**Covid-19 individual risk assessment – Schools**

**Guidance for Headteachers**

***Updated January 2021***

1. **Introduction and Scope**

Whilst it remains the case that wider government policy advises those who can work from home to do so, the government also recognise this will not be applicable to most school staff. Where schools applied the full measures within the government guidance on fully opening schools in September 2020, the risks to all staff were mitigated significantly, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) and clinically vulnerable (CV).

See section 2 for specific advice on CEV employees, which varies dependent on whether we are in a national lockdown or tier-related guidance is in place, based on where they live and/or work.

It continues to be the case that a risk assessment process needs to be undertaken for those employees who need additional consideration due to their having risk factors which make them more vulnerable to serious health complications as a result of Covid-19. These individuals fall into the following groups:

• Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV)

• Those who are clinically vulnerable (this includes those who are over 70, have a medical condition on the vulnerable list, are pregnant, have a BMI of over 40)

• Those who have other risk factors, which have been identified as increasing the risk of a poor outcome in the event of catching Covid-19 (this includes those in the higher age brackets, those from a BAME background and being born outside of the UK or Ireland)

A Covid-19 individual risk assessment has been developed for use in cases where individuals with one or more risk factors have been identified and they are required to work within the school.

Where an employee with a vulnerability is able to continue to work effectively from home there is no need to complete an individual risk assessment at the current time but consideration should be given to undertaking a homeworking risk assessment.

1. **Arrangements for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable employees**

These staff are likely to have been identified some time ago as they will have received a letter from the NHS or a specialist doctor advising them that they are within the ‘clinically extremely vulnerable’ group, initially referred to as the ‘shielding list’. They may have been advised to shield in the past, most recently in November 2020. If you have not done so already, headteachers can request that employees provide them with a copy of this letter which should be saved on the employee’s personal file.

**Scenario 1: National lockdown in place**

Due to the reintroduction of shielding, individuals in this category should be working from home and not attend school.

**Scenario 2: Tier-related local Alert Levels in place**

In local restriction Tier 4 areas, individuals who are clinically extremely vulnerable are advised to work from home and where this is not possible, **they should not go into work**. Note that this applies to staff who live in a Tier 4 area, even if their school is in Tier 3. In order to comply with your duty of care as an employer, this group must not attend the workplace; instead they should be supported to be able to continue working wherever possible, but from their home. This applies even if an individual wishes to disregard the Government guidance and expresses a wish to continue working on site. Schools should continue to pay clinically extremely vulnerable staff on their usual terms.

All other staff in local restriction tier 4 can continue to attend work, including those living in a household with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable.

Where they are unable to work from home, all staff can continue to attend school in local restriction tiers 1, 2 and 3. Under local restriction tier 3, staff and employers may wish to discuss flexibilities that support clinically extremely vulnerable staff, such as staggered start times to reduce travel during rush hour as part of the risk assessment process outlined below.

1. **Risk assessment process**

The individual risk assessment should be completed for all employees working in school who have an identified risk factor.

The risk assessment should be a joint process between school leaders and employees with a full exploration of any concerns which employees may have. In some cases, employees might have information from their GP or other health professionals to feed in. Where an employee wants to involve their union rep in the conversations, this should be accommodated if possible, but any meetings are informal and so there is no statutory right to representation in this regard and this should not hold up conversations with employees.

The assessment is framed as yes/no questions; and indicates where further action is needed, such as if additional control measures are required. Control measures is the term used within risk assessments for the actions and arrangements which have been put in place to control the identified risks. You should list all your agreed control measures within the comments and actions section on the risk assessment.

**3.1 Individual risk assessment**

The individual risk assessment focusses on the individual, their additional risk factors and what adjustments are required to support the employee at work.

On completion of the individual risk assessment, school leaders should determine if they have assessed their employee as being low, medium or high risk. It is not possible to provide guidance on every eventuality and the assessment of risk will depend on the specific circumstances of the individual. For example, two people with the same medical condition may be assessed at different risk levels due to additional risk factors such as age, ethnic background, gender and BMI.

The objective is to make an overall assessment in line with this grid:-

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Workplace Risk (with control measure)** | **Employee Risk** |
| Low | Medium  | High |
| Low  | Low overall risk – monitor existing control measures only | Low overall risk – monitor existing control measures only | Low overall risk – monitor existing control measures only |
| Medium | Low overall risk – monitor existing control measures only | Medium overall risk – Review/add controls and monitor | Medium overall risk – Review/add controls and monitor |
| High | Low overall risk – monitor existing control measures only | Medium overall risk – Review/add controls and monitor | High overall risk – seek competent advice/ amend duties |

As it suggests, this is based on the interaction of employee risk and workplace risk to give an overall risk factor.

**3.2 Employee Risk**

The following has been provided as guidance to help managers assess individual employee risk levels.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk rating** | **Definition** | **Workplace considerations** |
| High | High risk of hospitalisation, serious complications or death if infection occursLikely to be those with multiple clinical vulnerabilities and/or other risk factors | Risks at work should be kept low by the implementation of and adherence to controls.Ensure low likelihood of anyone breaching social distancing. Ensure they can maintain good personal hygiene with low likelihood of contacting contaminated objects and surfaces |
| Medium  | Risk of becoming hospitalised and seriously ill if infection occursLikely to be those with a lower number of risk factors or clinical vulnerabilities  | Risks at work should be kept as low as reasonably practicable by controls.May be able to undertake care work and working closely with others (such as teaching, sharing a vehicle, using public transport) provided controls (e.g. screens, face coverings) are effective in managing the risk |
| Low | Those for whom the risk of developing severe disease is low | An increased risk of infection may be accepted where there are no reasonably practicable means or reducing it further.Should be able to undertake all roles. |

Advice can be sought from Occupational Health around the potential impact of risk factors on individuals.

