Keep Wales Safe
Covid-19 Guidance for Higher Education

Version 2.4
18 February 2021
## Version control

**Version 2.1**

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Introduction

This guidance is the third phase guidance to help prepare for the spring term and beyond. This guidance does not cover research and innovation which will be covered by sector specific guidance. It is intended that this guidance enables and facilitates decision making.

The health, safety and wellbeing of the entire university community will remain the top priority for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as they continue to provide blended learning to students.

Institutions across Wales have reopened their learning environments, campuses, and other facilities while adhering to the physical and social distancing guidance other restrictions, Government guidelines and health and safety legislation, which institutions must have regard to. These measures are designed to safeguard public health and safety, and minimise the spread of Coronavirus.

Planning and understanding the range of measures in accordance with government guidelines is best done at an institution by institution level based on their own understanding and assessment of their situation and options. Every institution should ensure they are “Covid Secure” having carried out risk assessments and mitigated them with a combination of controls such as hand and surface hygiene.

If early warning information shows a local incident or outbreak then institutions should contact Public Health Wales and local resilience forums. Institutions must also be aware of the Coronavirus Control Plan and the alert levels for Wales. The alert levels approach also allows for regional and localised application and universities must familiarise themselves with any national or local alert level restrictions that may be in force at any time and can be put in place at short notice. These must be adhered to in addition to this guidance, which is intended to cover all alert levels.

This document outlines some of the measures HEIs may need to follow in order to protect the health of students, staff and the communities they serve.

HE providers must ensure that face-to-face learning complies with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 and that they have regard to the guidance issued by the Welsh Government in respect of those Regulations.

As we move into the future, we will update guidance as we continue to monitor the effects of the virus and any changes in the medical advice.

In addition, Universities UK with Universities Wales have provided a set of sector principles and considerations for moving out of lockdown, which this guidance is intended to complement.
We have worked closely with HEFCW, HEIs, staff and student representatives to compile this guidance and we will continue this conversation. We are committed to working together in partnership with the HE sector to move forward in a safe and purposeful way. This guidance is intended to empower our universities and student bodies to organise and facilitate lawful, safe and COVID-secure activities on campus.

We have worked with the National Union of Students in preparing this guidance and we expect every institution to continue to work as closely as possible with student representatives. NUS Wales is providing support to local students' unions to support this as much as possible.

HEIs work closely with their local communities and this will be essential as HEIs prepare for the future and respond to the public health crisis.
Keep Wales Safe – Health protection measures

To tackle the spread of coronavirus, the Welsh Government keeps the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No.5) (Wales) Regulations under review and these may change so you should keep up-to-date with the latest version. The regulations introduce the alert level system and set out the restrictions or requirements on or in relation to persons, things or premises in the event of, or in response to, a threat to public health, including restrictions on gatherings, and the movement of people. The Welsh Government prioritises the protection of people, and the safety, health, and well-being of everyone is of paramount importance to us.

Keep Wales Safe

- stay out of each other’s homes, except in very limited circumstances
- try to limit how many different people you meet
- maintain social distancing
- wash your hands regularly
- work from home if you can
- wear a face covering in indoor public spaces

In addition we should think about:

- If we are meeting people that we don’t live with, we should see them outside or in a regulated setting such as a café or pub (if alert level permits opening) rather than in each other’s homes (rooms and other people’s shared spaces like kitchens)
- We should continue to maintain social distancing when seeing anyone from outside our household
- We should limit the amount of time we spend in indoor settings with other people, even when we are socially distanced, and to wear a face covering in indoor public places or if required to by the establishment. This is particularly true of busy or poorly ventilated places or where we can’t wear a face covering and,
- We should limit the number of times we leave home and the distance we travel.

Stay at home if you or anyone in your extended household has symptoms:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- loss of smell or taste (anosmia)

Read our guidance on staying safe.

Remember anyone can spread the virus

Welsh Government guidance on protecting yourself and others
Health and Safety

It is the responsibility of individual institutions as employers to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments, as they would for other health and safety related hazards, and to put measures in place to ensure compliance with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

These risk assessments should take into account the changing nature of the risk associated with COVID-19 as increased prevalence and transmission rates will indicate increased risks.

Health and Safety Law requires all reasonably practicable precautions (elimination, controls, information, instruction, training, monitoring, supervision, review, etc.) to be put in place to protect all workers and others who may be affected by a risk.

The alert levels will allow for the external risks to be monitored and acted upon to either escalate or de-escalate. Where there is movement between levels, this should trigger a review of mitigation measures for individuals in the light of their individual risk assessments.

This is a risk-led approach to identify and implement sensible measures to control the risks. The assessment should consider what measures need to be implemented to protect the health and safety of all staff, students, visitors and contractors. These will be influenced by site-specific factors. Controls should be considered following the hierarchy of control approach (see annex A).

As we move between different alert levels of operations in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, institutions will need to review their plans and the individual risk assessments to ensure institutions remain “Covid Secure” for students and staff. This will include where there is increased or decreased prevalence amongst the student or wider population, or the introduction or easing of alert levels on a national or local level.

The Welsh Government recommends individual risk assessments should consider whether individuals can work from the site or whether they would be better working from home, with changing levels of transmission or during a localised incident of cluster of cases. This will of course be dependent on the role.

Lessons learnt from other settings, where staff work with client groups, indicate that the highest risk is in staff to staff situations therefore appropriate safe and secure system must be in place to limit staff to staff situations and staff areas should be risk assessed.

Safe and secure systems of working should explain to others, including staff, students and visitors, what they are required to do and help staff with planning and monitoring to ensure the controls are implemented and remain effective and are updated in the light of emerging evidence or changes in public health advice.
This guidance does not supersede existing health and safety legislation and HEIs will continue to abide by these obligations (along with legal obligations under coronavirus legislation), including the legal duty on employers to conduct risk assessments and engage with health and safety committees.

**Extremely vulnerable or previously shielding staff**

People who were previously ‘shielding’, that is those who are extremely vulnerable to poorer outcomes from COVID-19 because they have particular existing health conditions will require particular consideration based on their risk assessment dependant on the alert level in place either on a national or local basis.

People in this category will have previously received a shielding letter.

Where a staff member falls into the extremely vulnerable category, there is a need to consider working from home as the default position as this will be the most appropriate mitigatory measure. This will need to take account of the alert level in place.

Employers must be able to assure the safety of staff and the Welsh Government recommends that risk assessments be made on an individual basis and should take account of individual needs and circumstances. For example, where an extremely vulnerable member of staff wants to undertake in-person duties, they should be enabled to do so as far as is reasonably practicable and subject to additional mitigatory measures based on their individual risk assessment.

In addition to the previously shielding group, individuals who are identified as at increased risk should also be risk assessed, e.g. those with some pre-existing conditions such as diabetes. They may require additional mitigation measures to be in place when rates of infection rise. Individual risk assessments for these individuals should consider any changes that might be needed based on a change in alert levels or risk levels within the setting.

There are 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 managers and colleagues about any personal circumstances which may increase risk from coronavirus, and to agree any actions which need to be carried out. “Talking with your workers about working safely during the coronavirus pandemic” is guidance from the Health and Safety Executive on how employers may approach this conversation with staff.
Institutions will continue to ensure that educational and other activities take place on campuses following the latest public health and health and safety measures from the Welsh Government and Public Health Wales. We anticipate different levels of operations will be required during the remainder of the response to COVID-19 to ensure institutions remain “Covid Secure”.

Activities would change depending on the wider health conditions in Wales, areas of Wales or at individual institution. Institutions should ensure a coordinated approach working with local resilience forums to ensure a coordinated approach to local outbreaks and planning resilience in relation to institutions and their local communities.

In a survey by Universities UK from June of last year, 95% of institutions in the UK confirmed that they will be offering a mixture of face to face and online teaching. 87% of institutions confirmed they would also be offering in-person sporting, fitness and well-being activities. In Wales, 100% of institutions have confirmed they will be offering this blended approach.

**Alert Levels**

The Coronavirus Control Plan sets out the strategic approach to the alert levels. The broad approach set out in the Coronavirus Control Plan also sets out the need for all of us to play our part in preventative actions. We believe individual and local action is the most important first line of action we can all take in response to this virus.

The refreshed plan sets out in more detail how national measures will be introduced in a more predictable way, setting out the principles of the traffic light system and the measures we will put in place to control the spread of the virus and protect people’s health, depending on the state of coronavirus across Wales and other key indicators.

Crucially, the Coronavirus Control Plan sets out how and when there will be movement between the alert levels for Wales. This approach will provide greater certainty for people and businesses across Wales about what legal restrictions will be put in place, depending on the level of risk, helping us all to plan for the future.

The alert levels for Wales are set out in the Coronavirus Control Plan and simply in the Coronavirus Control Plan: Alert Levels in Wales Explainer.

The table below sets out how the different alert levels relate to the operations in our institutions. This will help in planning and preparing for the different phases during the remainder of the response to COVID-19.

