private dwellings and regulated premises) and make different provision depending on whether a gathering is indoors or outdoors. It also sets out a number of express reasonable excuses that enable gatherings to take place that would not otherwise be compatible with those rules. It is important to note that some of those reasonable excuses only apply where it is reasonable necessary and there is no reasonably practicable alternative
- Part 2 of Schedule 1 sets out the rules on organising events

As stated above it is important to note that from time to time the Regulations are

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amended and this can include the provisions in Schedule 1. Reference should be made regularly to the [Welsh Government website](#) for latest advice on alert levels and provisions in place.

Planning for the safe attendance of learners and staff

Providers must be able to articulate their approach to managing risks, and how it complies with the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(No 5\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#) (as amended) (“the Regulations”). Based on subject-level risk assessments, if it is not safe for an individual learner to return to face-to-face learning, the provider must put a plan in place for them to access their programme of learning remotely. We do not expect providers to undertake risk assessments for every individual learner (with the exception of Independent Living Skills learners, as set out in this guidance), but to give learners the opportunity to identify their own risks and to discuss any concerns with their provider.

We expect providers to:

- undertake and publish full risk assessments and implement arrangements to manage health and safety risks, in order to ensure that workplaces are COVID-aware before learners and staff are asked to attend (see guidance below on risk assessments) and refer to the [Health & Safety Executive’s guidance](#))
- have plans in place to use blended and/or remote learning to ensure continuity of learning for individuals who have to self-isolate, and to prepare for any possible periods of closure or restricted attendance, referring to the Welsh Government’s [blended learning guidance](#);
- consult regularly with staff, unions and stakeholders
- develop communication plans for staff, learners, parents/carers and employers, including clear ways for them to ask questions and raise concerns
- for campus or centre-based learning, consider how the learning environments and communal areas are prepared to meet the “minimising

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contact” requirements set out in this guidance. See also additional guidance from Public Health Wales on [contact tracing in education](#) which provides guidance on safely minimising the number of contacts resulting from a positive case

- for work-based learning, undertake a health and safety review of employer premises to assess whether it is safe for provider staff to undertake visits
- for adult learning, undertake a health and safety review of community venues used for teaching and learning, following the Welsh Government’s [guidance on the safe use of multi-purpose community centres](#)
- ensure that learning areas are adequately ventilated and that they are aired between classes,
- clearly communicate expected behaviours to learners including current [social distancing requirements](#); hygiene requirements such as regular and thorough hand-washing; what to do if they feel unwell; what to do if they have concerns or anxiety; and what would happen if they do not comply with requirements
- for programmes directly linked to a workplace setting, including apprenticeships, confirm with employers that appropriate hand washing and respiratory hygiene and social distancing arrangements are in place and that they accord with the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#)
- consider how social distancing, handwashing and respiratory hygiene requirements should be reflected in disciplinary policies and ensure that learners are made aware of any consequences of non-compliance with social distancing requirements
- consider travel to and from learning centres, referring to the Welsh Government’s [guidance on travel](#), [guidance on face coverings on public transport](#), and [guidance on public use of face coverings](#)
- determine cleaning and disinfection requirements and issues such as reconnection of water supplies prior to and after re-opening, referring to the UK Government’s [guidance on decontamination in non-healthcare settings](#) and the [Health & Safety Executive’s guidance on legionella risks](#)
- consider requirements to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to learners and/or staff in line with the provider’s risk assessments
- consider timetabling, including staggered opening hours and break times, as

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well as breaks for learners and staff during remote learning sessions to avoid screen fatigue

Learners and staff who have had the COVID-19 vaccine should continue to follow the control measures set out in this guidance.

The use of face coverings

Advice on face coverings is kept under review to reflect the latest scientific advice, and it is envisaged that this will become part of the framework of control for local decision-making.

From 1 September, face coverings are not recommended in classrooms, but may be worn by learners or staff if they prefer to do so.

Face coverings must be worn by staff and learners in indoor communal areas, where it is difficult to maintain two metre social distancing. Face coverings are not generally recommended for outdoors, unless in a crowded or confined space where social distancing is not possible. This should form part of a provider's risk assessment recognising that in communal areas such as corridors the physical layout means that contact groups cannot remain separated to the same degree and where it is difficult to adhere to other control measures. Face coverings must also be worn on dedicated transport.

Face coverings must be worn by other visitors, including parents, to any site (whether entering the building or otherwise), including at drop-off and pick-up points.

Face coverings should not be worn whilst undertaking sport or other physical activity.

Considering the wellbeing of learners is critical to any consideration of the use of face coverings. Face coverings may need to be provided to certain groups of learners who may be unable to obtain them through other means, if they are recommended by risk assessments. Providers should be sensitive to the needs of those who may have exemptions, such as people who have disabilities or

other complex needs which means that they cannot correctly use a face covering, or those who are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who is deaf or has any level of hearing loss. Providers should put systems in place to ensure that exemptions can be signalled and staff know when and how to challenge those not using face coverings.

