



Star

GUIDANCE ON DETERMINING STAFF AVAILABILITY

CHECKS AND BALANCES: RESPONDING TO COVID-19

A toolkit to support leaders
as they reopen schools



Contents

Context.....	3
Categorising staff and determining availability	3
Table 1: Vulnerable group classification.....	5
Table 2: Staff group table	6
Appendix 1: Email to all staff requesting availability information	11

Context

This document is intended to be used *in conjunction with the Toolkit* to enable schools to:

- Understand the different categories of staff as outlined in the government guidance and consider a balanced approach as to which staff can return to work on-site and which staff should continue to work at home.
- Provide a process and recording template to gather the information in a simple and easy to understand manner. This information can then be used to effectively plan staffing rotas and appropriate allocation of duties.

Categorising staff and determining availability

When planning for reopening, schools will need to put in place systems to collect information sensitively from staff to enable them to gauge the proportion of teaching and support staff for whom return to the school site may be unlikely. All schools will need to complete an audit of staff availability and keep this under continual review. The review and subsequent staffing arrangements should be fair, consistently applied and in line with government guidance.

The government has provided guidance on the classification of ‘extremely clinically vulnerable’ and ‘clinically vulnerable’ individuals with specific underlying health conditions which place them at greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (see Table 1).

The Department for Education has provided guidance specifically aimed at schools and other educational establishments providing their view on whether individuals who fall into these categories could return to work on-site when schools reopen more widely.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings](#)

Beyond these defined groups, there are staff who may be unable or reluctant to return to work because of other underlying health conditions or difficulties in personal circumstances. There are also groups of staff who may be unavailable to return to work because of non-COVID-19 related health reasons and those staff which would not normally be expected to return to work (e.g. those on maternity leave).

Table 2 provides a categorisation model, with actionable recommendations, that can be applied to audit staff availability and inform planning.

A supplementary database **Staff Availability Record** is provided to capture the outcomes of this audit. As well as allowing schools to record which category a member of staff falls into, it also allows schools to note the outcome of any COVID-19 tests undertaken.

When undertaking the audit, schools may choose to:

- Ask a designated lead, line managers or members of the senior leadership team to make individual telephone calls to staff.
- Send an email or letter to all staff to gauge availability. A template email is provided in Appendix 1.

The outcome of the audit should be used to classify staff according to the model outlined in Table 2 using the Staff Availability Record¹. This classification will allow leaders to make informed, criteria led decisions about the availability of staff for the reopening of the school.

Any further communication confirming the school's decision re staffing arrangements will need to be handled carefully and sensitively. Where a member of staff's preference to continue to work from home has not been upheld, a conversation, led by a member of the senior leadership team, should take place.

Where appropriate, risk assessments should be completed before staff return to work. The supplementary document **Template health risk assessments (pupils and staff)** provides a useful suite of risk assessments to support schools. As well as the key groups captured within Table 2, these risk assessments also include specific guidance in relation to groups which have been identified as potentially being at higher risk from COVID-19 due to individual vulnerabilities such as ethnicity.

The Staff Availability Record should be treated as a live document which is regularly updated as the health and personal circumstances of staff change.

¹ Note: Whilst it is recommended, that when completing the audit, a school secures evidence of a member of staff's situation, each school will know its staff well and may have sufficient information on file so additional evidence is not required. Staff can choose not to disclose evidence of medical conditions; however they should be encouraged to do so, explaining that what they do disclose will be treated confidentially and it will only be used to support staff planning.

Table 1: Vulnerable group classification

The vulnerable group classifications are defined in government guidance and the health conditions which would lead to a person being classified in either the ‘extremely clinically vulnerable’ or ‘clinically vulnerable group’ are listed in the table below.

Extremely Clinically Vulnerable	Clinically Vulnerable
<p>Expert doctors in England have identified specific medical conditions that, based on what we know about the virus so far, place someone at greatest risk of severe illness from COVID-19.</p> <p>Clinically extremely vulnerable people may include the following people. Disease severity, history or treatment levels will also affect who is in the group.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solid organ transplant recipients. 2. People with specific cancers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy • people with lung cancer who are undergoing radical radiotherapy • people with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment • people having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer • people having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors • people who have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs 3. People with severe respiratory conditions including all cystic fibrosis, severe asthma and severe chronic obstructive pulmonary (COPD). 4. People with rare diseases that significantly increase the risk of infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell). 5. People on immunosuppression therapies sufficient to significantly increase risk of infection. 6. Women who are pregnant with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired. <p>People who fall in this group should have been contacted to tell them they are clinically extremely vulnerable.</p>	<p>If a person has any of the following health conditions, they are clinically vulnerable, meaning they are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. They are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household.</p> <p>Clinically vulnerable people are those who are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions) 2. under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (that is, anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chronic (long-term) mild to moderate respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis • chronic heart disease, such as heart failure • chronic kidney disease • chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis • chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson’s disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), or cerebral palsy • diabetes • a weakened immune system as the result of certain conditions, treatments like chemotherapy, or medicines such as steroid tablets • being seriously overweight (a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or above) • pregnant women

