

EIS Advice to School Reps and Members re revised Risk Assessments

Introduction

In July, the Scottish Government announced that schools would re-open fully from 11 August 2020. In these circumstances, effective implementation of the health and safety guidelines and Covid 19 mitigations is critical to schools being Covid secure environments.

In terms of risk assessments, the Scottish Government advice is that these need to be conducted by the employers in conjunction with trade unions and LNCTs.

This updated guidance is intended to ensure that school reps, and members generally, are aware of their entitlements under Health and Safety legislation and of the type of measures which should be in place before the full re-opening of schools.

Heads and Deputies who are members, should find it useful, also, as a support to preparations as it will probably fall to them to act on behalf of the Employer at school level.

Legal Background to the Employer's Duty of Care, Risk Assessments and Consultation

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and associated Regulations, state that your employer is obliged to provide you with a safe place of work through the use of a risk assessment. A risk assessment will allow you to identify hazards and risk factors that have the potential to cause harm. There are five steps in a risk assessment:

- Identify the hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and how
- Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
- Record your significant findings
- Review your assessment and update if necessary

It is of vital importance that you are consulted as to the robustness and effectiveness of the updated risk assessment and ensuing plan. This updated risk assessment must be completed in the context of the revised guidance and return to full time education in schools. Your school rep must be consulted on the updated risk assessment prior to implementation. Your school rep should also facilitate branch consultation via a school meeting.

Reps and members should:

- ✓ Ensure that there is consultation on the updated risk assessment
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with your establishment's updated risk assessment.
- ✓ Consider the points outlined in the 'Healthy Workplace Checklist' to ensure that relevant Health and Safety issues and CERG Guidelines issues have been appropriately identified.
- ✓ Reach collective agreement on a satisfactory risk assessment.
- ✓ If there is not an updated risk assessment in place, or it does not adequately address the concerns of members, or is not followed, then your local association secretary, should be informed by the school rep or nominated individual.
- ✓ If you reasonably believe that the arrangements in your establishment would put you at personal risk, seek advice from your local association secretary.

There should be bespoke risk assessments for vulnerable groups, e.g. older staff, disabled staff, pregnant women, new mothers, and BAME staff, as well as individual children and young people identified as at greater risk.

Risk assessments should be kept under review as circumstances change.

Catering/cleaning and facilities management staff and any other contractors should be included in school risk assessments.

Covid Secure Workplace Revised Checklist August 2020

The following revised checklist should be used as a guide when considering Health and Safety issues and CERG Guidelines issues relating to the control of Covid-19 within the workplace. They are by no means exhaustive.

Cleaning protocols

1. If the school site or building has been closed for many weeks or if parts of the building have been out of use for a long period, the local authority/school should undertake a health and safety check of the building concerned, including water quality sampling for legionella and other bacteria. Has this occurred?
2. In addition, has the school's hot water system, lighting, electricity etc been checked? (You may wish to speak to other staff in the school about this, including ensuring that their own risk assessments are followed)
3. Are there enhanced cleaning provisions in place in line with the CERG Guidelines?
4. Has use and cleaning guidance for toilets been issued to ensure they are kept clean and physical distancing is achieved as much as possible?
5. Have additional staff been employed, such as cleaners and other facilities management staff, to implement enhanced environmental cleaning regimes, to support a successful reopening of your school?
6. Are procedures in place to ensure that commonly touched objects and surfaces (e.g. desks, handles, dining tables, shared technology surfaces etc.) are cleaned at least twice daily?
7. Has careful consideration been given, and provision made, to the cleaning regime for specialist equipment (e.g. in practical subjects or for children with additional support needs), sensory rooms, practical subjects with specialist equipment and dining halls, etc. to ensure safe use?

Hygiene and physical distancing measures

8. Are measures in place, with sufficient time allocated, for pupils and staff to clean their hands (with soap & warm running water or sanitiser) when they arrive at school, return from breaks, change rooms and before and after eating?
9. Is there access to enough sinks with hot water and soap for the number of staff and pupils in school?
10. Is there a protocol providing for regular hygiene breaks of sufficient length during the day? (Restrict the number of people using the toilet facilities e.g. using an engaged sign if necessary).
11. Is personal protective equipment (PPE) required in any area? Is it adequately provided to staff?