Face coverings are not a replacement for more effective controls such as social distancing and hand hygiene. Where a decision is made to use a face covering we would encourage that individuals use recyclable/multi use face coverings and use them correctly, covering the mouth and nose, ensuring hand hygiene before putting on and following removal. The World Health Organization recommends that face coverings should be made up of three layers, but do not need to be medical-grade face masks. Guidance on types of face covering, and how to use, wash and dispose of them safely as appropriate to their type is included in the [face coverings guidance](#).

In the event of a rise in transmission rates locally, or if there is a cluster of cases at a learning provider, advice will be provided by the local authority Environmental Health Team and Public Health Wales on whether any additional measures are required, including the use of face coverings.

Where providers run any facility which is open to the public (and in planning for future reopening in line with the wider lifting of Covid restrictions), such as a café or salon, [face coverings are mandatory for staff, learners, customers and visitors using the facility](#). Learners on work placements and visiting tutors must abide by the rules in place at those workplaces.

Regardless of their provider's policy, learners and staff may choose to use face coverings to help minimise the risk to themselves and others, and should be encouraged to do so if this helps them to feel more confident about attending their college or learning setting. If anyone wishes to wear a face covering for personal reasons anywhere on-site when it is otherwise not mandated, they should be permitted to do so. This may help support wider wellbeing, reduce anxiety and provide additional reassurance for some individuals alongside other mitigating measures.

Safeguarding vulnerable learners and staff

Clinically extremely vulnerable (previously 'shielding') learners and staff

Please refer to the [Guidance on protecting people defined on medical grounds as clinically extremely vulnerable](#).

Where a staff member falls into the clinically extremely vulnerable (ex-shielding) category there is a need to consider working from home as their default position, regardless as to whether national or local health protection measures are in place. This will be the most appropriate mitigatory measure in order to take account of their vulnerability. Providers and employers should undertake full considerations, taking account of reasonable measures to minimise the risks of exposure to coronavirus in the workplace setting. The Welsh Government recommends that risk assessments be made on an individual basis for such individuals, taking account of their individual needs and circumstances. For example, where a clinically extremely vulnerable member of staff is willing to return to the work place and undertake face-to-face duties, they should be enabled to do so as far as is reasonably practicable, **taking reasonable measures** into account and subject to additional mitigatory measures based on their individual risk assessment. In some cases, such as some supporting and technical staff, it will not be possible to work from home, so it is particularly important that up to date risk assessments are in place, and reasonable measures have been considered and put in place. It is also important that all staff and learners in this category have opportunities to discuss any concerns they may have before they return to the education/work setting, and consideration should therefore be given to arranging a meeting with individuals to allow for these discussions to take place.

The Welsh Government's [workforce risk assessment tool](#) can be used by staff to undertake a self-assessment. There are also a number of models which can be used to support managers during discussions with their teams about an individual's personal risk factors when returning to, or remaining in, the workplace. The aim is to help enable good quality conversations between

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managers and colleagues about any personal circumstances which may increase their risk from coronavirus, and to agree any actions which need to be carried out..

For both learners and staff who were previously shielding and then return to the education setting/college/learning centre/work setting, it is important that extra care be taken to ensure that those individuals in particular, and those around them, adhere to **strict social distancing guidelines** and **workplace guidance**, respectively.

If in doubt about whether an individual's health condition means they should not be attending their workplace or learning provider, staff, learners, parents and carers should take advice from their GP or hospital doctor. They may wish to discuss the risks of attending with their doctor and their provider before making a decision, and this may result in their doctor providing a medical certificate to indicate that they should not return at this time.

We would not expect any staff who are at increased risk but who are attending the workplace to be placed with learners who cannot reasonably adhere to the social distancing measures.

Learners or staff at 'increased risk'

Individuals at '**increased risk**' are at a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This category includes people aged over 70, those who are pregnant and those who have a range of chronic health conditions.

The advice to this group is the same as it is to the wider population. Learners and staff in this category can attend their college or centre, as long as safety measures are in place as set out in this guidance and the **reasonable measures guidance**. Where possible, staff should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to maintain social distancing. If an individual prefers to maintain social distancing when it is otherwise not mandated this choice should be respected. Providers may wish to encourage individuals to undertake their own risk assessments, and offer to meet with the individual to discuss their concerns.

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If in doubt about whether their health condition means they should not be attending their provider, staff, learners, parents and carers should take advice from their GP or hospital doctor. They may wish to discuss the risks of attending with their doctor and their provider before making a decision.

We would not expect any staff who are at increased risk but who are attending the workplace to be placed with learners who cannot reasonably adhere to the social/physical distancing measures.

Guidance for pregnant women and employers is available from the [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists website](#).

Living with an at increased risk or clinically extremely vulnerable (formerly shielding) person

If a learner or staff member lives in a household with someone who is at increased risk or was previously shielding, they should closely adhere to social distancing measures in place in their college or learning centre, and the learner should be able to understand and follow those instructions. This should, however, be considered in the light of the most current advice around [shielding](#). Learners and staff in these circumstances may have concerns about attending and should be able to discuss these with their learning provider.

Learners and staff who are anxious about face-to-face learning

All other learners and staff should be expected to attend in line with their provider's own attendance policy and staff employment conditions.

