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All Wales COVID-19 Education and Other Child/Youth Settings Workforce Risk Assessment Tool – Guidance for managers and staff

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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Introduction

On the 26 May 2020, Welsh Government launched the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool (the Tool). It has been developed in collaboration with clinicians, equality practitioners, community groups and workforce colleagues. Originally developed for use by health and social care staff, it has equal applicability for other sectors, including education, childcare, playwork, youth work and further education. We have therefore worked with colleagues to update the Tool for use in these settings.

The Tool uses Government guidelines, and the most up to date research, evidence and data available to identify known risk factors, including age, sex, ethnicity, underlying health conditions, body mass index (BMI) and any relevant family history in relation to COVID-19. It is a combination of these various factors coming together which contribute to the severity of infection.

The Tool is a live resource that will be subject to ongoing review and evaluation as the evidence base builds and we learn from implementation. Please use the correct and most up-to-date version on Learning@Wales.

How do you use the Tool?

The Tool uses a self-assessment methodology. It uses self-assessment as a first step as only you will be able to complete all areas, without assumptions or mistakes being made. It is intended to start the conversation between you and your line manager, to support you, the staff member. It also helps ensure that local authorities and others fulfil their duty of care to employees.

Your organisation has a duty to protect you from workplace risks and will be expected to actively ask and check that you have undertaken a risk assessment. You should feel confident to complete the risk assessment and then arrange a conversation with your line manager to discuss the outcome and identify any additional support needs.

The Tool is designed to complement existing advice for shielding and vulnerable populations who will already be subject to advice around working from home or strictly observing social distancing advice.

You may also wish to consider the need for an individual stress risk assessment or home working risk assessment, as a number of factors are important considerations in relation to your well-being. The Health and Safety Executive provide a generic [Stress Risk Assessment](#)¹ for use.

If your circumstances change, such as moving from working at home back into the workplace environment, the Risk Assessment will need to be reviewed and updated.

Is the Tool for everyone?

Yes, this Tool is for everyone in education, childcare, playwork, youth work and further education settings.

¹ www.hse.gov.uk/stress/risk-assessment.htm

Understanding your risk

The Tool sets out the four steps that you need to take. Let's look at each point in more detail.

1. Check your risk

When you go through the Risk Assessment, you will see that areas have been identified, these are the known risk factors and have been given a value or point. Each additional point indicates increased risks to the individual. This would be different for each person completing it due to your individual risk factors. It is important that you are honest when you complete this so appropriate support is put in place, to ensure you are protected as much as possible.

Age – If you are over 50 you are at a higher level of risk. Once over 60, this becomes increased further.

Sex at birth – Research shows that males are at an increased risk. We currently do not know why this is the case. By asking for sex at birth, it means we can also recognise the increased risk for transgender women, if the increased risk is for biological reasons. Therefore sex at birth is the correct terminology linked to risk.

Ethnicity – In April, growing evidence emerged that COVID-19 was having a disproportionate impact on people with black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds. This includes people of mixed heritage or race and members of the Roma and Traveller community. It is believed that systemic racism and socio-economic disadvantage over generations may be a factor as to why black, Asian, or minority ethnic people are at increased risk. Your line manager will need to fully understand your risk, please be confident to complete this section accurately.

There is emerging research identifying that Black and Filipino women may also be at increased risk. If you identify in these groups, please include this in your discussions with your line manager.

Underlying health conditions – People with underlying health conditions are additionally vulnerable to COVID-19. There are certain conditions that would mean someone is at increased risk. Current evidence indicates that it is the combination of various factors coming together which contribute to the severity of infection. This is why each condition listed has a score. If you have several health conditions, your risk increases and this must be taken into account when identifying any support you need and action required.

Obesity – The data indicates that COVID-19 seems to have a bigger impact if you are overweight. To be as protective as possible the Tool considers a number of measures. Body mass index (BMI) is a measure that uses your height and weight to work out if your weight is healthy. Waist measurement is also included, recognising that health impacts differ when linked with some ethnicities.

Family history – Data shows that some families, especially twins, have family susceptibility to COVID-19, this is recognised in the Tool. It is important where an immediate family member has been in ITU or has passed away from COVID-19 that this link is identified and appropriate protections are put in place.

2. Understand your score

Once you have completed the section on risk factors and established your score, you can look at what that score might mean for you personally.

The Tool provides actions to take in relation to your score and workplace setting which will support you to take the most appropriate actions for you. Some of these issues and factors are expanded on in the [frequently asked questions](#) for education, childcare and youth work, which accompany the Tool and this guidance.

It is important to remember that risk is associated to the task or procedure and not the job role. So think about the different tasks you would be undertaking and the risk associated with those tasks or procedures.

Once you have your score, you use the traffic light system table to identify what actions you need to take in a workplace setting.

Now you have completed your COVID-19 Risk Assessment, please discuss with your line manager to ensure that the appropriate actions are put in place for your individual circumstances.

Remember – Discussing your Risk Assessment with your line manager is an essential part of the process. The risk of the workplace setting will vary with the background level of escalation, and the precise exposure to COVID-19.

