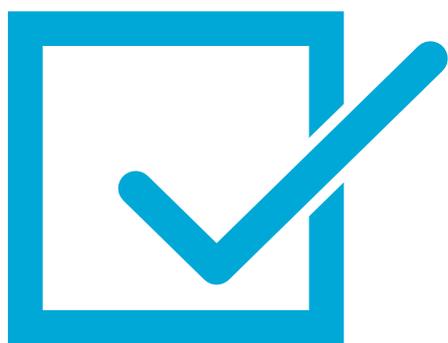




# **Risk assessments for individual staff: advice for leaders**



**Coronavirus crisis**  
Workplace checklist



Knowledge about the greater risks of Covid-19 to specific individuals and groups has grown during the current crisis.

The National Education Union (NEU) has concluded that, as part of school and college measures for wider reopening, risk assessments to ensure safety must include individual risk assessments for each member of staff which consider their specific circumstances and the level of risk to them before decisions are taken on how they will be asked to work.

This advice for leaders is intended to help you carry out that exercise. Please read it alongside our general advice on [ensuring safety for at risk groups](#) and our advice on the position of [Black staff](#).

This advice sets out specific considerations which should be taken into account when individual risk assessments are being conducted. Included is a model letter which can be used with NEU approval to gather relevant information which staff wish to provide. Also read our general advice on risk assessment on the [NEU leadership webpage](#) which is aimed at ensuring you have the confidence as well as the knowledge needed.

## Why are individual risk assessments needed?

Risk assessments are a legal requirement under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. They are also an essential tool in managing the workplace safely, especially in the current crisis, and ensuring staff understand the measures being put in place to ensure safety.

Risk assessment for individuals are needed to ensure that their safety has been properly considered. A general assessment on workplace safety can ensure that the workplace is safe for staff and students generally. It will not ensure that individuals to whom you owe a duty of care are properly protected. Only an individual risk assessment can do that.

Every staff member needs to be considered as an individual in the context of their personal and family circumstances and the circumstances of the workplace. The roles expected of them should reflect the level of risk to them and the measures needed to protect them, their families and the wider community. Resist any temptation to apply any simplistic points-based approach to this exercise, especially any approach provided from outside your school.

You do not have to be an expert or have specific training or qualifications to manage this process. As a leader in education, you already have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to do so. If you delegate the tasks involved, you should ensure that the other person(s) involved understand them, support them as needed and seek support for yourself if in any doubt.

## What should be considered within an individual risk assessment?

### Medical conditions

- Certain medical conditions mean that individuals have increased vulnerability to infection by and/or poorer outcomes from contracting the Covid-19 virus.
- Government guidance on [clinical vulnerability](#) and [clinical extreme vulnerability](#) identifies a range of specific long-term health conditions and pregnancy as being areas of particular concern. You should seek to identify staff who have conditions which fall into these categories or who have conditions which mean they should be similarly treated (the lists in the Government guidance are not intended to be exhaustive).
- You should also seek to identify staff who live with, or care for, people who have conditions which define them as clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable or have equivalent conditions.
- Disabled staff may be at increased risk, even if their disability is not one which increases their medical vulnerability, so you should seek to identify staff who have other disabilities or other medical conditions which create an increased risk not directly related to medical vulnerability.

### Age

- Age is a major factor in increasing the risk of loss of life or other adverse consequences of Covid-19. Risk increases faster as age increases, meaning that the oldest workers are at by far the greatest risk.
- As one of the most significant factors in vulnerability, age must be taken into account.

### Ethnicity

- Black<sup>1</sup> people are known to be at increased risk overall compared to the general population and the risk is even greater for people from some particular ethnic backgrounds.
- You should identify staff who are at increased risk due to their ethnicity and you should also seek to identify staff who live with family members who are at greater risk due to their ethnicity and other factors such as age – see [the NEU's advice](#).

### Sex

- The data indicate that men are at approximately fifty per cent greater risk than women in similar age groups.