Providers should bear in mind the potential concerns of learners and staff who may be reluctant or anxious about attending and put the right communications and support in place to address this. This may include those who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is at increased risk, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from COVID-19,

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including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, or who have certain conditions such as obesity or diabetes.

If learners or staff with significant risk factors (or learners' parents or carers) are concerned, we recommend the provider discuss their concerns, conduct an individual risk assessment and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk of attending.

Our [workforce risk assessment tool](#) can be used by staff in all education settings, to carry out a self-assessment of known COVID-19 risk factors and to plan mitigating actions.

Learners with additional learning needs (ALN)

Our goal is to ensure that learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not disadvantaged compared to their peers.

Learners with ALN will benefit from face-to-face learning and support, and this should be part of their learning programme unless risk assessments indicate that it is not safe for individual learners to attend at this time. Providers must make reasonable adjustments to meet learners' needs in line with their statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

In planning for the safe attendance of learners, providers need to consider that learners with ALN may struggle with:

- changes to their learning environment or routines, where the provider has made adjustments (for example, by reconfiguring classrooms or reducing furniture or equipment)
- social distancing. Where possible, learners should be supported and encouraged to maintain distance and not touch staff and other learners. This may not be possible for some learners with complex needs or at all times. Colleges should ensure that learners on ILS programme are kept in their contact groups and avoid mixing with other cohorts. Staff who provide close or contact support to learners should undertake risk assessments and be provided with PPE if the risk assessment shows that it is needed (refer to

Section 6 below). Providers should provide guidance and information such as posters in accessible, “easy read” and visual formats, and make this available to learners and parents before they return so that they know what to expect

- following hand washing and respiratory hygiene requirements and the “catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands” protocol. Providers should consider what frequency of hand washing is best for learners, and incorporate time for this in timetables, with supervision if required. Increasing the frequency and thoroughness of hygiene routines will help to mitigate the risks of contact between learners. Some learners may also require personal care such as help with toileting; in these cases, PPE should be used as set out elsewhere in this guidance
- articulating their symptoms if they are feeling unwell

Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for learners with additional learning needs can visit and provide interventions as usual. These visitors should be given clear **guidance** on site safety requirements including social distancing and hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

Some learners with ALN, including some of those who study Independent Living Skills (ILS) programmes, may have difficulties in understanding and complying with distancing requirements, and some may require personal care such as help with toileting. We expect learning providers to do all they can to mitigate and manage risks, in line with this guidance. This may include increasing the number of rooms available for ILS, and adapting the structure of learning programmes in order to help ensure learners’ safety.

Protective measures

Learning providers must continue to follow the system of controls set out below.

Prevention:

1. Minimise contact between individuals wherever possible.
2. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 **symptoms**, or who have someone in their household or

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extended household who does, do not attend their college or training centre or work setting.

3. Ensure adequate levels of ventilation.
4. Ensure good hand and respiratory hygiene.
5. Continue **enhanced cleaning**, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.
6. Wear face coverings where required and/or, where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Response to any infection:

7. Comply with the Welsh Government's and NHS' **Test, Trace, Protect strategy** and under GDPR rules staff and parents, carers, guardians will need to be informed of the learning providers' obligations under the TTP strategy.
8. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

Prevention

Minimise contact between individuals wherever possible

The guidance below should be used by learning providers to plan delivery from autumn 2021, and will be supplemented by a local control framework which will set out measures that can be used at different risk levels locally.

We know that minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces the transmission of COVID-19. The diversity of the post-16 sector, in terms of the learning environments, provision and learners involved, means that a tailored, risk-based approach needs to be adopted; this is why our guidance differs from the operational guidance for the schools sector, but we have aligned it as far as possible for similar groups of learners. Our aim is to move to a position where learning can operate as “normally” as possible in the autumn, minimising disruption to learners' progress.

The model set out below continues to be differentiated for different types of learning and groups of learners. This reflects differences in transmission rates,

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severity of illness and vaccination rates for both adults and children; the need to ensure parity between similar types of learning in different settings; the practicalities of limiting contact between individuals; and the aim of ensuring that learners can have a rich experience which supports their wellbeing as well as their educational goals.

Outside classrooms and other teaching environments, learning providers should avoid large gatherings and must apply the required social distancing measures of two metres wherever possible. This applies to communal areas such as refectories, sports halls and reception areas, where 2m distancing should be maintained between different contact groups, i.e people you do not regularly 'cluster' with, whether this is your friends, family or co-workers.

In configuring offices and other work areas for staff, providers should plan to follow current [workplace guidance](#), which at Alert Levels 1 and 2 allows for groups of six people from different households to form a cluster or group to work together without social distancing. Group members are advised to keep their distance from each other as much as possible, including avoiding physical contact such as shaking hands or hugging. Providers are required to take all reasonable measures to maintain two metre social distancing *between* these clusters or groups and others who are not part of the group.

Individuals who are part of the same household do not need to socially distance from one another, unless any [local restrictions](#) in place requires that, and if so it should be adhered to for all groups.