It is the responsibility of individual institutions as employers to undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments, as they would for other health and safety related hazards, and to put measures in place to ensure compliance with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020. In considering the table below, institutions as employers, must determine the appropriate response, and refer to Annex A – approach to risk estimation and management.
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<th>Alert level 2</th>
<th>Alert level 3</th>
<th>Alert level 4</th>
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<td>No Covid</td>
<td>(low risk)</td>
<td>(medium risk)</td>
<td>(high risk)</td>
<td>(very high risk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full operations – no restrictions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increased operations – on alert</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reduced operations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reduced operations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Significantly reduced operations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Blended learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Blended learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Blended learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Blended learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Blended learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health context</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virus not present</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virus contained clusters, cases low.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virus in general circulation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Transmission high or rising</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>HEIs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Universities fully open and operational</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increased numbers of students on campus at any time. An increase in the size of groups attending in person learning. Increase in wider campus services and social activities.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reduced and managed numbers of students on campus at any time. Limited size of groups attending in person learning. Some wider campus services and activities.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Limited and managed numbers of students on campus for essential in person learning. Essential educational services operating under strict rules. Essential wider campus services only. No in person social activities on campus.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distancing</strong></td>
<td><strong>None</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social distancing measures in place.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social distancing measures in place</strong></td>
<td><strong>Remote learning where possible. Social distancing measures in place.</strong></td>
</tr>
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- **Alert level 0 (No Covid):** Full operations – no restrictions.
- **Alert level 1 (low risk):** Increased operations – on alert.
- **Alert level 2 (medium risk):** Reduced operations – blended learning.
- **Alert level 3 (high risk):** Reduced operations – blended learning.
- **Alert level 4 (very high risk):** Significantly reduced operations – blended learning.

**Health context:**
- Virus not present
- Virus contained clusters, cases low.
- Virus in general circulation
- Transmission high or rising
- Severe threat and exponential growth

**HEIs:**
- Universities fully open and operational
- Increased numbers of students on campus at any time. An increase in the size of groups attending in person learning. Increase in wider campus services and social activities.
- Reduced and managed numbers of students on campus at any time. Limited size of groups attending in person learning. Some wider campus services and activities.
- Limited and managed numbers of students on campus at any time. Small group in person learning. Limited wider campus services and activities.
- Limited and managed numbers of students on campus for essential in person learning. Essential educational services operating under strict rules. Essential wider campus services only. No in person social activities on campus.

**Distancing:**
- None
- Social distancing measures in place.
- Social distancing measures in place
- Remote learning where possible. Social distancing measures in place.
Test Trace Protect

The Welsh Government's Test, Trace, Protect strategy is the national strategy to break the transmission of COVID-19 to keep Wales safe. Anyone in Wales who is displaying symptoms will be able to access a test.

Testing for COVID-19 is vital for:

- identifying COVID-19 cases to support contact tracing and thereby the spread of disease;
- diagnosing COVID-19 to help with treatment and care;
- population health surveillance, so that we can understand the spread of the disease; and
- business continuity, enabling people to return to work or education safe.

The scale of testing capacity needed in Wales and indeed across the UK to support these purposes and in particular Test, Trace, Protect is unprecedented.

We need everyone with symptoms to come forward for a test and be able to access one, ideally on the same day.

At present we have:

- Mass Testing Centres (MTCs)
- Community Testing Units (CTUs)
- Local Testing Sites (LTS) – a number of local testing sites that are accessible on foot or by bike are being deployed in communities across Wales. There should be one near to each university campus in Wales.
- Mobile Testing Units (MTUs) – these can be deployed across Local Health Boards as a rapid response to outbreaks and clusters.
- Home Testing Kits (HTKs) – these are available in universities on request for those who cannot access other testing facilities.

In addition to symptomatic testing, the Welsh Government is delivering a mass asymptomatic testing pilot for higher education students and staff in conjunction with the UK Government with support from universities in Wales. Testing will be available to support the return to campus in the spring term.

Cardiff University also offers an asymptomatic screening service.

Planning for and Managing Outbreaks

In the event of outbreaks (as defined in the Public Health Protection Response Plan 2020), institutions will work with local partners to work to ensure that the national testing programme is able to effectively respond. This will include identifying measures to isolate people with positive results and minimise the spread of the disease.
Please see [Public Health Wales - Operational Public Health Advice note](#) for the investigation and management of clusters and outbreaks of COVID-19 in educational settings.

**Contact tracing**

Contact tracing is a tried and tested method of controlling the spread of infectious diseases. It will also help prevent and understand how the disease is passing from person to person.

At a national level, Welsh Government will lead and provide strategic direction, including using developing scientific advice to inform our response. PHW will provide national co-ordination, expert advice and support on contact tracing methods and priorities, which will ensure that we have robust all Wales standards and comprehensive guidance for how contact tracing should operate.

Not all contacts, activities, or environments have an equal risk of transmission. PHW through their work to implement a rigorous health surveillance system will identify which contacts and settings confer the highest risk of transmission, helping direct contact tracing and testing efforts.

NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) will ensure that there is a single digital platform for contact tracing across Wales. This will allow people to simply and quickly report their contacts, supporting contact tracing teams to work effectively, and providing real time intelligence across the whole of Wales on the coverage of the disease, how quickly it is spreading, and where there are hotspots of infection.

Contact tracing will be delivered regionally with Local Health Boards and local authorities working in partnership along with other public services to deploy contact tracing teams who understand the local context. This will help to speed up contact tracing activity, and to identify new trends or local clusters of the disease as early as possible.

Anyone who has a positive Coronavirus test will be contacted by a team of contact tracers, and asked for details of everyone they have had close contact with while they have had symptoms.

Institutions are required to record and keep contact details for students, staff and visitors in line with [regulations and published guidance](#).

Institutions should ask students to keep a note of their activities so they can easily remember their whereabouts on a given day, along with who they were in contact with, including name and contact details.

Anyone asked to [self-isolate by a contact tracer](#), is legally required to comply and must self-isolate to prevent further spread of the virus.
**NHS Covid-19 App in Wales**

The NHS COVID-19 app is an important way to help keep Wales safe.

Institutions should encourage students, staff and visitors to download and use the app because the more people that do so, the more it will help reduce and manage the spread of COVID.

The app features are:

- **Alert**: lets you know the level of coronavirus risk in your postcode district
- **Trace**: get alerted if you’ve been near other app users who have tested positive
- **Check-in**: get alerted if you have recently visited a venue where you may have come into contact with coronavirus
- **Symptoms**: check if you have coronavirus symptoms and see if you need to order a free test
- **Test**: helps you book a test and get your result quickly
- **Isolate**: keep track of your self-isolation countdown and access relevant advice

The NHS app is supporting our NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect service and will work alongside the existing manual contact tracing system.

**What this means for universities and students’ unions**

This doesn’t replace the existing need for high risk businesses across Wales to record details of visitors and customers to their premises.

It is still the law in Wales for high risk businesses to record visitors and to keep those details for 21 days.

This includes pubs, restaurants, close contact services such as hairdressers and barbers, indoor leisure centres and gyms, cinemas, casinos and bingo halls.

The app is reliant on building managers/owners obtaining and displaying QR codes for each location/building. For more information about the app and to download the unique QR code for your business, please visit the [guidance](#).
Wider campus services

Institutions should refer to the appropriate Welsh Government guidance with regard to wider campus services, such as retail and events.

Workplaces and premises must also take account of the guidance on taking reasonable measures to minimise exposure to coronavirus.

Guidance on the alert levels and the necessary restrictions for the safe operation of many aspect of Welsh life are subject to change based on the current public health response, therefore it is recommended that institutions check regularly.

Institutions can sign-up for Welsh Government COVID-19 alerts and updates.

Institutions should refer to the appropriate Welsh Government guidance on the operation of their activities.

Please see the Coronavirus Regulations FAQs for further information and to keep up-to-date with regulatory requirements.

Please see guidance on the NHS Covid App.

Libraries and study spaces
Under all alert levels university libraries may be open.

Alert level 1
Normal operation. Social distancing must be observed with hand washing, face covering and hygiene measures in place. Information must be gathered to assist contact tracing.

Alert level 2
Social distancing must be observed with hand washing and hygiene measures in place.

Face coverings must be worn in indoor public areas, and other places indoors where social distancing is not possible.

Information must be gathered to assist contact tracing.

Restrictions on the numbers of people able to gather indoors must be observed unless they are gathering as part of an organised educational service.

Alert level 3
Social distancing must be observed with hand washing and hygiene measures in place. Information must be gathered to assist contact tracing.

Face coverings must be worn in indoor public areas, and other places indoors where social distancing is not possible.
Restrictions on the numbers of people able to gather indoors must be observed unless they are gathering as part of an organised educational service.

The use of in-person library facilities, including study spaces, must be managed to ensure the safe delivery of services. This could include a booking system to limit numbers of students and staff within the library at any one time.

**Alert level 4**

Universities should encourage students to use online library services and click and collect services if available.