Table 2: Staff group table

Category	Description	Action
No underlying health conditions or concerns	These staff do not report any underlying health conditions and have not expressed any concerns preventing them from returning to work. These staff are available for work.	Staff members should attend work as and when required, in accordance with their contract of employment.
Clinically extremely vulnerable https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19	Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals have an underlying condition which makes them significantly more at risk if they contract COVID-19. These staff will have received an NHS letter advising them to shield until the end of June 2020, at the earliest.	Staff members who can provide evidence that they fall into this category should work from home. Schools should maintain contact with the staff member.
Clinically vulnerable https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#clinically-vulnerable-people	Clinically vulnerable individuals have been advised to take extra care in observing social distancing and limit leaving home where possible as they are at an increased risk if they become infected.	Staff members who can provide evidence that they fall into this category should work from home if their job role allows, unless stringent social distancing in school is possible. A detailed risk assessment should be undertaken to determine this but should only be considered where there is no other option but for the person to attend work. Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.
Other medical conditions and individual vulnerabilities	Staff who have other medical issues and vulnerabilities but do not fall under the government’s vulnerable categories.	Staff members should attend work, otherwise they should provide evidence from their GP confirming alternative advice. The school should undertake a risk assessment if they do attend work. Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.

Category	Description	Action
<p>Living with clinically extremely vulnerable</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings</p>	<p>If a staff member is living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable and has received an NHS letter advising them to shield, they would fall into this category.</p>	<p>Staff members who can provide evidence that they fall into this category should work from home, unless stringent social distancing in school is possible.</p> <p>A detailed risk assessment should be undertaken to determine this but should only be considered where there is no other option but for the person to attend work and they are willing to do so.</p> <p>Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.</p>
<p>Living with clinically vulnerable</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings</p>	<p>If a staff member is living with someone who is clinically vulnerable, they would fall into this category.</p>	<p>Staff members who fall into this category should attend work, however individual circumstances should be considered, and each case handled sensitively with appropriate adjustments made where required.</p> <p>Schools should undertake a risk assessment if necessary.</p> <p>Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.</p>
<p>Displaying COVID-19 symptoms</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance</p> <p>https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/</p>	<p>The main symptoms of coronavirus are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high temperature – this means an individual feels hot to touch on the chest or back (a temperature measurement is not required). • new continuous cough – this means coughing for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if the individual usually has a cough, it may be worse than usual). • loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means the individual has noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal. 	<p>These staff should be self-isolating at home for a minimum of 7 days and be encouraged to be tested.</p> <p>After 7 days, staff will need to keep self-isolating if they still have any of the following symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high temperature or feeling hot and shivery • A runny nose or sneezing • Feeling or being sick • Diarrhoea • Loss of appetite <p>If they have diarrhoea or are being sick, then they should stay at home for at least 48 hours after it has stopped.</p>

Category	Description	Action
		<p>Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.</p> <p>If they are too unwell to work, they should be recorded as sick.</p> <p>If a member of staff tests negative for COVID-19, the member of staff should return to school, if and when they are well enough to do so.</p>
<p>Displaying COVID-19 symptoms – household member</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance</p> <p>https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/what-to-do-if-you-or-someone-you-live-with-has-coronavirus-symptoms/staying-at-home-if-you-or-someone-you-live-with-has-coronavirus-symptoms/</p>	<p>A household member is displaying the COVID-19 symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high temperature – this means an individual feels hot to touch on the chest or back (a temperature measurement is not required). • new continuous cough – this means coughing for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if the individual usually has a cough, it may be worse than usual). • loss or change to sense of smell or taste – this means the individual has noticed they cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal. 	<p>If another household member is displaying COVID-19 symptoms, the staff member should self-isolate for 14 days, or until a test for the household member is returned as negative.</p> <p>They are likely to be able to work from home, if their health and job role allows.</p> <p>Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.</p>
<p>Identified by the NHS Test and trace to self-isolate</p> <p>https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/nhs-test-and-trace-if-youve-been-in-contact-with-a-person-who-has-coronavirus/</p>	<p>Staff member has been alerted by NHS test and trace service that they have been in close recent contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID 19.</p>	<p>Self-isolate for 14 days from the day the staff member was last in contact with the person who has tested positive.</p> <p>They are likely to be able to work from home, if their health and job role allows.</p> <p>Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.</p> <p>If the staff member subsequently develops symptoms and goes for a test which is negative, they will need to keep self-isolating for 14 days from</p>

