

## Protecting your Health, Safety and Welfare is Our Priority

The NASUWT has been working throughout the Christmas holiday period to press for additional measures to protect the health and safety of members returning to schools and colleges from 4 January.

The NASUWT National Officers Committee met today to review the latest developments across all UK nations and to consider what further next steps are needed. The National Officers have agreed that it is essential that further information should be provided urgently to local secretaries and to members. The National Officers Committee are extremely grateful to Secretaries for your continuing efforts, together with members of the National Executive, on behalf of members.

Our priority throughout the pandemic has been and remains the safety of our members at work. We have also been clear that schools and colleges can only remain open to all pupils where it is safe for them to do so. The best way to keep schools and colleges open is to ensure that they are safe.

The NASUWT has:

- lobbied the Government to put in place additional measures to safeguard the health and safety of staff and pupils in schools and colleges, including insisting on an immediate move to remote education for all pupils from 4 January 2021;
- written to all employers, setting out clearly the Union's expectations for the measures which need to be in place for the safe opening of schools, reminding them of their statutory responsibilities for the safety of employees and reserving our members' rights and entitlements to a safe working environment, [click here](#) to view;
- provided a comprehensive health and safety checklist for use by employers, setting out the measures which should be taken in preparation for the opening of schools (Covid-19: Health and Safety Checklist ([nasuwt.org.uk](http://nasuwt.org.uk)))
- ensured all the information on the NASUWT website, including the FAQs, reflects the latest guidance from the Government and provides advice on the issues members have been raising with the Union during the Summer that relate to the opening of schools;
- continued to make representations to Ministers and government officials to raise with them the concerns of members, to seek to secure government guidance which reflects and addresses those concerns, and to reinforce the Union's position that paramount at all times in the decisions being made about the opening of schools must be the safety of staff and pupils.

On returning to the workplace, the NASUWT advises all members to ensure that they:

- have been provided with a copy of the school's revised/updated COVID-19 risk assessment, which should contain all of the safety measures your employer is putting in place. Risk assessments should be the subject of consultation with staff, and if on reading the risk assessment you have any concerns about the measures being proposed or believe that something has been omitted, you should raise this with your Head Teacher immediately and contact the NASUWT for advice;

cont...

- are clear about and observe at all times the safety procedures;
- use the incident report form provided by the NASUWT - England [COVID-19 INCIDENT REPORT FORM](#) (nasuwt.org.uk) - to report any incidents where the COVID-19 safety arrangements are breached or the employer fails to implement them;
- regularly review the NASUWT coronavirus hub on the Union's website, which is kept up to date with the latest advice and guidance and FAQs, and keep a check on their emails for the Union's COVID-19 updates.

#### Members in vulnerable groups are advised to:

- make sure that they have received and are satisfied with their individual risk assessment;
- ensure that the measures in the risk assessment are implemented fully in the workplace;
- contact the NASUWT immediately if they have any concerns about their health and safety. Supply teacher members, when agreeing to take up an offer of supply work, are advised to:
- make sure they request a copy of the school's risk assessment and that COVID-19 safety procedures are made available to them on or, where possible, before their arrival at the school;
- ask, in addition to the general risk assessment, for an individual risk assessment if they have an underlying health condition, a disability, are pregnant and/or are from a BAME background.

#### Members who are feeling unsafe about returning to work:

##### DO

- Ensure you follow the NASUWT advice in this bulletin and on the website;
- raise your concerns with your line manager or Head Teacher and ask to speak with them;
- ask for a copy of the updated risk assessment for your school/college;
- contact NASUWT for direct advice and support at [advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk](mailto:advice@mail.nasuwt.org.uk) if the steps above do not resolve the issue.

##### DON'T

- Refuse to attend the workplace without taking further advice from the [NASUWT](#) after you have taken the steps above to seek to resolve your concerns. The [NASUWT](#) will provide you with tailored advice about what to do next, based on your circumstances.

#### The NASUWT Position

It is abundantly clear that the pandemic is seriously impacting on the ability of schools to continue to operate normally, and there is continuing uncertainty over whether schools and colleges can remain open safely.