Face coverings must be worn in indoor public areas, and other places indoors where social distancing is not possible

The use of in-person library facilities, including study spaces, must be managed with additional cleaning measures in place to ensure the safe delivery of services. This could include a booking system to limit numbers of students and staff within the library at any one time.

Students and staff may only use facilities as an individual and must not gather.

**Events and Conferencing**

**Level 1**

Open but must take all reasonable measures to **minimise the risk of exposure** to coronavirus, including observing rules on gatherings (up to 50 people indoors), **social distancing**, face coverings, additional hygiene measures and contact tracing.

**Level 2, 3 and 4**

Closed.

**Food outlets, catering and hospitality facilities**

**Level 1**

All food outlets, catering and **hospitality** facilities on campus may open but must take all **reasonable measures** to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, including observing rules on gatherings, social distancing, **face coverings**, additional hygiene measures and contact tracing requirements.

Licensed premises may serve alcohol between 6am and 10pm.

Nightclubs discotheques, dance halls or other venues where live or recorded music is provided for members of the public or members of the venue to dance must remain closed.

**Level 2**

All **food outlets, catering and hospitality facilities** on campus may open and must take all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, including
observing rules on gatherings, social distancing, face coverings, additional hygiene measures and contact tracing requirements.

Licensed premises may serve alcohol between 6am and 10pm with a substantial table meal.

There is an exemption for licensed premises in educational establishments to be able to open and serve non-alcoholic drinks and food after 10pm or before 6am. This exemption is intended to support the serving of food and drink to students or staff who need to be able to access food and drink before 6am or after 10.20pm. Universities should ensure this exemption is used reasonably and should consider the need to rely on this exemption for the provision of essential food and drink only.

Nightclubs discotheques, dance halls or other venues where live or recorded music is provided for members of the public or members of the venue to dance must remain closed.

**Level 3**

All catering and hospitality facilities on campus may operate and must take all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, including observing rules on gatherings, social distancing, face coverings, additional hygiene measures and contact tracing. No alcohol may be sold for consumption on the premises.

Licensed premises may serve food and non-alcoholic drinks only. No alcohol may be sold for consumption on the premises. Alcohol may be sold for take away between 6am and 10pm only.

There is an exemption for food and drink establishments in educational settings to be able to open and serve non-alcoholic drinks and food at any time. This exemption is intended to support the serving of food and drink to students or staff who need to be able to access food and drink before 6am or after 6pm. Universities should ensure this exemption is used reasonably and should consider the need to rely on this exemption for the provision of food and drink only where there is no reasonable alternative.

Nightclubs discotheques, dance halls or other venues where live or recorded music is provided for members of the public or members of the venue to dance must remain closed.

**Level 4**

Catered halls and catering services for accommodation may serve as normal (no alcohol to be drunk on premises).

All hospitality including licensed premises closed - take-away or delivery only.

Nightclubs discotheques, dance halls or other venues where live or recorded music is provided for members of the public or members of the venue to dance must remain closed.
**Sports Facilities**

**Level 1**
Open with all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, including observing rules on gatherings, social distancing, face coverings, additional hygiene measures and contact tracing.

**Level 2**
Open with all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, including observing rules on gatherings, social distancing, face coverings, additional hygiene measures and contact tracing.

**Level 3**
Open with all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to coronavirus, including observing rules on gatherings, social distancing, face coverings, additional hygiene measures and contact tracing.

**Level 4**
All sports courts, golf courses, leisure and fitness facilities must be closed.
Outdoor, individual exercise only.

There is an exemption for accessing or receiving educational services, therefore sports courts, leisure and fitness facilities may open in higher education for accessing or receiving educational services at those facilities. This means these facilities may open for the exclusive use of those accessing those facilities to receive an organised educational service such as forms part of the course of study in a higher education institution only. However, there should be a focus on individual outdoor activities if possible.

These facilities must not be open for general use.

There is a similar exemption for elite athletes who would also be able to access those facilities for training, competing or coaching.

**Places of worship**

Open in all levels.

**Organised activities, including social activities**

Please note that other specialised guidance’s should be consulted dependent on the organised activities pursued. This is particularly applicable to performing arts and sports disciplines, and other group activities. A range of specialised guidance’s can be found here.

**Level 1**
Organised indoor activities may take place for up to 50 people.
Organised outdoor activities may take place for up to 100 people.

**Level 2**
Organised indoor activities may take place for up to 15 people.
Organised outdoor activities may take place for up to 30 people.

**Level 3**
Organised indoor activities may take place for up to 15 people.
Organised outdoor activities may take place for up to 30 people.

**Level 4**
Organised support groups only for up to 15 people (not including persons under the age of 11 or persons working, or providing voluntary services, at the gathering).

Support groups are for the mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support to those participating. For example:

- victims of crime (including domestic abuse);
- those with, or recovering from, addictions (including alcohol, drugs or other substance addictions) or addictive patterns of behaviour;
- new parents;
- those with a disability, long-term illness or terminal condition or who are vulnerable;
- those caring for persons with a disability, long-term illness or terminal condition or who are vulnerable;
- those facing issues related to their sexuality or identity including those living as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender;
- those who have suffered bereavement; and
- vulnerable young persons.
**Gatherings**

*Gatherings*, meetings or parties indoors, even within an extended household, must be limited in number. This applies in people’s homes, places like pubs, restaurants, and community spaces. Which type of gathering can take place and the number of people will depend on the alert level in place and can vary at short notice in relation to the progress of the virus and whether local restrictions are also in place at any time.

Please check the Welsh Government website for the most up to date information on meeting people socially and restrictions that may be in place. See the Coronavirus Control Plan alert levels for information.

**What is a gathering?**

A gathering is when two or more people come together as a group to meet usually for a social or work purpose.

It is important large crowds, anti-social behaviour and illegal gatherings are prevented as these could help spread the virus.

**Indoor gatherings**

Coronavirus spreads much more easily indoors, because it can survive in the atmosphere and on surfaces for a very long time without direct sunshine and adequate ventilation.

Welsh law imposes restrictions on people gathering indoors with others without a reasonable excuse (some examples of which are listed in the Regulations). This means people should not generally enter each other’s homes outside their extended household.

Universities must ensure that students are made aware of the restrictions in place in public areas on campus.

**Outdoor gatherings**

The number of people able to gather outdoors and for what purpose will depend on the alert level. Please see the Welsh Government website for the latest information on how many people are permitted to gather outdoors. The virus is much less likely to be spread outside, although this depends in part on the weather conditions, and disperses more in well ventilated environments. The virus dies quickly in the summer sun but less so in colder conditions.

When meeting outdoors, students and staff must maintain social distance from others who are not members of their household, or extended household.

We are advising people to avoid places where many people tend to come together in large numbers with no controlling presence.
Organised outdoor activities including team sports and classes may be allowed to take place subject to restrictions on numbers as outlined by the alert level. Please check the Welsh Government website for the most up to date information.

If activities are permitted and are being organised in a university setting, the person responsible has a duty to carry out an appropriate risk assessment in advance and take all reasonable measures to minimise risk of exposure to coronavirus. Those organising such events will generally hold a duty of care to those attending the gathering, which means they should ensure the event is as safe as possible.

Students and staff should be advised to avoid unorganised gatherings, busy places and large queues.

Please also see the section on student accommodation.

Use of face coverings

Face coverings are required in all indoor public places including for students and staff working in those indoor public areas, unless one has a reasonable excuse (see below). This includes any public areas within buildings that are otherwise closed to the public – for example a reception area of an office building.

Please see general guidance on face coverings and also the guidance on face coverings for employers.

We strongly recommend that universities mandate the use of face coverings in all indoor public spaces, including in student accommodation and any areas where social distancing cannot be maintained, unless there are strong reasons not to.

We also advise that universities decide whether to require face coverings in teaching and learning environments based on their assessment of the risk and in context of local circumstances and the need to access education.
International Students – self-isolation (quarantine)

Our international students are a welcome part of our communities in Wales. International students, from countries outside the UK or Common Travel Area (Ireland, Isle of Man or the Channel Islands) may need to comply with the self-isolating requirements for their first 10 days in Wales. International students will have regard to guidance that relates to residents or visitors travelling to the UK (Entering the UK) and Wales (Travel: coronavirus).

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) Regulations 2020, as amended, provide for a number of exemptions to this requirement. The complete list of countries from which travellers do not need to self-isolate can be found in the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Wales) Regulations 2020, as amended.

Please see the list of countries exempt from the self-isolation rules in Wales and the Coronavirus (COVID-19): travel corridors, UK Government.

Please check regularly as these are subject to change at short notice.

Please see accommodation section for further information.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the How to self-isolate when you travel to Wales: coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance.

Self-isolation

For those students arriving from countries not on the list of exempt countries, outside the UK or common travel area will need to self-isolate for 10 days. ‘Self-isolating’.

All arrivals must go straight to the place they are staying when they arrive in the UK.