**3.3 Workplace Risk: The impact of job role**

Whilst individuals will have their own risk level, this needs to be considered in the context of their job role. Different roles will carry different risks depending on a range of factors.

Headteachers are encouraged to think about the potential risk factors associated with a role and the following scenarios are provided as guidance:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description of working arrangements** | **Considerations** |
| Role based in an office or reception area where the contact with other employees and students is limited. | Measures such as spacing of chairs and desks, one way systems are implemented. Also additional measures for individuals if required e.g. screens, staggered start times, etc.These would be considered low risk work environments suitable for all employees |
| Role based in a classroom or other area involving contact with a variety of employees, students and members of the public | These roles may be assessed as medium risk and controls should be formalised to minimise risks.Controls may include; one-way systems, social distancing where possible, provision of hygiene measures  |
| Role involving contact with a wide variety of employees, students, members of the public and the provision of personal care or medical procedures. | Risk levels for such roles may be assessed as high.Risk assessment will need to include all relevant factors and whether suitable control measures can be put in place to reduce risks. Measures are likely to include PPE where appropriate.These roles are unlikely to be suitable for employees who are assessed to be high risk due to their vulnerability. |

**3.4 Overall Risk**

**Where the overall risk is high, even after measures have been agreed, then advice should be sought via an Occupational Health referral to explore whether any further controls are possible**.

Where the overall risk is medium, managers should consider whether additional control measures are necessary.

Where the overall risk is low, it is still important that existing control measures are maintained.

**In all cases, individual risk assessments should be regularly reviewed to ensure they remain current and sufficient. Should there be any changes to the employee’s circumstances/health or their workplace, the risk assessment should be reviewed.**

* 1. **New and expectant mothers**

Pregnant women are in the clinically vulnerable category and are generally advised to follow the same advice for that group. All pregnant women should be subject to a New and Expectant Mother (NEM) workplace risk assessment, aside from Covid and a Covid-19 individual risk assessment should also be undertaken.

More guidance and advice on coronavirus and pregnancy is available from the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (rcog.org.uk)

There is no current evidence to suggest that pregnant women are more likely to get seriously ill from coronavirus, however pregnant women have been included in the list of people at moderate risk (clinically vulnerable) as a precaution. Pregnant women should follow the latest government guidance on staying alert and safe and avoid anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus. Once into the third trimester (more than 28 weeks pregnant) pregnant women should be particularly attentive to social distancing and individual risk assessments should be reviewed in advance of entering this stage of pregnancy.

1. **Possible actions and additional control measures**

**Amendments to the current role** – where possible, duties should be amended to reduce the risk to the employee where this is considered medium/high. Although it is recognised that redeployment opportunities outside of the classroom may be limited in schools, some possible options to explore include:

* relocating employees to a different part of a building or location where the risk is lower
* moving the employee to different duties with a lower risk of infection
* allowing the employee to complete some of their role from home where possible
* consider changing the way in which activities are undertaken for example, use of video conferencing

**Amendments to the workplace** – whilst arrangements advised by the government and other agencies should be effective in reducing risk, employees with vulnerabilities may understandably be worried about a return to working outside the home or have particular concerns, which head teachers should explore and address where possible. Examples of additional measures to explore include:

* Employees can be designated their own desk or workspace which only they are allowed to use
* In some circumstances screens could be provided to reduce contact with others
* The employee could be located near a window which opens to ensure good ventilation
* The employee could be relocated to a different building or area which is quieter
* Signage can be put up, with the employee’s agreement, indicating that they are at higher risk to ensure other employees stringently observe social distancing measures
* Supplies of hand sanitiser and wipes can be made available near to the employee’s desk in addition to being available across the school.
* The employee could be encouraged to bring their own food and drink negating the need for them to use shared kitchens e.g. bring a thermos of coffee, bring food in a chill bag so it doesn’t need to be put in a shared fridge, etc.
* Vary the employee’s start and finish time to ensure they can avoid bottlenecks at entrances and exits
* Consider how the employee travels to work and encourage walking, cycling or using their own car where possible. Where the employee is required to use public transport, consider whether working times can be varied to enable them to avoid busier periods. Car-sharing should be avoided if at all possible, but where it is not the passenger should sit in the back and ensure there is good ventilation. Individuals may wish to wear face coverings as is the legal requirement on public transport.
* The employee may wish to wear a face covering whilst at work
1. **Non-Covid Risk Assessments**

Another aspect of the covid-related changes to the school environment is that they may impact on pre-existing risk assessments. There is therefore a need to review these other risk assessments and update them as required. For example, it may have been agreed as part of an individual risk assessment that a disabled employee uses a particular entrance due to ease of access. However, the new one-way system introduced due to covid, makes this impossible, meaning the risk assessment and controls need to be revisited.

**! Actions**

* Ensure clinically extremely vulnerable staff do not attend their place of work.
* Identify other staff who are extremely clinical vulnerable or clinically vulnerable or have other higher risk factors.
* For all of the above who have an identified risk factor, complete an individual risk assessment in conjunction with the individual, and continually review, when changes in respect of the individual’s circumstances, their role, and/or the school environment are introduced.
* Obtain advice from your Occupational Health, HR, Health & Safety Advisers and the local Public Health team as required.