

## Preparations for the opening of schools in September 2020

### Introduction

The NASUWT recognises the concern and anxiety of many members about the Government's plans for the opening of schools, colleges and other educational settings in September 2020.

The Union also recognises that given the relatively late date in the Summer term the Government made the announcement, many teachers ended the term unaware of the details of the plans their employers were making for the September opening.

In this document, the NASUWT provides:

- a summary of the actions we have taken so far to protect the interests of members collectively, in preparation for the opening of schools and other educational settings;
- a self-audit checklist to enable members to consider their own position in relation to their employer's plans for the September opening.

### Summary of the actions the NASUWT has taken

The NASUWT has:

- a. issued comprehensive advice and health and safety checklists ([www.nasuwt.org.uk/reopeningschoolsEngland](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/reopeningschoolsEngland)) to our representatives and to NASUWT local officers, who will be engaging with employers to assess the plans in place for opening in September;
- b. written to all employers advising them of their legal obligations to their employees, reserving our members' legal rights and entitlements and setting out the actions we expect them to take to safeguard the health and welfare of staff ([www.nasuwt.org.uk/reopeningschoolsEngland](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/reopeningschoolsEngland));
- c. continued to offer support and guidance to members through our national advice line, and these contacts from members, together with the NASUWT's regular surveys of members, have provided information to assist us in addressing the issues, concerns and anxieties members have, particularly with regard to the plans their employer may be making for opening in September;
- d. produced extensive FAQs and other information to support members. All of this can be found on the Union's website ([www.nasuwt.org.uk/coronavirushub](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/coronavirushub));
- e. continued to engage regularly with the Government and the Department for Education (DfE) on the content guidance being issued to employers and to raise directly the issues and concerns of members.

## NASUWT members' self-audit checklist

The NASUWT is committed to ensuring that not only are the needs of our members collectively represented fully, but that each individual member has the information they need to ensure that the planning, in which their employer is engaged for the opening of their workplace in September, takes account of their circumstances.

Prior to the wider reopening of schools in June 2020, the NASUWT issued a self-audit checklist for members to consider their individual position.

This latest version of the self-audit checklist takes account of the changes to Government guidance, which have been made in preparation for the opening of schools in September.

Members are advised, therefore, to consider the checklist below and follow the advice the Union has provided at the end of each section.

The checklist covers the following areas:

- 1. Personal health**
- 2. Equality impact measures**
- 3. Next steps after completing the self-audit checklist and following the advice**

### 1. Personal health

Listed below are categories of teachers who, in the context of COVID-19, are considered vulnerable or are disproportionately affected by the virus.

Please note as a result of changes in Government guidance, the list makes no reference to those who live in the same household as someone who has been shielding or is clinically vulnerable. Advice for members in that situation can be found in the NASUWT's FAQs.

#### Section A

(i) When the new term begins in September, if you are:

- sharing a household with someone who is self-isolating with COVID-19 symptoms;
- exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19;
- certified by your GP as not able to attend the workplace;
- on sick leave or any other form of authorised leave,

you should not be attending work.

Make sure that your employer is aware of your position.

(ii) Are you:

- pregnant
- disabled
- BAME

(iii) Are you:

pregnant and in your third trimester

(iv) Do you:

have an underlying health condition

If you have ticked one or more of the items in (ii) and (iv) above, and you have had no contact from your employer about, or risk assessment of, your position when schools open in September, then you are advised to send the following message to your headteacher/principal in the week beginning 17th August and keep a copy.

*[date]*

Dear *[add name of headteacher/principal]*

*[I am – add whichever of the above list applies] or [I have an underlying health condition add details] I am, therefore, a person potentially at risk in the context of COVID-19.*

*I would be grateful if you would please confirm to me that you have factored into your planning for the start of the new term that I will require an individual risk assessment and details of how my employer will ensure that the safety provisions identified in the risk assessments will be implemented and maintained.*

*I would be grateful if you would provide me with a copy, as a matter of urgency, of the risk assessment and the measures you propose to address the risk.*

*Yours sincerely*

If you have ticked item (iii) and are therefore pregnant and in your third trimester, and you have had no contact from your employer about, or risk assessment of, your position when schools open in September, then please send the message below, in the week beginning 17th August, to your headteacher/principal.