The ‘test to release for international travel’ does not apply in Wales. An international student who wishes to participate in this programme may not travel to Wales until after 10 days have elapsed since their day of departure from a non-exempt country.

To support international students and ensure they are able to comply with the self-isolation rules, we recommend HEIs provide a place where the students can stay when they arrive. Ideally, students should stay in one place during self-isolation and must supply the address on their declaration form. It will be helpful to supply the address to students in advance and they should go straight there.

Many students chose to stay in the private rented sector (PRS). Institutions may wish to share this guidance with PRS landlords to ensure they are aware of the requirements for international students to self-isolate.

To minimise disruption to study, we recommend asking international students to arrive in the UK with enough time to complete their self-isolation period before the start of any in-person teaching and learning.
It is recommended that public transport is only used where no alternative travel arrangements are possible. To minimise the need to use public transport, you may want to consider providing transport for international students arriving in the UK, with the appropriate risk assessments and mitigations in place.

You may want to recommend a date of arrival and preferred points of arrival in order to support the coordination of on-ward travel arrangements.

**What happens if a student arrives with symptoms?**

Where an individual arrives displaying symptoms they are required to make the authorities aware of this, prior to disembarkation if possible, and demonstrate that the accommodation in which they are staying is suitable. It is also worth noting that there are public health powers to isolate and/or direct those with symptoms to a screening facility etc. that may be exercised.

If a student develops symptoms whilst travelling they must not use public transport and it is recommended that they do not use shared transport.

The onus is on those persons arriving with symptoms to arrange travel to their accommodation and isolate as necessary but HEIs may wish to consider how to support students making these arrangements. Institutions may wish to develop a mitigation strategy to support students arriving with symptoms.

A person who is displaying symptoms should self-isolate and book a test.

**Contact with others**

Self-isolation means students should not have visitors, including friends and family, unless they are providing essential care. The only friends and family students can have contact with are those who travelled with them or the people they are staying with. The people they are with should also self-isolate.

**People you travelled with**

Where international students travelled together and are sharing accommodation, they can continue to have contact amongst themselves but it is recommended that where possible social distancing should be maintained.

**International students - Accommodation**

Please see the section on international students – self-isolation.

Accommodation providers will wish to consider carefully how to support the effective self-isolation of international students. There are two key considerations which each accommodation provider may wish to make provision for:

- assisting an international student to self-isolate in accordance with Welsh Government guidance; and
• arrangements for the provision of food, medicines and other necessities, and any other required assistance, during the period of self-isolation. This may include assistance in respect of physical and mental health such as a buddy system.

Accommodation providers who are not HEIs may wish to liaise with HEIs to determine what support may be available from student welfare services to complement their own provision of support to their tenants.

The use of en-suite rooms with no mixing with others, supported by regular food and other deliveries, is likely to be the safest way of providing for self-isolation for arriving international students.

If self-isolating students are co-located with other students, the other students will not need to self-isolate (unless they too have travelled to the UK). The guidance on self-isolation for households will apply if the international student (or any other) shows symptoms of Coronavirus disease.

If co-located, the accommodation provider will wish to consider whether further measures can be taken to minimise the risk of transmission of the virus. Guidance Self-isolating in your shared home during the coronavirus pandemic provides advice to those self-isolating in shared accommodation on measures that can be taken to reduce the risk of infection to others – for example, cleaning shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and living rooms (including all surfaces) regularly and using a separate bathroom, if possible. Accommodation providers will wish to consider how they can support risk mitigation.
Accommodation guidance

Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to consider issues which may be relevant in maintaining the safety of student tenants, staff and visitors to student accommodation during the pandemic.

Accommodation providers must act in accordance with their statutory duties. They will also wish to ensure that they enable student tenants, staff and visitors to act in accordance with the Coronavirus Regulations, maintaining their safety.

Consideration should be given as to how to reduce contacts and maximise distancing between those in accommodation wherever possible and minimise potential for contamination so far as is reasonably practicable.

For some students, accommodation is used only during term-time, other students will stay in their accommodation year round. Students live in a range of accommodation, including:

- their own or their parental/guardian home;
- halls of residence provided by HEIs – these will often house significant numbers of students at relatively high densities, often with shared spaces and facilities such as kitchens and bathrooms;
- purpose built student accommodation provided by the private sector (‘PBSAs’). These may be very similar to halls of residence with shared spaces and facilities such as kitchens but usually with ensuite bathroom facilities; and
- rented houses, flats and apartments, often shared, in the private, public and charitable sectors.

The health, safety and wellbeing of students, staff and visitors remains the priority.

Everyone must ensure that they comply with the Coronavirus Regulations and have regard to the guidance issued by the Welsh Government in respect of those Regulations.

The Welsh Government recognises and values the professionalism of the professional services and estates functions in our Universities, and of that in the private accommodation sector, and greatly appreciates the ongoing dedication to keeping staff and students/tenants safe. This guidance is not intended to cover every scenario or issue, nor is it intended to replace the expertise and local knowledge of accommodation providers in carrying out their statutory duties.

This guidance has been developed in conjunction with representatives of the higher education sector and trades and students unions. The Welsh Government are grateful for their input.
Student accommodation as a workplace

Student accommodation is the workplace of a large number of staff, as well as the home of students. Under the Coronavirus Regulations businesses that are open must, by law, take all reasonable measures to ensure that a distance of 2 metres is maintained between any persons on the premises.

Maintaining a distance of 2 metres between persons who are not in the same household is an important aspect of the measures we must all take to minimise the risks of the spread of COVID 19.

The regulations enable the Welsh Ministers to issue guidance. This guidance – Taking all reasonable measures to maintain physical distancing in the workplace and accommodation providers must have regard to it.

The health and safety of staff in workplaces is subject to extensive guidance and legislation. Accommodation providers must be aware of their legal duties in respect of students/tenants and their employees, including under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Equality Act 2010. They must conduct or update risk assessments and controls in light of the new hazards posed by Covid-19. The Health and Safety Executive provides guidance. Accommodation providers should review the risk assessments conducted in respect of their accommodation and implement or adjust any necessary controls.

Wales’ coronavirus rules, guidelines and students

Students in Wales need to be aware of the restrictions on socialising imposed by law in response to the coronavirus, including an awareness of the current alert level and associated restrictions. These often differ from the law in other parts of the United Kingdom.

In addition we recommend students also consider:

• reducing the frequency with which students move between their term time address and their home address;

• reducing the number of contacts they have - reducing the number of people you mix with reduces the risk of transmission, especially if you or the people you meet don’t know they have the virus because they are ‘asymptomatic’;

• maintain social distance even within their own households for a lay low period of 10 days  either before or after they move between their term time and home address;

• observing increased hygiene measures such as washing your hands often, cleaning surfaces regularly, cleaning the kitchen and bathroom after or before you use it, not sharing towels, toothbrushes or personal items with anyone.

A period of laying low means taking extra care to minimise social contacts and only go out for essential purposes such as medical care or to exercise alone or with someone in your household outdoors.
Please refer to the latest guidance. These measures will help reduce the risk to family, friends and the wider community. Students should also remember that some members of their households, at home or during term-time, will be at higher risk if they catch Covid and our actions affect the lives of others.

Everyone must think carefully about where they go and who they’re meeting because the more places we go and the more people we meet – the more chances we have of catching coronavirus.

**What is a student “household”?**

Many of the restrictions are based on the place where you live and who you live with, in other words around the concept of a “household”. It will be important to know who forms part of a household as the coronavirus restrictions mean a person may only socialise indoors with people who are in their household or extended household.

**Commuter students**

Many students will live in a family home and will not move to attend university, they are known as commuter students and it will be clear that they will form a household with the people they live with.

**Student movement – two households**

Students who leave home and move house to attend university will become part of a different household. This does not necessarily mean, however, that they are no longer part of the home they have left. As many students routinely spend time both away at university at a term time address and at a home address, they are considered to have two “households” for the purposes of the coronavirus restrictions.

However, students should be made aware there is an increased risk of spreading coronavirus when moving between their two households.

Students should only move between their term-time and out-of-term time households when necessary, for example for work, because of concerns about wellbeing or at the end of term.

However, in alert level 4 students must have a reasonable excuse to travel. This means travelling for a ‘visit’ home is not allowed. A reasonable excuse may include travel: for work, volunteering, or for caring, to access medical support or because of concerns for mental health and well-being; to access or receive educational services and to move home.
**Term time household**

For students who move to a term time address, their household may be more difficult to determine. In many instances the nature of the accommodation will be such that a student’s household will be obvious.

**Flat-type accommodation**

For students living in ‘flat-type’ accommodation provided by universities where a small number of students have bedrooms and shared facilities such as a bathroom or kitchen in a self-contained unit, the student’s “household” is that flat. Similarly for students living in a shared house, the household is made up of those living in the house.

People who live in flat-type accommodation may mix together freely.

