The following should be considered when developing a plan for support for learners during this academic year.

- The support the learner received pre-COVID-19 should be reviewed to ensure it is still relevant and reflects their experience during the spring and summer term closure.
- Support to transition back to school will be crucial for all learners, as their level of anxiety may be greater due to the length of time many have been away.
- Schools and settings should maintain regular contact and work with other professionals – such as youth workers, mental health support services, support workers and young carers services as appropriate – to support the return to school, including continuing to maintain regular contact with the learner’s social worker if they have one.
- Schools and settings should be alert to identify and support learners who exhibit signs of distress. Pastoral care and bereavement support should be planned for and put in place.
Scenario 1

1. In school full time – A normal school day

What support can the learner expect to receive on a normal day when the school/setting is open full time?

Things you might wish to consider may include the following.

The support the learner received pre-COVID-19 should be the starting point for this academic year. However, it should be reviewed to ensure it is still relevant and reflects their experience during the school closure period and will support their continued progression, including during future lockdowns.

Requests for reasonable adjustments within the classroom should be considered and accommodated providing they are in line with public health advice.

Learners – and parents/carers if appropriate – should be asked to reflect on their lockdown experience so that this can be factored into their ongoing support.

The wider circumstances of the family should be considered and factored in, as this may be causing anxiety for or placing additional pressures on the learner.

Staff within schools and settings should positively reinforce behaviours around social/physical distancing and hygiene as opposed to stigmatising mistakes, and ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for breaks and time outdoors.

Parents/carers should notify their school/setting if their child is unable to attend and explain the reason. This will help schools, settings and local authorities understand any barriers to learners returning to school and identify any further support needed.

Schools and settings should work with learners and their parents/carers to identify learners who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. Consideration and the right support should be given to those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with school regularly during the pandemic.

Schools and settings should discuss any concerns with parents/carers and provide reassurance of the measures that are in place to reduce the risk in the school/setting.

Reassurance and familiarity are key in ensuring vulnerable and disadvantaged learners transition effectively back to learning.

For those at a key transition point or starting a new school, extra planning will be required.

The virtual tours created by schools/settings and shared online to aid transition could be useful more broadly, e.g. for learners and parents/carers who are feeling anxious about the return to school or ongoing attendance.
**Scenario 2**

2. In school part time/learning from home part time – blended learning

What blended learning support can the learner expect to receive?

Things you might wish to consider may include the following.

The [Guidance on learning in schools and settings from the autumn term](#) provides information on how to facilitate learning that is flexible enough to respond to changing conditions. [Guidance on blended learning](#) has also been published.

For vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, the priority should be to consider how any disruption to learning can be avoided or minimised during a blended scenario. The starting point should be the support for learning they receive while physically attending the school/setting and considering how this can be replicated for distance learning. There may need to be adaptations but these should be minimised as far as possible.

Provision of information to families should be considered to help them support their child’s continued learning. Parents/carers should also be informed of any additional support that may be available, from the school/setting, the local authority or other services.

Local authorities may wish to consider setting up designated helplines for parents/carers.

In some situations, it may be appropriate for staff to deliver learning resources and equipment and to keep in touch by making socially distanced and safe visits to the home.

Ensuring accessibility, including access to digital tools, should have been addressed and resolved, with all learners now experiencing full and equitable support for learning. Any outstanding issues should be urgently prioritised.

Ensuring access to specialist equipment, toys and other resources when distance learning should also be prioritised.

Careful consideration should be given to the appropriateness of remote or blended learning activities, generally but specifically for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Remember that inclusive approaches and materials will be appropriate for all learners.

Some local authorities have already produced bespoke information packs or resources for parents/carers to support them in developing their child's understanding of the current situation, establishing routines, reducing anxiety and supporting the return-to-school transition. Communicating the availability of such resources directly to parents/carers and placing them online, including via social media, is important.
Scenario 3

3. Distance learning due to school closure or self-isolation requirement

What support can the learner expect to receive when learning from home or elsewhere because it is not possible for them to attend their school/setting?

Things you might wish to consider may include the following.

The distance learning elements included in scenario 2 above apply equally to this scenario, where learners are undertaking most or all of their learning at home or elsewhere.

All learners should be contacted regularly to ‘check in’ – this would provide an opportunity to check on the safety and well-being of the learner as well as to explore their learning experience and consider possible additional support. A proactive and preventative approach should be adopted.

If applicable, practitioners should also keep in touch with parents and carers if there are issues (such as additional help with learning or lack of engagement) which require monitoring.

All learners should be provided with the duration of learning time they would receive were they in their school/setting, regardless of whether or not some or all of their learning is taking place at home or elsewhere.

There is a wealth of information and resources available on Hwb, which practitioners may find helpful in informing their engagement with parents/carers in the event of another lockdown.