### Mental health & wellbeing

- Employers need to consider issues of mental health and wellbeing. Anxiety about returning to the workplace could easily become more significant and make staff unwell.
- In particular, staff who previously experienced mental health conditions may be at greater risk, while Black staff may be more likely to be directly affected by Covid-19 including personal bereavement.
- Some staff may have personal circumstances such as childcare which affect their ability to return to work at school.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Black' is used by the NEU in a political context to encompass all members who self-identify as Black, Asian and any other minority ethnic groups who do not identify themselves as white.

### Increased risk factors deriving from the individual's particular role

- Consider the impact of each staff member's role within the school or college. Those with greater contact with parents or visitors, or engaged in cleaning, off-site activities or other types of activities are likely to be at greater risk than their colleagues.
- Social distancing or ease of access to hand washing facilities may also increase the risk for certain categories of staff – is each individual within the acceptable parameters of risk to health in your college or school?

### Other circumstances

- The circumstances of your school or college and its setting – whether for example it is a special school, a large comprehensive city school, a rural school, etc – may increase the risk to individuals as well as to staff generally.
- Take into consideration the context of deprivation, health and inequality in the local community.
- Consider how travelling into school or college – the modes of transport and the extent of public contact involved – may present additional problems for individual 'at greater risk' staff in attending and fulfilling their employed role.
- Consider the R number in your region – monitor it and act accordingly.

The above list is not meant as the definitive topic areas for consideration, but rather as a suggested guide when undertaking individual staff risk assessment during this health crisis. They will help you consider the circumstances of each staff member and the appropriateness of options to continue to work at home or return to work at the workplace.

### Model letter

Dear [staff member's name]

In order to help safeguard your safety and well-being during this pandemic, I am writing to ask you for information to assist the risk assessment process in relation to you personally.

We are seeking to ensure that we assess the risks to each employee individually. Any information that you do provide will be taken into account, alongside information already held on relevant matters such as your age, sex and ethnicity, in determining what you should and should not be asked to do in relation to work.

You are entitled to decline to disclose any information and that right is completely respected. Any information you do provide will be treated in the strictest confidentiality. It will only be used to inform your individual risk assessment and will not otherwise be recorded.

If you want to discuss this, please in the first instance contact [named person]. We hope you will contribute fully to this risk assessment process – it is in your best interests to do so.

Yours sincerely

## Questions to ask

### Medical conditions

Coronavirus (Covid-19) can make anyone seriously ill but for some people, the risk is higher. The Government has defined two levels of higher risk and published associated (non-exhaustive) lists of conditions:

- [clinically extremely vulnerable](#) (high risk)
- [clinically vulnerable](#) (moderate risk)

Are you in the clinically extremely vulnerable category as defined?

 Yes  No

Do you have any condition which you think means you should be treated as in the clinically extremely vulnerable category

 Yes  No

Are you in the clinically vulnerable category as defined?

 Yes  No

Do you have any condition which you think means you should be treated as in clinically vulnerable category

 Yes  No

Please provide any additional information on your condition which you want taken into account.

Do you live with/care for someone who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable category as defined or should be treated as in that category?

 Yes  No

Do you live with/care for someone who is in the clinically vulnerable category s defined or should be treated as in that category?

 Yes  No

Please provide any additional information on their condition which you want taken into account.

### Ethnicity & age

Do you live with/care for someone who is at increased risk due to ethnicity and/or age ?

 Yes  No

If you think the school is unaware of any relevant information on you personally please let us know.

### Mental health & wellbeing

Are there any factors related to your mental health or wellbeing that you specifically wish to be considered?

 Yes  No

### Increased risk factors deriving from your particular role

Are there any factors related to your particular role that you specifically wish to be considered?

 Yes  No

### Other circumstances

Are there any factors related to your travel to work that you specifically wish to be considered?

Yes  No

Do you have childcare responsibilities which limit your ability to work your contractual hours?

Yes  No

Do you have childcare responsibilities which limit your ability to return to the workplace?

Yes  No

Are there any other personal factors that you specifically wish to be considered?

Yes  No

### Working at home

In order to work at home, is there any additional support or adjustment to normal duties that you wish to be considered?

Yes  No