**Halls of residence**

For students living in traditional style halls of residence, however, the position is less clear. In those circumstances we do not consider that the two or three hundred students who stay in the building live “together” in the ordinary meaning of that word. As a result we do not consider this to be the student’s “household” for the purposes of the coronavirus restrictions. On that basis each student living in a single room in a traditional style hall of residence is a single “household” for the purposes of the rules.

The Welsh Government recognises, however, this is not good for the well-being of those students in such a situation. It is also impractical. As a result the law has been changed to provide that students who live in halls of residence have a reasonable excuse to socialise with those in the hall they share facilities such as kitchens or bathrooms with. Shared facilities will be allocated to specific “contact” groups in order, in effect, to replicate the kind of “household” that exists in “flat” style accommodation. For example in a shared kitchen in a hall of residence, it should be made clear for example that kitchen A is allocated to students on floor 1, rooms 1 to 12, kitchen B is for students on floor 2 rooms 13 to 24 and so on.

For the purposes of public health management of cases, incidents and outbreaks, those living in shared accommodation as a contact group will be treated as a ‘household’. We strongly recommend the use of rotas in order to minimise the number of people needing to use a shared facility at any one time.

It should also be clearly communicated that facilities are for the exclusive use of those allocated to them. This means that visitors from outside the accommodation should not enter shared facilities. This will include parents and other members of their home household and people in their extended household or support bubble if they have formed one. However, they may enter the individual’s private room. In addition students from different contact groups should not use those facilities. Clear signage should make students aware of this.
The number of students creating a contact group will depend on the number of students allocated the same shared facilities. University accommodation typically has contact groups of between 4 and 12.

The coronavirus restrictions limit the number of students within the contact group who can gather at any one time. This will vary depending on the alert level:

- in alert level 1 the maximum number is 6 people (excluding under 11s).
- in alert level 2, 3 and 4 the maximum number is 4 people (excluding under 11s).

In addition, students are able to gather with their contact group outside their accommodation. However, they must follow the rule on gatherings as they are not classed as a household. For example a student may have 12 people in their contact group but may only meet with a maximum of 3 others in shared facilities or public places in alert level 2, 3 and 4.

Students obviously need to understand who is in their contact group and understand that they shouldn’t socialise indoors with anybody outside that contact group (unless they have formed a support bubble or extended household (depending upon what is permissible at each alert level and specific rules apply by levels)).

This arrangement has the advantage of allowing students to form relationships and mix with those they live with in shared accommodation and in limited circumstances with an extended household or support bubble (dependent on alert level). However, the rules do not allow individuals to form and re-form new extended households or support bubbles. Extended households and support bubbles are fixed and once an extended household or support bubble chooses not to be considered as such individuals are not able to form a new extended household or support bubble.

Students should be aware that there is an increased risk of mixing within the contact group and in forming extended households due to the increased number of people they may come into contact with.

**Why is this so strict?**

We know that coronavirus spreads easily when people socialise indoors. We also know that people tend not to stick to social distancing practices when they socialise. We need, therefore, to minimise close interaction by reducing the amount of socialising between groups of people.

The more people interact the more people will spread the virus, and where a student tests positive for COVID-19 they along with all others they have come into close contact with will need to self-isolate. This may mean large numbers of students being asked to self-isolate, which could have an impact on their education.

The Welsh Government knows that this is not what student life is normally about, but sadly we don’t live in normal times.

**Please help us by sticking to the rules. Please help us keep Wales safe.**
Extended households

Please note, extended households can vary depending on the alert level. Extended households are not permissible at alert level 4, but support bubbles may be formed by individuals at this level under specific rules.

Students who are classed as a single person household may form a support bubble with another household, either with another individual household or a larger household if they choose to do so.

For larger group households, they may agree to form an extended household with one other household, but this may be difficult because all of the students in each household must agree to this. Extended households are not permitted at Level 4.

Alert levels 1-3 only

Extended households could be very attractive to latter year students who tend to have formed into more traditional households and will have more clearly defined social groups. However these will present difficult choices, particularly where partners are concerned, as all individuals in a household need to agree on the same extended household. However, this is the same for the entire population at this time. Excluding all students from these arrangements would be disproportionate.

However, extended households may be unworkable for first year / new students and those already living in larger households. In these circumstances institutions may wish to advise these students not to form extended households.

In addition, support may be needed to help vulnerable students and students in increased higher risk categories in deciding on forming households and extended households. They may also require support in communicating with other students where additional consideration for the need to keep each other safe should be thought through.

The rules do not allow individuals or households to form and re-form new extended households or support bubbles. Extended households and support bubbles are fixed and once an extended household or support bubble chooses not to be considered as such, individuals are not able to form a new extended household or support bubble.

Large households – joint tenancy

Where a (single) household is made up of more than four people, because they live together, there are no restrictions on the members of that household being together.

Clearly, all members of the household need to be able to be at home together, and there is no public health benefit in preventing the members of a household from being able to go out places together. Therefore, a single, larger household could go to a restaurant, café, bar or pub together as a group depending on whether this is permitted at the current alert level in place.

Individuals are also able to spend time outdoors with their household even if there are more than four or six depending on the alert level.
In addition a larger household could form a support bubble with an individual. A support bubble arrangement can continue even in alert level 4. The purpose of this is to recognise the risks of loneliness and isolation.

The maximum number of people who can meet in regulated settings depends on the alert level. These can be any people – they do not have to be people you live with or part of your extended household. If some of the people you meet with are part of your extended household, this does not mean that your group can be larger than four people.

Arrival and reception

Accommodation providers should make safe arrangements for receiving new and returning tenants and those assisting them, and communicate these clearly. This may include specific and staggered arrival times, routes in to and out of buildings, car parking arrangements, hand washing facilities, arrangements for ad hoc or unexpected arrivals, and so on. These should be communicated clearly.

Shared spaces, facilities and thoroughfares

It has become commonplace to see the necessary 2 metres social distancing between households maintained in shared and public spaces by the provision of signage, measurement markers and other aids.

One way systems and other protocols and procedures to assist in the management of movement of students around accommodation buildings may help ensure safety.

Electronic passes and security doors may assist in restricting movement of students within and between buildings, whether altogether or at certain times of the day.

Automatic doors may reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus by touch.

The provision of shared spaces will vary between settings, but may include gyms, restaurants or cafés, bars, and other social amenities. Shared study or quiet spaces may also be provided. Some of these settings may not be permitted to be open depending on the alert level. Others may, but with restrictions. Accommodation providers will wish to consult the Coronavirus Control Plan and existing guidance on settings relevant to them and plan accordingly as the national regulations are updated. Accommodation providers may determine that, even where permitted, settings should not open due to the potential risk they may pose.

The wearing of face coverings should be strongly recommend in all shared spaces and are mandatory in areas open to the public such as reception areas.

Shared bathing and toilet facilities may present particular challenges. Where facilities are shared, enhanced provision of serviced cleaning and the provision of adequate materials and instructions for students to clean facilities before and after use may assist.

Shared laundry facilities will also require management and effective and regular cleaning. Students who are self-isolating will not be able to access shared facilities, including laundry facilities and accommodation providers should make arrangements
to support individuals who are self-isolating with alternative arrangements such as a delivery and collection laundry service.

Shared spaces are where staff may come into frequent contact with students. This will include security, maintenance and other essential estates services, and other student and welfare services. Accommodation providers must take the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of both.

Shared spaces will include entry and exit points. Accommodation providers may wish to consider how to manage these spaces at busy times of the day to facilitate social distancing (currently 2m).

**Cleaning and hygiene**

Rooms and other facilities will need to be cleaned before a new tenant arrives, following guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. This is especially so if accommodation has recently housed anyone who may have been exposed to coronavirus. Accommodation providers may wish to be reminded of their responsibility for the safe re-opening of buildings after an extended period of closure, including appropriate ventilation and safe maintenance of water, heating and air conditioning systems.

Accommodation providers will wish to ensure robust and enhanced cleaning services are available. In addition to serviced cleaning, the provision of cleaning materials for occupants may be helpful, including the provision of appropriate wipes. See the guidance on cleaning in a non-health care setting. Increased frequency of cleaning may be considered, especially in shared spaces. Accommodation providers will wish to ensure that the chemicals used are adequate for the task of disinfecting.

Additional attention to those areas where the virus may be deposited and then transmitted (for example, door handles and plates, handrails etc.) may be warranted. Accommodation providers will wish to assess whether items which are usually provided for communal use should still be available or whether alternative arrangements could be made – for example, waste bins, drinking water dispensers, vending machines etc.

COVID-19 is an easy virus to kill when it is on skin. This can be done with soap and running water or hand sanitiser and adequate and appropriate facilities should be provided. Provision of hand sanitiser, especially in shared spaces and entry points, may be an effective measure.

Ensuring adequate ventilation is also likely to assist.

Good hand washing and respiratory hygiene can be promoted by the ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach (together with appropriate disposal facilities).

**Managed social interactions**

See section on rules relating to gatherings in Wales.

