

Leeds City Council – HR and Health and Safety Service

Guidance to Schools on Re-Opening or Expanding Provision – 29th May 2020

Introduction

It is recognised that many schools have continued to operate safely for the children of key workers and for vulnerable children during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has played an essential part in allowing key workers to undertake work essential for the UK COVID response. During this time LCC HR and H&S Teams have provided advice and support.

Approach

We will continue to support schools to re-open or expand their provision, when it is safe to do so in line with the prevailing government guidance. The risk is evaluated and controlled at three different levels:

1. **Government** – no local decisions will be made unless they are in line with the government guidance, which takes into account the scientific modelling of expert bodies (e.g. SAGE). This modelling considers various scenarios and national guidance has been issued to reduce any residual risk. We would not support any school to expand further than is recommended by the government at any point.
2. **Local Authority** – LCC has various roles in relation to the different types of schools. As an employer and a service provider (providing access to competent advice, including on HR and H&S), we have built on the government assessment and evaluation of risk and the available guidance. We have produced a comprehensive Risk Assessment document which sets out all the matters a school needs to consider before any change in provision or re-opening takes place (28 areas for control have been identified). This was influenced by particular schools, school staff and union consultation. It should also be remembered that there are many other tools already in place which will be helpful to schools e.g. Wellbeing and Support Plans; Individual Pupil Risk Assessments etc.
3. **School** – it is incumbent on the school to ensure that it implements the measures required to ensure that it is safe, taking into account any local factors such as: the design of the school; their pupils or parents; their location; any issues which may place staff members at a higher risk; transport issues etc. Going through and adapting the local authority risk assessment document, described above, will assist this process and leave the school with site specific safety measures – which must be kept under regular review. These should be drawn up with the involvement of school-based staff/school TU reps.

Risk Assessment

Head Teachers have always had to plan to ensure the health and safety of the whole school community and conduct dynamic assessments of risk every day. They do that by having regard to national and local guidance. This is the same with COVID-19, except that key decisions are taken at a macro level and the risk is rarely static –

both in terms of the growth or control of the virus and in relation to evolving knowledge.

The government has undertaken a detailed risk assessment, based on modelling, that allows certain school cohorts to return on or after 1st June, as long as certain measures are put in place. LCC HR and H&S have limited influence on this element of the assessment and decision. As always local concerns have been and will continue to be raised via LCC in dialogue with the government.

Local factors to be considered:

- **R Number** - locally, we have considered the likely 'R number' for North East and Yorkshire – which is currently cited to be 0.8. Nationally it is between 0.7 and 1.0 and so the regional rate is within the rate the government considered when reaching their decision.
- **Number of cases** - in terms of officially recorded cases, Leeds has a rate of 228 cases per 100k (1802 cases out of a population of 793,139). There has been 514 deaths.
- **Deprivation** - Leeds has 24% of its Lower Layer Super Output Areas in the top ten percent of the most deprived areas in the UK (14 are actually in the top one percent). These areas are mainly in the inner east and south of the city. Many of these social determinants and resultant health conditions do appear to be linked to a more serious response to COVID-19, once infected. This needs to be balanced with evidence that has also shown it is often young people in these areas who may not be having the best 'home schooling' experience.
- **Staff Health** – this needs to be considered at a school level. Regard needs to be taken of any staff who need to shield or who are otherwise recommended to take stringent account of safety measures due to underlying health conditions.
- **Test, Trace and Isolate** – this will be important in maintaining the reduction in the R Number in the community, including schools. It is expected to go live on 1st June and its efficacy locally will need to be kept under review.

Summary

1. The government is responsible for making national decisions regarding school opening, following a risk assessment that has regard to scientific advice.
2. LCC HR and H&S is responsible for supporting schools to respond to the government decision. We have done this by considering all guidance, providing a risk assessment framework to help schools plan to re-open/expand as safely as possible. This has had regard to regional and local information such as R numbers and COVID cases.
3. Schools are responsible for considering all factors contained in this LCC risk assessment document, alongside the specific factors relating to their particular location and staff health and demographics. Help and advice will be available from the LCC HR and H&S Team and local school staff/Trade Unions will need to be involved and kept informed. Schools will then need to decide on the necessary safety measures and at what point they feel these can be safely implemented – whether that be on the 1st June or beyond.

4. This will be kept under review by both the school and LCC HR and H&S, having regard to local information and government advice.

Overarching Risk Assessment

Task/Activity	Hazard	Who might be harmed and how	Existing Controls	Initial Risk	Additional Controls	Final Risk Rating
Re-opening or expanding school provision in line with prevailing government guidance.	Transmission of COVID-19.	Staff, pupils and others visiting and/or working in or around school premises.	<p>Government guidance issued to manage and control the hazard in school settings.</p> <p>Measures already in place and available to LCC schools e.g. WASP, pupil risk assessment, infection control etc.</p>	Gov. evaluate that certain school years can return to school and so they consider the risk to be tolerable.	LCC risk assessment document on minimum standards to be undertaken / considered and safety measures written down – taking into account regional, local and individual school factors.	<p>School can implement national and LCC guidance and local/school considerations do not pose a risk higher than government assessment – risk is tolerable and as low as reasonably practicable.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>School are unable to implement all national and LCC guidance and consider local factors and/or local/school factors pose a risk higher than government assessment – risk is intolerable and school will review date of opening.</p>

n.b. a tolerable risk is a level of risk deemed acceptable in order that some particular benefit or functionality can be obtained, but in the knowledge that the risk has been evaluated and is being managed.