Work placements for FE and Traineeship learners can be arranged, subject to up-to-date health and safety and risk assessments being carried out. The provider must be assured the workplace is safe and the employer is complying with regulations and relevant sector workplace and reasonable measures guidance. The employer's safe working practice policy should be considered as part of health and safety checks. The provider should make sure the learner understands safe working practices around social distancing and hand washing and respiratory hygiene, and that they know to inform the provider if they have any concerns about safety in the workplace.

1. Full-time learners in FE colleges

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From 1 September 2021 the use of contact groups is no longer recommended for full-time learners, including those studying A level, vocational and Access programmes. Instead, contact tracing will be used to ensure that, if one individual tests positive for COVID-19, only close contacts will be required to self-isolate. Colleges will have flexibility to decide how they wish to use blended learning models, both to manage any self-isolation requirements and to enhance all learners' experiences. Anyone who has symptoms, or lives with someone who has symptoms, or has been in close contact with someone who has symptoms, will still need to self-isolate and take a test. If they test positive, contact tracing will then apply.

For vocational programmes, colleges must comply with any appropriate **workplace guidance** for the relevant industry, to ensure that their workplaces are COVID-aware when planning and managing delivery. In particular, for "close contact" industries like hairdressing or care, where learners require physical contact with clients or with one another in order to learn skills and carry out assessments, industry-standard PPE must be worn. Learners studying close contact subjects such as hairdressing or beauty therapy may practice techniques on other members of their contact groups. Learners must have training on the safe use of PPE. Where learners are based in any workplace and if tutors visit, they must adhere to the rules on **wearing face coverings** in indoor public places as appropriate to the **workplace**.

Social distancing remains the most effective way of reducing transmission, and therefore wherever distancing of two metres can be achieved through classroom reconfiguration, it should be implemented.

2. Part-time learners, adult learners in the community, and employed learners on college- or centre-linked programmes, including apprentices

From autumn 2021, learning providers can operate a contact group model for these groups of learners. As a guideline, providers should work to a maximum contact group size of 30 where possible.

In planning for delivery from autumn 2021, learning providers must:

- undertake risk assessments at subject level and put appropriate safety

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requirements such as PPE, recognising the increased risks around delivering “close contact” subjects

- consider how assigned seating or workstations can be used to help keep close contacts consistent within the overall contact group, to help minimise disruption if one member of the group is symptomatic or tests positive for COVID-19. Social distancing should still be used as the primary control measure where this is possible, in addition to reasonable measures to **minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19**
- comply with any appropriate **workplace guidance** for the relevant industry when planning and managing delivery as well as the reasonable measures guidance. Where learners are based in any workplace they must adhere to the rules on **wearing face coverings** in indoor public places as appropriate to the **workplace**
- put measures in place to ensure that adult learners stay within their contact group and do not mix with other learners, who may be unvaccinated and therefore at greater risk if they become infected with COVID-19

Learners who are interacting with clients or in a “hands-on” way with one another to practice techniques, and learners who spend time on employer premises, are at greater risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 and this should be reflected in risk assessments and ensuing actions.

Assessors may undertake workplace visits to apprentices, subject to the risk assessment requirements set out in this guidance. Assessors must maintain a two-metre distance from other people during visits and wear a face covering if the workplace visited requires it under rules for indoor public places.

3. Learners on Independent Living Skills programmes

Learners in this group are likely to interact with relatively high numbers of teaching and support staff, and the nature of the cohort and of their learning means that distancing is unlikely to be an option. At this time, colleges should plan to operate contact groups for ILS learners and should avoid them mixing with learners from other cohorts. Colleges should consider undertaking individual risk assessments for learners to identify their specific health and safety risks and needs, and should liaise with parents and carers to help them

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decide whether learners with complex health needs should return to college at this time. Separate **guidance** is available for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, (which although is for a different age group), provides information on managing social distancing and PPE in the context of people with additional needs.

4. Traineeships

For traineeship learners who are fully centre-based, providers can operate as set out in (a) above.

Where learners are undertaking work placements, as part of the regular progress review that the provider will hold with each learner, the provider should check the learner's understanding of safe working practices, and where possible the work placement provider should be involved in the review.

Where trainees are based in workplaces that are included within the rules of **face coverings in indoor public places**, they must comply with these rules unless they have an exemption. Visiting tutors or assessors must also comply with wearing a face covering whilst on the **workplace** premises when relevant.

5. Higher education students in FE institutions

FE institutions should apply the same approach to their HE students as set out for other groups of learners in this guidance, based on whether they are full-time or part-time.

Examinations

Arrival and departure of candidates

As candidates arrive before the scheduled start time of exams, you will need to ensure this is managed alongside the arrival of other students at the college or learning centre, in order to keep exam candidates separate from other students.

You should also ensure social distancing measures are followed for any

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candidates who arrive late for the exam.

You will need to ensure that there is a plan to manage candidates entering and leaving the examination room and site, particularly as exams may finish at different times. As part of this, you will need to take account any candidates who require additional time in exams.

Set up of the exam room

Where exams are being undertaken by mixed cohorts, adult and part-time learners should be accommodated separately or seated two metres from full-time learners and from one another. As detailed elsewhere in this guidance, it is important to ensure good ventilation and maximise this wherever possible.