Students will wish to socialise, appropriate social and physical distancing between households must be maintained, guidance on gatherings observed according to the
rules for the alert level in place at any time, and rules on face coverings in indoor public places followed.

Any restrictions that may be in place must also be observed. Communication with students will be important, and accommodation providers and universities may determine that, where permitted by the Regulations, planning and management of social events will be advantageous to support student mental health and well-being and contribute to the university experience. In addition, legal, organised social interactions will help to manage and mitigate the risk of unplanned gatherings.

Management and clear signage in shared spaces may assist in preventing unplanned gatherings.

‘Virtual’ gatherings will play an important role in supporting students’ wellbeing and enabling safe socialising and should be encouraged. Many higher education providers and students’ unions will manage a wide range of social facilities and venues. These will need to be managed in accordance with the relevant sector guidance and according to what is permitted to operate under each alert level. See the section in this guidance on wider campus services.

**Travel to campus**

Accommodation providers may wish to consider how to facilitate safe travel to and from campus during term. Measures may include encouraging walking and cycling by, for example, providing secure storage for cycles, and working with local transport operators. It is mandatory for face coverings to be worn on public transport.

**Engagement with students/tenants**

Accommodation providers will recognise that engagement and effective communication with tenants during the pandemic is particularly important. This will assist in risk mitigation and may provide reassurance to students/tenants and their families. Local students’ unions will be helpful in communicating concerns and issues from students to accommodation providers and assisting in resolving them.

Students should be aware of the risks of transmission of the virus and the nature of the disease which may result. There is great deal of information available for individuals to assist them in maintaining their and others’ safety. Some students will have experienced lockdown and subsequent measures while at University earlier in 2020. Nonetheless, for many students this may be the first time away from home for any period. For others, this will be the first time living independently since the start of the pandemic. In both cases, these will be new circumstances in which to manage their own safety and that of others. HEIs and accommodation providers should play an important role in reinforcing key messages and signposting students to advice, guidance, support and medical assistance.

Accommodation providers may wish to consider the provision of information and/or advice to their students/tenants on issues such as:

- the restrictions in place in Wales, including for arriving international students;
• symptoms of coronavirus disease;
• availability of and access to testing;
• availability of and access to healthcare;
• information on rules concerning the composition of and interaction between households;
• requirements for self-isolation, including in shared accommodation;
• moving house/home;
• arrangements for safely moving into accommodation;
• expected behaviour in shared accommodation;
• the precautions taken in the accommodation to maintain safety;
• arrangements for safe socialising;
• hygiene and cleaning measures in place;
• security and other management arrangements;
• support available from the higher education institution; and
• support available from the accommodation provider.

The Welsh Government in partnership with Universities Wales and NUS Cymru have developed an asset pack with downloadable material.

This information may be particularly valued by those away from home for the first time, international students who are not familiar with the UK and/or current restrictions, and students from outside Wales who are not familiar with the restrictions in place in Wales. The provision of information may be phased in order to promote relevant messages at the appropriate time. Multi-lingual provision may be helpful.

Supporting self-isolation

Individuals who display symptoms or the people living with or in contact with a person who has symptoms or a positive test are required to self-isolate immediately. In shared accommodation, this will mean the contact group or household.

In addition, anyone who may have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive will be contacted by Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) are asked to self-isolate. Self-isolation is a requirement in law if you have symptoms, have tested positive, or live with or are a contact of someone who has symptoms or has tested positive.

If you are identified by TTP as a close contact, you will be informed you need to self-isolate and they will advise you on what else you need to do. Please see the guidance on contact tracing.

Extensive guidance is available and accommodation providers will wish to familiarise themselves with:

• Self-isolation: stay at home guidance for households with possible coronavirus; and
• Self-isolating in your shared home during the coronavirus pandemic.

Accommodation providers will wish to consider how to support student households
which are self-isolating in accordance with the guidance. They will need to determine whether providing information which has been drafted with the particular circumstances of their accommodation in mind may be helpful. This might include information on how self-isolation will be supported, including contact details for those who will assist.

Accommodation providers must not visit the home of anyone who is self-isolating.

Accommodation providers will wish to consider carefully how to support the effective self-isolation of an individual, household or households. There are three key considerations which each accommodation provider may wish to make provision for:

- assisting an individual or a household to self-isolate in accordance with the law and Welsh Government guidance;
- arrangements for the provision of food, medicines, laundry and other necessities;
- assistance in respect of physical and mental health, including daily virtual keeping in touch, knowing who to contact if they feel very unwell and ensuring individuals are not feeling lonely or feeling other negative impact of loneliness.

Providers should also consider any other required assistance during the period of self-isolation.

Accommodation providers who are not HEIs may wish to liaise with HEIs to determine what support may be available from student welfare services to complement their own provision of support to their tenants.

PHW may manage any cluster of cases in shared accommodation as if a single household had been formed and a contact group will be treated as if they were a single household and PHW and Test, Trace, Protect will inform all individuals using shared spaces to self-isolate. This is because sharing living spaces will increase the risk of transmission of the virus and these measures are in place in order to control the spread.

Understanding how households are self-isolating is important for determining how to support them. It is for individuals and their households to follow the guidance on self-isolation, but providers will wish to consider their role in ensuring the health and safety of those in their accommodation.

**Confirmed cases of Coronavirus disease**

Confirmed cases of disease will be of concern to those resident in student accommodation, as well as those employed there.

Accommodation providers may wish to consider:

- developing an early warning system to identify possible infection among staff or students;
- familiarising themselves with the Test, Trace, Protect protocols, and providing information to students;
• supporting self-isolation (as above);
• staying in touch with self-isolating individuals/households;
• facilitating medical assistance;
• taking the precautions necessary to protect other households in shared accommodation;
• taking the precautions necessary to protect staff;
• providing information to other households and to staff to alert them and inform of the precautions being taken; and
• determining when to seek the assistance of Public Health Wales and/or the Local Resilience Forum to advise on the management of an outbreak.

Disabled students

Accommodation providers will wish to consider whether any additional arrangements are required to keep disabled tenants safe, and whether any adaptions made to keep others safe may be have an unanticipated impact on disabled students (for example, unusual entry and exit routes which wheelchair users may not be able to navigate). Risk and equality impact assessments will be important.

Visitors

Arrangements will need to be considered for the reception and management of any necessary visitors, including social and physical distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, and so on. Accommodation providers will need to keep a record of all visitors to assist with Test, Trace, Protect.

Monitoring and review

Accommodation providers must continually monitor and review their arrangements to ensure they are effective in keeping student/tenants and staff safe, especially during periods of self-isolation. When there is a move between alert levels this will indicate a need to review health and safety measures. Continued engagement with students/tenants and the local Students’ Union may assist.
Students and staff in need of support

Institutions should consider the impact of all COVID-19 arrangements on specific students and staff.

HEIs must not discriminate against or disadvantage any student or member of staff who is required to self-isolate, for whatever reason.

Vulnerable students / Widening Access

There may be students who need specific additional support in order to continue to progress in learning. Equality impact assessments should identify impact on students with protected characteristics. Institutions should also consider the needs of those students who are socio-economically disadvantaged and may have additional support needs.

These may include:

(i) Vulnerable students who may include:
   - People with protected characteristics;
   - people with care and support needs;
   - people who are estranged from families or homeless;
   - people who are care experienced;
   - carers;
   - disabled people, including those with mental health issues; and
   - those with other identified needs or health conditions.

(ii) Students who have had difficulty engaging with online learning because of a lack of appropriate equipment, including broadband and appropriate line speed in shared accommodation, connectivity, digital skills or digital poverty.

(iii) Students who are also key workers and may be studying full or part-time, including students on placement in education, health and social care or other settings.

(iv) Students from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

(v) Students who the provider considers to be at risk of disengaging or dropping out of learning.

We recognise that accessing face to face learning may not be possible at various phases for many students. HEIs may wish to consider what individualised support these students will require at different phases to take account of the changing nature of risk associated with COVID-19, including where there is increased or decreased prevalence amongst the student or wider population, or the introduction or easing of local health protection measures.

Students who are extremely vulnerable or who were previously shielding or who may consider themselves or a family member vulnerable should be supported in access to in person learning or online learning and support.
In addition support may be needed to help these students in deciding on extended households and in communicating with other students where additional consideration for the need to keep each other safe should be thought through.

HEIs may decide that a combination of approaches is most appropriate, depending on the student’s needs and these could include:

- Pastoral support, including mental health and wellbeing check-ins, and further help signposting such as Student Space;
- Regular, timely and clear communication between course teams and students, particularly in relation to changes in provision;
- Tutorial support to check how the learner is engaging with online/remote delivery and that they understand what is expected of them, and to give feedback on their work;
- ICT support to ensure that they are comfortable and confident using online learning platforms and other technologies required for remote learning and minimise digital poverty/inclusion;
- Safeguarding checks;
- Advice and guidance on next steps in learning, placements and/or employment;
- Where safe, offering support on a one-to-one basis but adhering to the social distancing rules;
- Use of learner analytical data, including: engagement and monitoring data (e.g. library or VLE log in records, monitoring of online ‘attendance’, use of analytics data where relevant); and
- Seeking feedback from staff and students on any barriers to learning or well-being that are being experienced.