12. Are staff being supported/allowed to wear face coverings should they wish? (Note: Where adults cannot keep 2 metre distance and are interacting face-to-face for a sustained period (about 15 minutes or more), face coverings should be worn).
13. Are arrangements in place in staff rooms and bases which ensure 2 metre physical distancing is maintained between adults
14. Are arrangements in place which ensure that staff can maintain a 2-metre distance from students at all times?
15. Does every class have a supply of hand sanitiser (minimum alcohol 60%)?
16. Are arrangements in place to ensure classrooms and other work areas are supplied with tissues?
17. Are lidded bins with double bagging available in every classroom and work area?
18. Does the school have appropriate signage alerting all to the need for high standards of hygiene?

Establishment Operations

19. Has a rota of staff been organised with varying start/finish times?
20. Are arrangements in place for parents/carers to drop off and collect children and young people which ensure that large gatherings of people are avoided and physical distancing between adults and children of different groupings is maintained?
21. Is there a one-way system in place in the school (ingress and egress)?
22. Are rooms labelled to identify the maximum number of people to respect physical distancing requirements?
23. In primary schools, does the school plan to restrict the size of groupings to no more than one class i.e. no assemblies etc?
24. Have steps been taken to minimise the extent to which teachers move between classes?
25. Has the lay out of classroom furniture been adapted to support physical distancing between pupils where possible, between staff and pupils, and between staff and other staff?
26. Has the lay out of classrooms be adapted to ensure children and young people are seated side by side and facing forwards, rather than face to face?
27. Has the number of people in staff rooms / bases been configured to ensure distancing can be maintained? If not have alternative arrangements been put in place?
28. Have arrangements been made to ensure that physical distancing arrangements can be maintained in the school library?
29. Dining halls, offices, staff bases and rest areas – has the school minimised the number of chairs to maintain 2m rule where possible?
30. Dining halls, staff bases and rest areas – has the school established staggered breaks to reduce the number of people in the area?
31. Has the movement of children, young people and staff between classrooms been minimised wherever possible?

32. Where movement cannot be avoided, is there provision of appropriate cleaning supplies to enable desk/chair/surfaces to be cleaned regularly?
33. Where limited catering facilities are provided, is there guidance on the need for food to be wrapped and only disposable cutlery provided.
34. Have arrangements been considered fire alarms, including for undertaking fire test drills or procedures where the whole school is evacuated? Schools and local authorities should consider muster points and whether these need to be altered to ensure a greater degree of separation. Note the Fire Safety Risk Assessment should always be reviewed before any internal doors are held open.

Class Groupings

35. In line with the scientific evidence, and to reduce the risk of transmission, have sufficient efforts been made to keep children and young people within the same groups for the duration of the school day?
36. Have additional teachers been employed to provide a range of additional support to help with recovery work?
37. Have sufficient efforts been made to keep groups apart from other groups where possible? For example, in open plan settings with large numbers of children or young people (for example multiple classes in one open plan space) has consideration been given to ensuring clear demarcation and separation between the areas in which different groups learn, including the use of screens?

Health

38. Is there a designated person with responsibility for keeping up to date with any changes to NHS, Health Protection Scotland, or Scottish Government guidance?
39. Does the school know the medical conditions (physical and mental) of individuals attending the school during this Covid19 crisis period?
40. Is there a designated person in the school responsible for ensuring that everyone in the school is aware of up to date symptoms of Covid19?
41. Is there a protocol for what to do where an individual develops Covid19 symptoms during the day?
42. Is there provision of an isolation area where any employees or pupils showing symptoms can be directed until they are able to leave site?
43. Is there a protocol for ensuring the testing staff who have symptoms? (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested/>)
44. Are additional control measures in place to reduce the risk of any necessary visitors bringing the Covid19 virus into school or college inadvertently?

Travel

45. What consideration has been given to transportation difficulties for those staff who usually use public transport, with safeguarding being paramount, along with logistical issues?
46. Are car parking spaces clearly set out?
47. Has consideration been given to the arrangements for parents/carers of children and young people with additional support needs who may normally drop their children off within the school building, and those who arrive at school using school transport, including taxis?

Consultation

48. Have all staff been consulted and involved in the risk assessment process and the implementation of safeguards and mitigations?
49. Have union reps, health & safety reps, and staff been consulted as widely as possible and practicable.
50. Does the school have an updated written Covid19 risk assessment register?
51. Is there a formal process for reviewing the updated risk assessments and implementing revised control measures where appropriate and necessary?
52. Does the school plan to review updated risk assessments and protocols at regular intervals and when circumstances change, in consultation with staff and union representatives?
53. If control measures cannot be maintained within the school, what is the plan? Are staff aware of the plan?