Schools, colleges and other settings can only remain open to all pupils where it is safe for them to do so.

Given the increased risk of virus transmission amongst children and young people, the [NASUWT](#) has insisted that the Government confirm an immediate nationwide move to remote education for all pupils in primary, secondary and special schools and colleges as the only sensible and credible option at this time to minimise the risks to those working in schools and to safeguard public health.

cont...

The **NASUWT** is continuing to make strong representations to the Government about its plan for schools, colleges and other settings. The Union is challenging the Government robustly on the basis that:

- The late notice of changes affecting the education sector will give rise to serious operational difficulties and undermine efforts to ensure workplace health and safety.
- The plans for immediate reopening of primary schools have not been justified on the basis of clear scientific evidence. We are asking for the Government to publish immediately the scientific evidence and advice they have received on the transmission of the Coronavirus, including the new variant, in all schools and colleges.
- Additional preventative measures (e.g. blended/remote learning and mandatory use of face masks) are necessary to minimise the risk of virus transmission in schools and colleges when they do reopen.
- The Government has not published the criteria and factors they have been using to determine a highly selective list of tier 4 local authority areas where primary schools should remain closed to pupils from 4 January or the basis on which the Government will determine when these schools should reopen.
- The inadequate arrangements to ensure the effective implementation of mass testing in schools and colleges.
- The Government has failed to provide sufficient assurances in respect of staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable, together with staff in other high risk groups.
- Additional financial support is needed immediately to enable all schools and colleges to deliver covid-safe teaching and learning environments, including funding for additional PPE, cleaning and handwashing supplies, additional staffing, signage, digital equipment to support remote teaching and learning.

The Union is also seeking confirmation that education staff working in schools and colleges will be deemed a priority group for access to the Coronavirus vaccine as a basis for ensuring that schools can continue to remain open safely.

The **NASUWT** has also written to all school and college employers reminding them of their legal duties to ensure health and safety at work.

The Union has notified all employers that:

- It is essential that their existing covid-security plans are revised and updated, subject to appropriate consultation with staff, the **NASUWT** and other trade unions;
- It is essential that further mitigations are considered and implemented by employers to ensure a safe start to the new term.
- They must ensure that their schools, colleges and other settings have completed their reopening health and safety checks, taking account of the additional risks associated with the Coronavirus.
- Relying on risk assessments prepared for the autumn term 2020 is not sufficient for the purpose of meeting your statutory employer duties and legal obligations for health and safety at work.

cont...

- The **NASUWT** is seeking urgent confirmation that they will complete the review and updating of all Covid-19 risk assessments and control measures.
- A comprehensive and updated COVID-19 operational plan, including new risk assessments which will have been the subject of full consultation with all staff and unions, must be in place prior to reopening to staff and pupils in January, and taking into account the increased risks identified by the Government of Coronavirus transmission in your local area.
- Updated the guidance and training must be provided to all employees on safe working practices in light of the additional risks identified by the Government.
- New individual risk assessments must be undertaken for clinically vulnerable employees and with regard to other employees identified as at higher risk from the Coronavirus.
- For all employees who are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) in tier 4 areas, they must be required to stay at home/work from home, and new individual risk assessments must be conducted for CEV employees if they are required to work in tier areas 1, 2 or 3.
- Plans and protocols with regard to the safe deployment of supply teachers must also be produced.
- Procedures must be in place to ensure full compliance with the measures set out in risk assessments, and there must be a clear notified procedure for dealing immediately with any breaches.

Employers have also been reminded that teachers' contractual rights with regard to pay and other conditions of service must be adhered to at all times, including when planning for onsite or remote education provision.

Members should request urgent clarification from their school/college and notify the **NASUWT** immediately where the above measures are not in place.



E-mail: [advice@mail.nasuwat.org.uk](mailto:advice@mail.nasuwat.org.uk)  
Website: [www.nasuwat.org.uk](http://www.nasuwat.org.uk)