Vulnerable staff

This guidance does not supersede existing health and safety legislation including the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and HEIs will continue to abide by these obligations (along with legal obligations under coronavirus legislation), including the legal duty on employers to conduct risk assessments and engage with health and safety committees

Specifically on COVID-19 and through all phases of planning, HEIs will have regard to general Health and Safety Executive health and safety guidance.

There may be staff who need specific additional support or where any equality impact assessments identify groups who may be disadvantaged.
These may include:

(i) Vulnerable staff may include:
   - people with protected characteristics;
   - people with care and support needs;
   - carers;
   - disabled people, including those with mental health issues; and
   - those with other identified needs or health conditions.

(ii) Staff who have had difficulty engaging with online working because of a lack of appropriate equipment, connectivity, digital skills or digital poverty.

(iii) Staff who are also key workers and may be working in more than one setting.

(iv) Staff from ethnic minority communities.

For these staff, there will be a need to review the risk assessments following the introduction or easing of restrictions or a cluster outbreak.

We recognise that returning to in person work may not be possible at various phases for many staff. HEIs may wish to consider what individualised support these staff will require at different phases due to the changing nature of the risk associated with COVID-19 as increased prevalence and transmission rates will indicate increased risks.

Specifically, where national health protection measures are implemented, institutions should ensure they review the individual risk assessments for vulnerable staff as a priority. Where a staff member falls into a vulnerable category, there may be a need to consider working from home as the most appropriate migratory measure. However, risk assessments need to be made on an individual basis and should take account of individual needs and circumstances. Institutions will, of course, have to ensure that measures and arrangements adopted comply with their duty to minimise the risk of staff exposure to coronavirus under the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 2) (Wales) Regulations 2020.

**Off-site delivery**

We recognise that some programmes, such as initial teacher training, social work, medical and allied healthcare professions as well as laboratory based research cannot be completed online and HEIs will need to continue to comply with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (No. 5) (Wales) Regulations 2020 and support students.

For students, including HE apprentices, whose learning takes place in the workplace or in another place, 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 whilst they are undertaking workplace delivery. **In all cases, if the nature of the learning environment means that the provider cannot assure itself that students and staff will be safe, learning delivery must not continue.**
Managing delivery safely: workplace learning, HE apprenticeships and franchise delivery

The Welsh Government has published guidance on staying safe at work for employers and employees to keep safe in the workplace, including on work-based learning and apprenticeships. There is also guidance on all reasonable measures that workplaces and other premises must take to minimise the risk of exposure to the virus.

This includes general guidance as well as sector specific guidance as follows:

- Retail
- Manufacturing
- Sports, recreation and leisure
- Forestry businesses
- Creative industries
- Offices and contact centres
- Culture and heritage destinations and venues
- Animal businesses, rescue and rehoming
- Working in a vehicle
- Labs and research facilities
- Construction and outdoor work
- Food and meat plants
- Tourism and hospitality
- Hairdressing and barber businesses

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. The guidance will be updated over time and we anticipate that further sectors will be added as more industries start to reopen for business.

If a learner reports concerns about their safety in their workplace, or if an assessor observes unsafe practices (such as poor handwashing and respiratory 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. Equally, assessors and other staff involved in workplace delivery must not attend workplaces if they display symptoms themselves, but must self-isolate and apply for a test. Assessors, staff and learners must comply with the mandatory wearing of face coverings in indoor public places in the workplace where relevant, or to comply with any employer requirement for face coverings on their premises if not mandated by law.

Students 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
Laboratory guidance – teaching and learning environment

Purpose and scope of this guidance

The purpose of this guidance is to consider changes to the teaching and learning approach within laboratory and research development facilities at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

It gives practical considerations of how safe practices could be applied. However, individual institutions should consider the required flexibility of their individual needs and circumstances to ensure the delivery of a high-quality experience that supports students to achieve their learning outcomes in a safe manner.

The health, safety and wellbeing of the students, staff and visitors remains the priority. This guidance outlines some of the considerations that universities may wish to review in order to protect against the transmission of the virus, which causes COVID-19.

Learning / teaching in a laboratory

This guidance is a summary of the full laboratory guidance it is intended to summarise the elements which apply to a teaching laboratory.

Where students or staff are required to attend laboratories then the following guidelines should be followed:

- Where it is possible to maintain a social and physical distance (2m at the time of writing) should do so.
- Given laboratories are also work settings, those responsible for the work will be required to take other reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to, or spread of coronavirus. It is therefore important that other mitigation measures are considered as set out in Welsh Government guidance, for example; face coverings, washing hands, using physical barriers or limiting contact. These should be risk assessed and communicated clearly with students and staff.
- We would encourage institutions to demonstrate to their staff and students that they have properly assessed their risk and take taken appropriate
mitigating measures. If possible, you should publish your risk assessment and safe systems of working on your intranet and it should be updated regularly.

- Where possible laboratory equipment (including all work surfaces, and other touch surfaces such as door handles) should be cleaned between each session.
- Institutions should evaluate the space available in each laboratory setting to determine how many people are able to be in the laboratory safely at one time whilst maintaining a 2m distance. Once identified this number should be adhered to at all times.
- Institutions should review layouts and processes where possible to allow for social and physical distancing, accepting the limitation of some lab environments.
- Institutions and lecturers should consider using fixed teams or adjusting booking processes to reduce the number of people in a lab at the same time to maintain physical distancing and avoid overcrowding.
- To minimise the need for movement once in the laboratory, workstations should be set up with equipment prior to each session and each student should be allocated their own equipment/kit as much as is reasonably practicable.
- There should be limited use of high-touch items and shared equipment, for example, test equipment, apparatus, shared control terminals. High-touch objects that cannot be restricted (such as benches, furniture, doors etc.) must be cleaned according to guidance.
- Any reusable PPE and lab coats should be washed thoroughly after every use. Facilities should be put in place and procedures to assist with the safe removal and cleaning of these items, such as plastic bags for taking items home.
- Disposable items must be stored in a refuse bag. The estates/cleaning team are informed who will collect the bag and dispose of safely. This does not include sharps which are stored in the sharps container.
- The Facilities Manager should arrange deep cleaning and interim sanitisation of the area according to the agreed cleaning regime that should take account of current guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings.
- Where the use of security access devices are required, such as keypads or passes, then institutions should consider adjusting processes at entry/exit points to reduce risk of transmission. For example, cleaning pass readers regularly and asking staff to hold their passes next to pass readers rather than touching them.

An example of social and physical distancing being practised in the lab.
Handwashing and Respiratory Hygiene and safety

It is recommended that all individuals:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and use available sanitising gel. This is especially important if you blow your nose, sneeze or cough.
- Wear a face covering in indoor public spaces.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands.
- Use washbasins and sanitise before entering the rooms/labs.
- Refrain from touching any parts of the face once you have washed/sanitised and entered the lab.
- Students must not enter the substances storage rooms or prep rooms or other areas designated by the individual institution.
- Students should remain at their work benches.
- Prior to leaving the area, wash/sanitise your hands.

Moving around campus and travel to the lab

Institutions will have guidance in place that sets out what actions need to be followed while on campus, this should be adhered to. When attending a campus to work or train in a lab additional consideration should also be given to the following:

- Refrain from moving around the campus to other parts of the building whenever possible.
- Follow social distancing rules at all times.
- Wear face coverings in indoor public places, or where asked to do so because social distancing is not possible.
- Individuals must go directly to the building as directed noting any marked entrance and exit routes and follow any one way or other access management systems in place. Within the building go directly to the laboratory as directed by the course team whilst maintaining social distance.
- When individuals finish their tasks they should leave the campus immediately.
- Institutions are advised to consider staggered arrival and departure times to limit opportunities for congregation of people and reduce crowding into and out of the learning environment, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics.
Examples of common areas that have been restricted for use and overlaid with clear visual markers to encourage physical distancing.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so. Where social and physical distancing cannot be maintained the need for additional industry standard PPE may be considered as part of the risk assessment and hierarchy of risk. Institutions are reminded that face coverings are not the same as the PPE used to manage risks like dust and spray in an industrial context.

**Accidents and Emergencies**

In an emergency, for example, a chemical spill, provision of first aid, fire or break-in, people do not have to stay 2m apart if it would be unsafe. People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards, including washing hands.

Accident and emergency procedures are already in place and should be followed. Institutions are advised to review their procedures to ensure they reflect the 2m physical distancing principles as far as possible. All workplaces and premises must take reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to the virus as set out in guidance.
General Guidance on Protective Measures

In all education and training settings, preventing the spread of coronavirus involves dealing with direct transmission (for instance when in close contact with those sneezing and coughing) and indirect transmission (via touching contaminated surfaces). All workplaces and premises must take reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to the virus as set out in guidance.

