

5 November 2020

COVID-19 UPDATE

To: All Members in England

The UK Government has updated its coronavirus guidance for schools and other education settings, which can be accessed at: **Education and childcare settings: New National Restrictions from 5 November 2020**.

The NASUWT has been pressing the Government for further national measures to be introduced to ensure the safe opening of schools, in light of the Prime Minister's announcement on Saturday 31 October to extend national coronavirus restrictions (the national lockdown) from 5 November 2020.

Following lobbying by the NASUWT, the Government's guidance for England has now been updated, confirming stronger protections for vulnerable staff and pupils.

Whilst these changes are welcome, the Government's guidance does not go far enough and the Union is, therefore, continuing to call for more robust measures to be introduced to protect all staff, including those who are clinically vulnerable, pregnant, disabled or from a BAME background.

The NASUWT is also pressing for a raft of other national measures to be introduced, including stronger enforcement of essential COVID-safety measures, to keep all staff and pupils safe.

As from 5 November, the UK Government is advising that in England:

'Schools should continue to undertake risk assessments and implement the system of controls set out in this guidance. These measures provide a framework for school leaders to put in place proportionate protective measures for pupils and staff. If schools follow the guidance and maximise control measures, they can be confident they are managing risk effectively.'

'We would expect schools to ensure that any changes required in light of national restrictions, are in place as soon as practically possible, and by Monday 9 November at the latest.'

The Government also provides the following guidance:

'Clinically extremely vulnerable children and staff

'Children

'More evidence has emerged that shows there is a very low risk of children becoming very unwell from coronavirus (COVID-19), even for children with existing health conditions. Most children originally identified as clinically extremely vulnerable no longer need to follow original shielding advice. Parents should be advised to speak to their child's GP or specialist clinician if they have not already done so, to understand whether their child should still be classed as clinically extremely vulnerable.'

'Those children whose doctors have confirmed they are still clinically extremely vulnerable are advised not to attend education whilst the national restrictions are in place. Schools will need to make appropriate arrangements to enable them to continue their education at home.'

'Children who live with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable, but who are not clinically extremely vulnerable themselves, should still attend education.'

'Parents of clinically extremely vulnerable children will be receiving a letter shortly confirming this advice.'

'Staff

'Those individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable, are advised to work from home and not to go into work. Individuals in this group will have been identified through a letter from the NHS or from their GP, and may have been advised to shield in the past. Staff should talk to their employers about how they will be supported, including to work from home where possible, during the period of national restrictions. All other staff should continue to attend work, including those living in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable.'

'Clinically vulnerable staff and children

Staff and children who are clinically vulnerable or have underlying health conditions but are not clinically extremely vulnerable, may continue to attend school in line with current guidance.'

Employers should now confirm with their staff the additional actions that will be put into place to:

1. consult on, agree and update their risk assessments and control measures in light of the revised Government guidance and the new national restrictions to be introduced from Thursday 5 November;
2. confirm the actions they will be taking to maximise the control measures their schools will follow in order to manage the risk of COVID-19. The NASUWT believes that this should, as a minimum, include confirmation by the employer that they will:
 - ensure that all clinically extremely vulnerable staff are instructed to stay at home/work from home for the duration of the national restrictions, from no later than 9 November;
 - undertake individual risk assessments for all clinically vulnerable staff with a view to determining whether they should be deployed to work in school or at home;

- provide for the use of face masks or transparent face shields by staff and pupils where appropriate;
- ensure that effective two-metre physical/social distancing measures are applied, including consideration of provision for blended learning options, in order to maintain effective social distancing.

Further advice

If you are concerned about the safety of working practices in your workplace, please contact the NASUWT immediately for advice.

For further coronavirus information and advice, please visit the NASUWT website.



E-mail: advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk
Website: www.nasuwt.org.uk