Invigilators may walk up and down aisles between desks, but there must also be points in the room where an invigilator can stand at least two metres from the nearest desks and can see all the candidates in the room. If an invigilator passes close to a desk but spends the majority of time elsewhere, e.g. at the front or outskirts of a room, that does not make them a contact.

Invigilators

Invigilators can move between different schools, colleges and learning centres. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain social distancing from other staff, and follow all other protocols for visitors including face coverings.

Invigilators should be fully briefed ahead of the exams about what the expectations are for them to minimise contact and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff.

There is no requirement for invigilators to wear gloves when collecting exam scripts from candidates but they should wash their hands thoroughly and more frequently than usual and particularly after handling exam papers.

Maintaining distance between staff and candidates

Invigilators and other staff should stand alongside candidates when interacting with them rather than face to face. For prolonged encounters of over 15 minutes, for example when scribes/readers or other individuals are providing support to candidates, staff should maintain a two metre distance where possible, for example using separate rooms from other candidates to accommodate this. Where this is not possible, they should avoid close face to face contact and minimise any time spent within one metre of others.

These arrangements may not be possible when working with some candidates who have complex needs, in which case these candidates' educational support should be provided as normal during exams. For additional information, refer to the [guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners](#).

Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 symptoms, or who have someone in their household or extended household who does, do not attend their college or training centre

Under no circumstances should learners or staff attend their learning provider or workplace if they:

- feel unwell and have any of the identified COVID-19 [symptoms](#). If this is the case, they must [self-isolate](#) immediately and book a COVID-19 [test](#)
- have tested positive to COVID-19
- live in a household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19, or has tested positive for COVID-19 (in which case they should be aware of the need to self-isolate immediately)
- have been asked to self-isolate by the NHS Wales [Test, Trace, Protect](#) service

Colleges and other learning providers play an important role in supporting contact tracers to undertake their role in determining the contacts of a positive case. The overall aim is to safely [minimise the number of contacts](#) resulting from a positive case. It will not be a one size fits all approach and settings will

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need to determine how they can most effectively implement the guidance to reflect their local context and circumstances.

Providers should have a clear escalation policy and procedures in place if learners or staff begin to show symptoms of COVID-19 while at their college or centre. These need to be fully understood by staff, learners (where able) and parents/carers.

Surfaces that learners or staff with symptoms have come into contact with should be carefully and thoroughly cleaned according to this **guidance**.

Anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home and self-isolate while also making arrangements to be tested. The Welsh Government's **self-isolation guidance** sets out the actions to be followed and the periods of isolation required for those with possible or confirmed cases of COVID-19, and their household/extended household members, and this should be read carefully and adhered to.

Learners or staff who have had a positive Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test should not attend their learning provider, and should arrange for a confirmatory PCR test.

Ensure adequate levels of ventilation

Those in control of a premises have a **legal duty** to ensure effective ventilation.

Providers should ensure adequate levels of ventilation. Where centralised or local mechanical ventilation is present, re-circulatory systems should be adjusted to full fresh air. If this is not possible systems should be operated as normal. Ventilation should commence ahead of the start of the day and continue after classes have finished. Where ventilation units have filters present enhanced precautions should be taken when changing filters. Ventilation systems should be checked or adjusted to ensure they do not automatically adjust ventilation levels due to differing occupancy levels.

The **Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers** has provided advice to help employers provide adequate ventilation in their workplaces and

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premises during the pandemic. The guidance builds on helping you to identify and take action in poorly ventilated areas. It also provides guidance on other factors to consider when assessing the risk from aerosol transmission, and determining whether adequate ventilation is being provided to reduce this risk.

You should be maximising the fresh air in a space and this can be done by:

- natural ventilation
- mechanical ventilation
- a combination of natural and mechanical ventilation, for example where mechanical ventilation relies on natural ventilation to maximise fresh air

Read the [guidance on air conditioning and ventilation](#) and find out how you can provide adequate ventilation in your workplace, helping to protect workers and other people from transmission of coronavirus.

There is also advice available for building services, particularly around ventilation of buildings, both in use and when returning to buildings which have been closed from the following:

- [The Building Engineers Services Association](#)
- [REHVA](#)

If buildings have been closed or had reduced occupancy water system stagnation can occur due to lack of use, increasing the risks of Legionnaires disease. [HSE guidance covering water management and legionella is available here](#). (Where mains water has been turned off since the close of the premises at lockdown, when it is reconnected it will need running through to flush away any microbiological or chemical residues built up while the water supply was disconnected).

Steps that will usually be needed:

- checking any water supplies - mains water supplies that have to be reconnected (because they were turned off when a premises was closed) will need running through to flush away any microbiological or chemical residue that might have built up while it was disconnected

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- the Drinking Water Inspectorate, who are the Regulators and technical experts in England and Wales, has produced this [advice on maintaining drinking water quality](#) when reinstating water supplies after temporary closure due to the COVID-19 outbreak
- checking whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.
- most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings or you are unsure, advice can be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers
- removing any fans from, for example, workstations, to avoid the recirculation of air
- opening windows and doors frequently to encourage ventilation, where possible, and if it is safe to do so

Ventilation and the new variants (technical details for those with mechanical systems)

Ventilation is a key mitigation measure to control the far-field (more than 2m) transmission of COVID-19 by aerosols between people who share the same indoor space. Ventilation is not likely to have significant impacts on close range transmission by droplets and aerosols (within 1-2m) or transmission via contact with surfaces (high confidence).