*[date]*

Dear *[name of headteacher/principal]*

*I would be grateful if you would confirm to me that you have factored into your planning for the start of the new term that I will be in the third trimester of my pregnancy.*

*I will, therefore, require an individual risk assessment which complies, as advised by the DfE, with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists' advice for women in the third trimester of pregnancy, who are at relatively higher risk and should, therefore, have their circumstances addressed differently from others.*

*I would be grateful if you would provide me with a copy, as a matter of urgency, of the risk assessment and the measures you proposed to address the risk.*

*Yours sincerely*

## 2. Equality impact measures

### Section B

Do you anticipate having any problems with childcare/carer responsibilities at the start of the new term because of issues relating to COVID-19 restrictions?

If so, what are the factors causing the problem:

- my usual childcare/carer arrangements are not available and I have no access to alternative arrangements
- my employer is proposing staggered starting and/or end times which changes my normal working day and affects the timing of my childcare/carer arrangements which cannot be changed

If you have ticked either of the points above, and you have had no contact from your employer about your position when schools open in September, then you are advised to send the following message to your headteacher/principal, in the week beginning 17th August before the start of the term, and keep a copy.

*[date]*

Dear *[name of headteacher/principal]*

*I know that in planning for the opening of the school/college in September, you will be reviewing the availability of staff and will be considering not only the health and safety aspects of the plans you are making, but also the equality impact.*

*As you are aware, I have **[childcare/carer]** responsibilities.*

*My circumstances are as follows **[list here any factors which are causing issues with childcare/carer responsibilities which are related to COVID-19 restrictions]**.*

*I would be grateful if you would advise me how this will be factored into the equality impact assessment of the staffing arrangements and if you would advise me of the results in relation to my personal circumstances.*

*Your sincerely*

The NASUWT appreciates that some members may be covered by multiple issues in the self-audit checklist and, therefore, may need to include all of these in one communication with the headteacher/principal, using the text from a number of the draft letters.

## 3. Next steps after taking the actions in the self-audit checklist

### Section C

**For members who have contacted their employer in relation to issues in Section A and/or B:**

If your employer fails to respond to your request, members are advised to send the message below to their headteacher/principal and keep a copy. Members should allow at least five days (excluding weekends) for a response. Given that it is the Summer break, it is therefore, not reasonable to expect an answer immediately.

*[date]*

Dear *[add name]*

*I contacted you on [add date], and I am disappointed not to have received a response. Given the seriousness of this situation, I now have no choice but to refer the matter to my Union for advice and support.*

*Yours sincerely*

**For those members who have raised issues with their employer in relation to:**

### **Section A Personal Health**

Once you receive a response from your employer and the risk assessment/information you have requested is provided, members should:

1. Check that the risk assessment records all the activities that you believe are potentially a risk to you. Make a list of any you think may be missing.
2. Check that the risk assessment describes the controls and safeguards your employer is proposing to implement to remove the risks to you in relation to each of the issues in Section 1 Personal Health that you ticked:
  - are there any activities relevant to you for which controls or safeguards have not been identified? Make a note of them;
  - are there any you are concerned about? Make a note of these and why you are concerned.
3. Check that the risk assessment describes the arrangements the employer is proposing to take to ensure that all the controls and safeguards will be implemented in practice:  
Do these seem reasonable to you? If not, make a note of why you do not think they are reasonable.

If you have noted any points in 1, 2 and/or 3 above, then you will need to raise these in writing with your headteacher/principal immediately. A draft template message is below for you to use. Please keep a copy.

*[date]*

Dear *[add name]*

*Thank you for providing me with the risk assessment, which I have now reviewed and considered.*

*[Add here all of the points you noted in 1, 2 and/or 3 above and give your reasons for noting these]*

*I am requesting you to address these issues and to update me on the actions taken.*

*Yours sincerely*

Once you receive a response to the above message, if it is still not satisfactory, then please send the following documents to the NASUWT at: [advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk](mailto:advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk):

- a copy of the message you sent in accordance with Sections A Personal Health and B Equality Impact Assessment to your headteacher/principal as a result of completing the NASUWT self-audit checklist;
- a copy of the response you received and any accompanying documentation;
- a copy of the message you sent in accordance with Section C above and the response received.

The NASUWT will need all of the above information to ensure that we can provide the appropriate advice to you, and to do all we can to protect your health, safety and welfare.

Thank you for your continuing support for the NASUWT and the actions we are taking to seek to protect your health, safety and welfare.

**July 2020**

### **FIND OUT MORE**

The NASUWT website ([www.nasuwt.org.uk/coronavirushub](http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/coronavirushub)) contains useful information on the issues raised in the checklist, including specific COVID-19-related advice for members who are pregnant, disabled and from a BAME background.