A range of approaches and actions should be employed to do this.

These can be seen as a hierarchy of controls that, if implemented, create an inherently safer system, where the risk of transmission and illness is substantially reduced. The controls at the top of the hierarchy are potentially more effective and protective than those at the bottom.

HEIs should communicate these measures clearly to students and staff and facilitate these actions as much as possible.

Avoiding all contact with individuals who are unwell

If a member of staff or student has or are showing symptoms of coronavirus (a new continuous cough, fever or loss or change to sense of smell or taste or smell), or have someone in their household who is, they should not be in an education setting. They should be at home isolating whilst applying for and awaiting the outcome of a coronavirus test, in line with the guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection.

Cleaning hands more often

Clean hands more often than usual, particularly after arriving at the HEI setting, and arriving home, touching the face, blowing of the nose, sneezing or coughing, and before eating or handling food.

Staff and students should have ready access to facilities to clean hands. They should be reminded that frequent cleaning is appropriate, and that safe hand washing means you should wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly.

If hand washing facilities are not available, the use of alcohol hand rub/sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered is advised.

HEIs may wish to ensure adequate availability of alcohol hand rub/sanitiser is available to staff and students.

You may wish to consider including some of the following:
Cleaning and hand hygiene protocols

Clear cleaning and hand hygiene protocols need to be introduced to limit coronavirus transmission that are understood by all staff, contractors and students.

In developing these protocols a proportionate consideration should be given to:

- Increasing cleaning at touch points such as handrails, gates, doorknobs, door plates, lift buttons, parking meters etc.
- Remembering that a high and visible level of personal hygiene and cleaning regimes for your cleaning staff will provide reassurance for staff and students.
- Providing hand sanitiser at the entry and exit points to the site/building and where regular, unavoidable and multiple “touch points” exist.
- Increasing frequency of the cleaning of work areas and surfaces such as touch points as set out above, using your usual cleaning products.
- Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.
- Installing hand sanitiser for use by staff and students before they enter kitchen facilities.
- Reinforcing messages about frequent hand washing/use of hand sanitiser.
- Removal of water fountains.
- Do not share towels, including hand towels and tea towels.

With specific regards to toilet facilities consideration should be given to:

- Enhancing and increasing frequency of cleaning regimes.
- Introducing signage and social distance markers to support physical distancing.
- Installing a queuing system with marked floor spots for physical distancing.
- Taking out of use every other urinal, cubicle or basin unit.
- Introducing no-touch soap dispensers.
- Introducing more regular checks of soap/paper towel dispensers – in the expectation that greater use will be made of these. Do not share towels, including hand towels and tea towels.
- Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoiding touching your face and to cough or sneeze into your arm and to remember social distancing.
- Providing regular reminders and signage to maintain hand hygiene standards.
- Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.
- Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved.
- Replacing hand dryers with paper towels in handwashing facilities.
- Minimising use of portable toilets.
General preventative measures

Ensuring good respiratory hygiene – catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands!

Avoid touching the face, mouth, eyes and nose.

Cover the mouth and nose with disposable tissues when coughing or sneezing. If none are available, sneeze into the crook of the elbow, not into the hand.

Dispose of tissues into a disposable rubbish bag and immediately clean hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser.

Individual cleaning of frequently touched surfaces often

To prevent the indirect spread of the virus from person to person, individuals should clean frequently touched surfaces, such as table tops and electronic devices (such as phones). When cleaning, use the usual products, like detergents and antibacterial surface wipes, as these will be effective at getting rid of the virus on surfaces. Full guidance for non-healthcare settings is available.

Shared study spaces should have appropriate cleaning materials such as wipes readily available to enable individuals to clean areas before and after use.

Cleaning clothes daily

The virus can survive on clothes. To prevent the indirect spread of the virus staff should change any clothing/uniforms or face coverings, if used in confined spaces, daily and wash using normal detergent at the hottest temperature specified on the garment. Do not shake dirty laundry. Remember to wash your hands after changing your clothes/uniform/face covering. Keep used reusable face coverings in a bag until they can be washed.

Minimising contact and mixing

You should, as much as possible, alter the environment to minimise contacts and mixing within your setting and strictly adhere to the social distancing requirements. This might include, where feasible, keeping small groups of students together, but maintaining social distance, for on campus activity.

General cleaning and preventative controls

Building(s) will need to be cleaned regularly and at least once a day. Hard surfaces should be cleaned with warm soapy water or the normal cleaning products used. Particular attention should be given to cleaning ‘high-touch’ areas and surfaces. These areas should be cleaned frequently in high use areas based on local assessment, including bathrooms, railings, tables, equipment, door handles and lift areas.
An additional clean (as above) should occur when a cohort is changed within any area, lecture theatre or room. This may include canteen and catering facilities with staggered lunch breaks.

Cleaning staff should maintain social distancing from each other and from staff and students at all times.

Tissues should be placed in a separate waste bin and disposed of safely. All rubbish should be removed daily.

**Ventilation**

Areas that may be poorly ventilated, or where people spend a lot of time together increase the risk of the virus spreading. Adequate ventilation must be ensured in all areas. Consideration should also be given as to whether face coverings should also be mandated within those locations.

Where possible, poorly ventilated spaces should be adapted to improve ventilation or, if that is not possible, they should not be used as a teaching/learning location.

You should consider ways to maintain and increase the supply of fresh air, for example, by opening windows and doors (excluding fire doors). You will need to consider making provision for winter in those spaces which rely on the opening windows for ventilation. Air conditioning systems should rely on fresh rather than recycled air. Advice on this can be found in Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak.

**Using outside space and shared spaces**

Coronavirus does not persist very long in well-ventilated sunlit environments. The virus persists longer in the indoor environment.

- Outdoor space should continue to be used for exercise and breaks, adhering to the social distancing requirements. Management controls may need to be put in place to prevent congregation of people around areas of high usage such as entrances and exits etc.
- Outdoor learning is encouraged where possible as this can limit transmission and more easily allow for the required 2 metre social distance between individuals.
- Outdoor equipment should not be used unless the setting is able to ensure it is appropriately cleaned between groups of students or staff using it, and that multiple groups don't use it simultaneously.
- For those students or staff who need to access sites, use of staff rooms/communal areas and offices should also be staggered to limit occupancy and hot desking should be discouraged. Face coverings are mandatory in indoor public spaces and those indoor places where social distancing is not possible.

**Transport arrangements**

- **Face coverings** are mandatory on public transport, including taxis, in Wales.
• Change start/finish times to avoid peak transport times, as public transport capacity is likely to be reduced to allow social distancing.
• Encourage student and staff to walk or cycle where possible, again observing the social distancing requirement.
• If you provide dedicated transport, ensure transport providers follow the taxi and private hire guidance.
**Actions following a suspected (showing symptoms) or confirmed case of COVID-19**

Once someone with suspected (showing symptoms) or, confirmed COVID-19 has been identified, all areas where this person has been must be identified and kept clear.

Management of the areas should be physical where possible i.e. barriers with suitable signage or behind locked doors. A clean down prior to reoccupation should take place following the COVID-19: cleaning in non-healthcare settings guidance.

Particular attention should be given to any specific area where the person has been in contact with, i.e. desk/chair, as well as all other ‘high-touch’ areas such as door handles, railings etc.

If any waste is associated with someone, suspected or confirmed of COVID-19, it should be double bagged in a waste bag, held in a secure place for 72 hours then disposed of with other waste.

Cleaning staff should fully understand the cleaning requirements, and HEIs should ensure that cleaning staff have appropriate training, products and equipment available to them in a timely manner.
Personal protective equipment (PPE)

The information below is based on current advice. We will keep this under review and update if required, based on scientific evidence.

It is essential that those who need personal protective equipment (PPE) have access to it. It is also important to avoid improper use given the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 health emergency.

The majority of staff in HE will not require PPE beyond what they would normally need for their work, such as researchers or those staff and students in health and social care settings. Guidance for those in health and social care settings is available from Public Health Wales.

However, where staff are required to clean equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids, saliva or respiratory secretions, gloves and aprons should be used.

Handwashing should always be practised before putting on and after removing PPE.

Students who have personal care needs and their care routinely involves the use of PPE, due to their intimate care needs, should continue to receive their care in the same way.

All staff required to use PPE should understand how to put on/remove PPE in order to reduce the risk of onward transmission of infection.
Annex A: Approach to risk estimation and management

This is taken from a SAGE paper and has been highlighted by Chief Scientific Adviser for Health as an important approach.

When considering contact between contact groups, we would advise institutions to consider:

- What contact can be stopped?
- What contact can be substituted?
- Where there is contact, what design measures can control the risk?
- Where there is contact, what procedures can improve safety/ minimise risk?
- Having gone through this process, PPE should be used where the guidance states this is recommended.

The paper makes very clear that it will only rarely be feasible to eliminate the risk completely. The combination of controls introduced should aim to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably practicable prioritising structural, environmental interventions over individual level ones.