Higher viral load associated with people who have the new variant could have significant implications for transmission via the air, as previous scientific modelling suggests that viral load is a major determinant of airborne transmission risks. SAGE before the emergence of new variants stated; for most workplaces and public environments adequate ventilation equates to a flow rate of 8-10 l/s/person based on design occupancy, although guidance for some environments allows for lower flow rates of 5 l/s/person. Since the introduction of the new variant, SAGE has recommended where possible, increasing ventilation flow rates mentioned above by a factor of 1.7 (70%) to account for the increase in transmissibility.

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For some existing and older buildings, ventilation systems may not have been designed to meet current standards and additional mitigations may be needed. As a precautionary measure it is recommended that ventilation is included as part of any workplace or public indoor environment COVID secure risk assessment, and the necessary mitigation measures are adopted.

In most buildings, maintaining comfortable temperatures and humidity above 40-60% relative humidity is likely to be beneficial to reducing the survivability of the virus. However, this is likely to be less important than the ventilation rate mentioned above (medium confidence).

Ensure good hand and respiratory hygiene

Washing hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and running water or hand sanitiser is an effective way of minimising the risk of contracting COVID-19. Providers should, via messages, signage and notices, remind all learners of the need to clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. More information on correct handwashing procedure is included in the social distancing [guidance](#). Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future. Points to consider and implement include:

- whether the site has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser ‘stations’ available so that all learners and staff can clean their hands regularly
- supervision of the use of hand sanitiser given the risks around ingestion. Learners with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly
- building these routines into the organisational culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure everyone understands the need to follow them

The ‘catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands’ approach continues to be very important, so providers must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available to support learners and staff to follow this routine. As with hand cleaning, providers must ensure that learners with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all learners understand that this is now part of how your

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provider operates.

Some learners with complex needs may find it difficult to maintain good respiratory hygiene effectively. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these learners and the staff working with them, and is not, on its own, a reason to deny these learners face-to-face education.

Continue enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach

Providers should follow the latest [cleaning guidance](#) for non-healthcare settings. Points to consider and implement include:

- putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes:
 - more frequent cleaning of rooms/shared areas after they have been used by different groups
 - frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
 - consideration of providing cleaning products and encouraging learners to clean their own desks before and after use
- where possible, providing separate toilets for different contact groups. Where this is not possible, using hand sanitiser before entering the toilet and ensuring toilets are cleaned regularly will help. Learners must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

Wear face coverings and/or, where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)

Learning providers should plan for the use of face coverings in indoor communal areas where social distancing cannot be maintained.

It is important to remember that social/physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene (catching a cough or sneeze in a tissue or covering the mouth and nose with an elbow or sleeve then washing your hands) remain strongly evidenced to be the most effective ways to prevent the spread of

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coronavirus. There is therefore no need to use face coverings when undertaking routine educational activities in colleges or centres. PPE is protective equipment that are manufactured to regulated standards to give a known level of protection to the wearer. Circumstances where PPE may be required are set out below.

Suspected cases of COVID-19

- Gloves, aprons and a fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn if someone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care.
- Eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning the areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been.

Intimate care

- Gloves and aprons should continue to be used when providing intimate care to a learner. This can include personal, hands-on care such as washing, toileting, or first aid and certain clinical procedures such as assisted feeding.
- Fluid-resistant surgical masks and eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
- Gloves, fluid repellent gowns, FFP3 masks and eye protection are indicated when undertaking aerosol generating care procedures such as suction.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions.

Vocational learning

As set out above, providers should carry out risk assessments for vocational and work-based delivery and should use appropriate industry-standard PPE to help reduce the risk of infection. This will be necessary for “close contact” industries in particular, and for employed learners such as apprentices. Learners and staff

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must have training on the safe use of PPE as appropriate for their industry. Where learners are based in any workplace and if work-based learning practitioners visit, they must adhere to the rules on wearing face coverings in indoor public places as appropriate to the workplace.

The use of PPE by staff within providers should be based on a clear assessment of risk, taking into account needs of the individual learner. Following any risk assessment, where the need for PPE has been identified, it should be readily available and provided. Further information has been provided by the **Health and Safety Executive**. All staff should understand how to put on or remove PPE in the right order, safely dispose of the waste and use correct hand hygiene steps to reduce the risk of onward transmission of infection. In any case, hand washing should always be practised before putting on and after removing PPE.

Response to any infection

Engage with the Test, Trace, Protect scheme

Test, Trace, Protect works by:

- testing those people who have coronavirus symptoms, asking them to **self-isolate** from family, friends and from their community, and requiring that they, their household and extended household self-isolate while they take a test and wait for the result. People with symptoms can apply for a test for themselves, or someone in their household with symptoms can apply for a test. This includes adults and children including the under 5s. Information and **guidance** for staff and how to apply for a test can be found **the Welsh Government website**
- tracing those people who have been in close contact with people that have tested positive for the virus, requiring them to take precautions through **self-isolation**. Further information on contact tracing and how it operates can be found **on the Welsh Government website**
- ensuring that if the symptoms are not due to coronavirus, individuals and their contacts can get back to their normal routines as soon as possible
- providing advice and guidance, particularly if the person who has symptoms

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or their contacts are in the **clinically extremely vulnerable** group or the **increased risk** group

Providers should reinforce these messages and in particular, remind all those who show any of the virus symptoms to self-isolate immediately and book a test. Those living with someone showing symptoms should also self-isolate.