Category	Description	Action
		<p>when they were last in contact with the person who tested positive.</p> <p>If the staff member subsequently develops symptoms and tests positive, they should then follow the instructions below in the 'Positive test result' category.</p> <p>If the staff are too unwell to work, they should be recorded as sick.</p>
<p>Positive test result</p>	<p>A member of staff tests positive for COVID 19.</p>	<p>These staff should self-isolate at home for a minimum of 7 days following the onset of symptoms.</p> <p>After 7 days staff will need to keep self-isolating if they still have any of the following symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high temperature or feeling hot and shivery • A runny nose or sneezing • Feeling or being sick • Diarrhoea • Loss of appetite <p>If they have diarrhoea or are being sick, then they should stay at home for at least 48 hours after it has stopped.</p> <p>They can stop self-isolating after 7 days if symptoms have gone, or if they just have a cough or just have changes to sense of smell or taste – as these symptoms can last for weeks after the infection has gone.</p> <p>Staff members should work from home, if well enough to do so.</p> <p>Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.</p>

Category	Description	Action
		<p>If they are too unwell to work, they should be recorded as sick.</p> <p>Any return to work will need to be managed very carefully and staff should not be rushed back without a clear plan in place which considers all the pertinent points, including wellbeing of the member of staff and consideration of how to manage communications.</p> <p>Where a child, young person or staff member tests positive, the rest of their class or group within their childcare or education setting should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms.</p>
Childcare issues	<p>Staff members reporting issues with the care of their own children (for example, where grandparents are unable to provide childcare due to isolation or where children are unable to attend school due to school closures).</p>	<p>Staff members who fall into this category should attend work.</p> <p>However individual circumstances should be considered, with each case being handled sensitively with appropriate adjustments being made where it is possible.</p> <p>Schools should maintain contact in the event the member of staff works from home.</p>
Absent	<p>A staff member is absent for reasons not related to COVID-19, they would fall into this category e.g. sickness (not COVID-19); special leave; maternity leave.</p>	<p>The staff member is absent and not required to work.</p>

Note: There may be members of staff, with no medical conditions, vulnerabilities or childcare issues, who express significant concerns about their safety or wellbeing, or wellbeing of those they live with when asked to return to the workplace. Such cases should be dealt with on a case by case basis in the context of the staffing needs of the school

Appendix 1: Email to all staff requesting availability information

Schools may wish to consider adapting the following email to staff. Most schools will already be aware of which staff did not attend school prior to the closure due to underlying conditions. This email gives an opportunity to explore this further and to seek evidence in order to make informed decisions. Staff risk assessments should then be undertaken to inform decisions on availability.

NB The website links in this letter were correct at the time of publishing. However, as guidance is being updated regularly, schools are advised to check these links reflect the latest government guidance.

Dear **insert name**

We are currently reviewing our staffing in school and considering what our future needs may be. We need to ensure that we have sufficient numbers of staff when more pupils return to school and that this process is managed fairly and safely for everyone. Of course, there are many unknowns in the current climate which makes it particularly difficult to plan.

We would like all staff to complete the questions below. The latest government advice asks schools to follow the guidance on protective measures in education and childcare settings which should enable more people to go to work where they cannot work from home. Please be assured that government guidance regarding protecting people that are clinically extremely vulnerable, as well as those who are clinically vulnerable will continue to be adhered to.

We recognise that the information requested is sensitive. Please be assured that any information provided will be treated confidentially. You are not under any obligation to provide the evidence requested, however staffing and management decisions can only be made based on the information available. If you would prefer to speak to someone directly regarding this matter, please contact **insert name** on **insert number**.

Do you have a specific medical condition which means that you are considered 'extremely clinically vulnerable' and have received the NHS letter regarding shielding (see below guidance)? Please also let us know if you live with a family member who falls into this category. If so, please provide either a photograph or copy of the NHS letter with your response.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

.....
.....
.....

Do you have an underlying condition which may mean you are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus and which falls within the categories which the government advise should be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures (see section 8 of the below guidance)?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing#clinically-vulnerable-people>

.....
.....
.....

Do you have any other conditions or concerns which may impact your ability to return to work and undertake your full duties when schools reopen more widely? If so, please detail these below.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Please return your response by **insert date**.

Yours sincerely,