Occupational health, workforce/HR team, union representative, membership organisations or advocates are also available for advice and support to ensure you are appropriately protected. Other risk factors can be considered, including the outcomes of a stress risk assessment. This is so that you are supported as an individual.

3. Identifying the right actions for you

In identifying any risk in the workplace you and your line manager can also identify further support. This includes actions you can take and areas where your employer needs to provide support. The Tool provides suggestions for each. It is important that you are able to challenge if the support you require is not available. This can be done via workforce, union representatives or staff networks as appropriate.

It is also important to remember the existing, important and continuing behaviours to avoid COVID-19 infection.

- Good hand hygiene.

- Reasonable social distancing in informal workplace activity as well as with learner and other staff contact.
- Appropriate use of PPE depending on the setting and the procedural risk.
- Ensuring the right training to protect staff, children and young people.

4. Act now – take the right action

Step 4 in the Risk Assessment considers reasonable adjustments, linking to your additional support needs or concerns such as mental health and requires evidence of the safeguards put in place. This may include discussions where you have been identified as being at a high or very high risk, but do not want to be removed from the work environment, or at lower risk but would like to be removed from the workplace. There may be multiple reasons for this, including domestic abuse or toxic home environments, childcare arrangements, family member shielding at home, or increased anxiety or mental health issues due to lockdown.

In these cases, honest and sensitive conversations need to happen between you and your line manager so your individual risks can be measured and appropriate support put in place. In doing so you should be confident any adjustments won't be used negatively and are to support your well-being.

5. Mitigating risk and examples of good practice

Many schools and other settings have already adopted the All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool to manage the return of their workforce and there are many examples of good practice upon which to draw. Examples of mitigating actions which can be adopted for staff judged to be at high or very high risk include:

- reducing group work to smaller cohorts
- undertaking outdoor work
- digital and outreach work
- enhanced cleaning regimes
- socially distancing in line with Welsh Government advice, with an emphasis on infection control where social distancing is hard to maintain
- specific assessment of staff proximity, location of activity, entrance and exit routes, access to PPE and sanitising kit
- planned activity that reduces the amount of contact with physical resources, e.g. kicking a ball around rather than throwing it
- ensuring knowledge of extended household history is available (i.e. have family members had C19, are vulnerable, shielding, etc.)
- access to sanitiser
- pre-arranged seating/work space
- guidance on spacing and one way systems, etc.

There are also a number of examples of good practice in others settings such as childcare, including the following.

- To promote social distancing outdoor areas were set up to allow parents to keep a two-metre distance when dropping off and collecting children. Parents would usually bring the children directly into the building and into their homeroom. Considering the need to reduce contact parents were asked to drop their children off at the gate and staff would escort the children into the setting. Staff would then bring the children out at the end of the session so again parents would not need to access the building.
- **Interaction with parents** has proved particularly problematic for settings as many have previously been open and welcoming places. Dropping children off can be traumatic for the child and parent. Children are distressed by the new routines and changes and parents cannot settle their child in as they normally would. Many nurseries have found the use of technology helpful in reassuring parents that their child has settled.
- Settings are making use of their car parks to take children out to the waiting cars at the end of the session. This helps limit unnecessary contact between the parent and setting and also means that any confidential information can be shared discreetly.
- Good **hygiene and infection control** have always been a part of most nurseries routines. Parents are asked to sign a document on returning to the nursery confirming that they will not send their child to nursery with symptoms of COVID-19 and staff are alert to children showing symptoms. Nurseries have a written procedure to deal with a symptomatic child and all staff are aware of this.
- Where parents do enter the buildings they are being asked to wash their hands. Children's bags are sprayed with disinfectant and no outdoor shoes are worn in the settings. Settings that are providing wraparound care change the children's clothes on arrival. Cleaning rotas are in place, particularly between different groups of children accessing a shared space and staff are asked to be aware of what children are using and either clean it after the child has finished with it or remove it for cleaning later.
- Staggering children's arrival and leaving times to avoid parents gathering during drop off and at pick up points.
- Stagger staff breaks to ensure social distancing in the staff room.
- Parent viewings completed virtually, or during evenings/weekends with cleaning undertaken between and after viewings.
- Adapting activities, e.g. sand/water and malleable play so they can be carried out in a COVID-secure way.
- Making greater use of the outdoor space.
- Ensuring areas are well ventilated.
- Operational plan includes that high-risk staff members will not be responsible for supervising symptomatic children awaiting collection.
- Staff remove clothing when arriving at the setting to change into their work uniform as outlined within the protective measures.

- Parental apps are used to share information with parents that may have previously been shared via physical daily journal.

Review

It is important that once completed, review dates are put in place with your line manager, so you can discuss if there have been any changes in government advice, research, working or personal circumstances and ensure adjustments are made if needed.

Note for managers

The All Wales COVID-19 Workforce Risk Assessment Tool is based on scientific data and research evidence, but staff and managers need to also communicate other risks to a staff member's well-being and this should also be taken into account when identifying actions to protect individual staff. This may include previous mental health concerns and anxiety or if the staff member has a family member or housemate who is shielding. They may also be the sole carer for a highly vulnerable or shielding person. The score should not be taken in isolation and the value comes from the discussions individuals and managers have as a result of the risk assessment.