



### **Updated Joint Statement College Opening**

SFCA as the employer body for the sector and NASUWT, NEU and UNISON as trade unions representing staff in sixth form colleges continue to share a commitment to full college opening as soon as it is safe to do so, and to promoting steps to help colleges with their planning and risk assessments for safety when wider opening happens.

We welcome the work that has been done by management and staff alike to maintain provision over the period since March. This updated joint statement considers preparations for the new college year beginning in August/September. It is again intended to assist those working in colleges when they develop their plans for wider opening in consultation with unions, staff and students.

Colleges have been advised that “the overarching principle to apply is reducing the number of contacts between learners and staff” including through keeping groups separate and maintaining social distancing. They have also been advised to apply protective measures to reduce risk and prepare plans for managing individual cases and outbreaks. We jointly emphasise the absolute importance of making plans which will ensure safety for students and staff alike. We are again jointly advising colleges through this document that planning and risk assessments should be undertaken with the full involvement of college managements and union representatives. The principal focus of this planning should, of course, continue to be on ensuring safety whenever wider opening happens.

Trade unions have the legal right to be consulted on risk assessments and on future amendments to them. Risk assessments should be shared with staff and a reporting system is also required to allow staff to alert college leaders urgently to any shortcomings in arrangements or where systems are not functioning as they should be.

The three unions are advising their representatives to join in discussions with college management about full reopening but without accepting that full on-site delivery must be achieved by any particular date. They will provide their own advice on planning for wider opening in sixth form colleges on matters which they wish their representatives to ensure are taken into account.

The trade unions continue to press the Government to work with them to create the conditions for a safe return to college based on principles and tests which have the safety and welfare of learners and staff as the paramount principle.

This statement is intended to help ensure that colleges meet their duties to assess and manage risk. As the science develops, government guidance will be kept under review and may be revised.

The SFCA and the trade unions will be keeping in close contact as matters develop and will be available to provide further information and clarification where this is needed.

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