In the event of a positive test, a contact tracer will contact the person tested to help identify potential contacts. A second contact tracer will then get in touch with those contacts and advise them to self-isolate. These people will only be required to take a test if they develop symptoms.

Where staff have maintained social/physical distancing rules and adhered to hand washing and respiratory hygiene measures during work and where required have used personal protective equipment (PPE) or worked behind an appropriate screen or partition, it is unlikely that they would be regarded as part of a contact tracing exercise for these purposes. It is important, however, to remember that even where a provider has all of the appropriate controls in place, employees may not always remember incidences where they have failed to follow these controls.

A positive test on site does not require closure of that site. The process of testing and contact tracing is part of the 'new normal' and where providers follow these guidelines carefully, there is no cause for alarm. The latest information on contact tracing and testing in educational settings can be found on the **Welsh Government website** and should be read in conjunction with this section.

The Welsh Government has published **guidance** on keeping records on staff, customers and visitors, in order to help track COVID-19 infections and contain outbreaks. This applies to certain sectors including hospitality, tourism and leisure, close contact services, and facilities provided by local authorities. Learning providers are not required to keep these records, but the guidance **does** apply to some services run by colleges which are used by the public, such as hairdressers, beauty salons, leisure facilities and restaurants, which should follow the sector guidance to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

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To support the operation of education settings, lateral flow device (LFD) testing is being made available to provider staff and learners. Guidance is available via the [LFD asset bank](#).

Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice

Building upon the Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (2020), Public Health Wales has provided [specific advice](#) regarding the investigation and management of clusters and outbreaks of COVID-19 in educational settings. The advice outlines what steps should be taken to protect individuals and communities where outbreaks are occurring, as well as reducing spread to other communities.

Provider operations

Risk assessments

Providers must take [reasonable measures](#) to protect staff, learners and others from COVID-19 within their sites. They should revisit and update their risk assessments by building on the learning to date and any practices they have already developed.

Individual campuses, centres and specialist areas may require their own risk assessments, or a COVID-19 focused update to existing risk assessments. Risk assessments should be published either on the provider's website, staff intranet or shared drive.

For guidance on carrying out risk assessments, see the [Health & Safety Executive's website](#).

Learning providers are subject to and must follow the requirements of the [Management of Health and Safety in the Workplace Regulations 1999](#).

For learners, including apprentices, whose learning takes place in the workplace, the responsibility for the safety of the learning environment rests with

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the employer; but the learning provider must satisfy itself of the safety of its staff who are undertaking workplace delivery. Apprenticeship providers must undertake a health and safety review of employer premises to determine how assessors can safely undertake visits, and must confirm with employers that appropriate hygiene and social distancing arrangements are in place that accord with the [Health Protection \(Coronavirus Restrictions\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#). Where providers are arranging work placements on behalf of learners they must carry out a risk assessment and assure themselves that the workplace is COVID-aware.

Learning providers should work with staff, parents/carers, learners and employers so that there is clarity on what and how the revised arrangements will work in practice and 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

Workplace learning

The latest Welsh Government [guidance for staying safe at work](#) is available. This includes guidance for some specific industries.

Workplace assessors visiting employers should familiarise themselves with any guidance for their sectors, to ensure that they understand what employers should be doing to keep their staff safe.

If a learner reports concerns about their safety in their workplace, or if an assessor observes unsafe practices (such as poor hygiene, or failure to observe social distancing in enclosed spaces), the provider should escalate these concerns to the employer. Assessors and other staff involved in workplace delivery must **not** be required to visit workplaces if the provider is not sure that they are safe.

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Learners or assessors can report an issue relating to protecting people from COVID-19 in the workplace to the Health & Safety Executive:

- on 0300 790 6787 (lines are open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 8pm)
- online using their [working safely enquiry form](#).

Sport and extracurricular activities

Sport, physical activity and wider extracurricular activities play an important role in developing and supporting learners' health and wellbeing. Learning providers will understand best how the operational guidance can be applied in their settings and they should do so in a way that prioritises the health, safety and wellbeing of learners and staff.

Activities which minimise contact with others and enable physical distancing to be maintained will help minimise the risk of transmission.

Outdoor activity should be prioritised wherever possible. Maximising time spent outdoors by learners has physical, mental and educational benefits. Additionally, the risk of transmitting COVID-19 is generally lower outdoors compared with indoors.

Where activity cannot take place outdoors, indoor spaces can be used. In indoor spaces, ventilation should be maximised including using natural air flow through opening doors and windows due to enhanced aerosol generation during activities. Areas should be cleaned regularly and thoroughly as part of the enhanced cleaning programme across the provider's estate.

Learning providers should keep a record of any learners who have to mix contact groups for sports and extracurricular activities, for use in contact tracing if required.

Changing rooms present a higher risk of transmission. As part of the local risk assessment, providers should consider their use and take reasonable and proportionate control measures to reduce the risk to the lowest practical level which will include as a minimum ensuring rooms are as well ventilated as

possible and surfaces are cleaned after use.

Learners should wash and dry their hands thoroughly before and after the activity.

Activities should minimise the use of equipment to reduce risk of transmission. Activities where there is no sharing of equipment are preferable. Any equipment used and shared should be carefully cleaned before next use. Particular attention should be paid to any equipment which needs to be adjusted to ensure all touch-areas are kept clean between each use. There should be no sharing of water bottles.

Face coverings should not be worn whilst undertaking sport or other physical activity.

In planning for autumn 2021, colleges can plan for sporting activities including team sports and fixtures to take place. In doing so, they should:

- undertake risk assessments which are tailored to the individual sport, reflecting different levels of contact and the environment in which it takes place (indoor/outdoor)
- follow any current guidance issued by that sport's governing body
- consider the [Welsh Government's guidance on Sport, Recreation and Leisure, Performing Arts](#); and Public Health Wales' guidance on [Covid-19 and Physical Activity, Performing Arts and Technology Activities in Secondary Schools and Further Education](#)
- recognise that local or national restrictions may change and that this may require the cancellation or postponement of fixtures
- ensure that risk assessments include transport to/from events and recognise that learners may be travelling from areas with different local risk levels
- ensure that management of spectators complies with current guidance on indoor and outdoor gatherings
- manage the risks of learners and staff socialising before and after events

Where learners are studying sport-related qualifications, classes can take place outdoors and indoors. College gyms and pools can be open for learners, staff and (where run on a commercial basis) members of the public, where the wider

programme of alert levels **allows such facilities to operate**. See the Welsh Government guidance on **Sport, Recreation and Leisure** for more details on management of sports venues.

Transport

Whilst post-16 transport is discretionary, it is recognised that many colleges make arrangements for assessing and meeting the travel needs of learners aged 16 and over. This guidance is for those colleges who make transport arrangements for learners, and applies to dedicated home to college transport (services which exclusively carry learners travelling to and from college premises). Colleges may be required to have regard to:

- the needs of learners with disabilities and/or additional learning needs
- any particular needs of learners who are 'looked after' or formerly looked after by a local authority

Colleges are responsible for working with the operators with whom they contract to ensure necessary measures are put in place in line with risk assessments (which should involve appropriate consultation with trade unions and staff). Parents, carers and staff should all play a role in educating learners on acceptable behaviour on college and public transport.

Key messages

- Colleges, working with transport operators and local authorities as appropriate, should undertake a risk assessment for dedicated college transport journeys in their local area that takes account of the routes travelled and the users of the services; the nature of the transport used and the opportunity for adaption and local transport capacity, i.e. the opportunity to scale up provision. The risk assessment must be signed off by the appropriate person at the college. They must then work through the system of controls set out in this section and adopt measures in a way that addresses the identified risk, works in the local circumstances, and allows learners to attend their college.

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- **Face coverings** should be worn by all learners when travelling on dedicated home to college transport (unless there is a medical exemption).
- Wherever capacity allows social distancing should be implemented between learners, and between drivers/passenger assistants. Where it is not possible, other measures such as allocated seating plans should be considered.
- There is no requirement to maintain contact groups on college transport providing a consistent group of learners travel on the same bus each day they attend. The use of dedicated college transport to serve several campuses should be avoided where possible.
- Colleges should ensure that operators and learners are aware of the safe use of face coverings, such as hand washing before and after putting on and removing face coverings, safe disposal or storage and that these are not a substitute for other control measures advocated.
- General **guidance on safe travel** during the pandemic is available and specific **guidance for transport operators**.
- During this time as far as it is safe to do so, the use of active travel routes by parents, carers, staff and learners should be encouraged. Walking and cycling, scooting, wheeling, etc. should be strongly encouraged. In view of the potential for capacity constraints on public transport to impact learner's ability to attend college, all sustainable and active travel modes should be considered.

Taxis and private hire vehicles

Some learners, including those with additional support needs, rely on taxi or private hire vehicle transfers to get to and from their college. Where taxis are used solely for the purpose of transporting children and young people to and from college, as with dedicated college bus and coach services, **guidance on the operation of taxis and private hire vehicles should be followed**. It is recommended that in taxis and private hire vehicles learners travel in the back seat only.

There should be careful consideration of how learners with additional needs can be provided with safe, bespoke transport arrangements. This could include the introduction of cleaning protocols, driving with the windows open (when possible) or finding larger vehicles for transportation. Colleges should liaise with

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their local private hire providers on the measures they are putting in place to protect learners, including for the arrangements for carrying multiple learners.

When travel by taxi or private hire vehicle is necessary, learners should be advised to follow the advice of the driver. Appropriate cleaning and sanitising measures will also be necessary. Face to face seating where available should not be used.

Contact

Any questions or comments on this guidance should be sent to FEAD.COVID-19@gov.wales.

About this document

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