

Assessment mitigation centre guidance communication in relation to Covid-19 disruption, 2020-21 for Health and Social Care and Childcare/Early years

This is a joint communication from all the Awarding Organisations/Bodies (AOs/ABs) as identified by their logos and it applies only to the Health & Social Care and Childcare/Early Years qualifications offered in England, Wales and NI.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in disruption to education and training during spring and summer 2020. National/Local restrictions are likely to be in place during 2020/21, and further disruption may occur. Due to continued requirements to adhere to social distancing and restrictions this may affect either learner or assessor access to employer sites.

The Awarding Organisations are working collaboratively with Ofqual, Qualification Wales and CCEA and with the relevant workforce regulators in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to agree on the proposed mitigations applicable to all other qualifications not covered by the guidance for NI and Wales as mentioned above.

The principles underpinning our shared approaches include:

- Achievement of full placement hours (where mandated in the qualification specification) unless specific guidance has already been issued by individual AOs/ABs. Extremely exceptional circumstances¹ will be considered in the final guidance.
- Learners who are progressing from the Level 2 qualifications with mandated work placements to Level 3 during this academic year (2020/21) are permitted to carry forward up to 25% of the total work experience/practice hours that were undertaken during the completion of their Level 2 qualification.

Here are some of the good practice tips for centres to consider. These will help reassure employers and help you plan and prioritise the work placements for learners completing their qualifications in July 2021.

- Centres must make use of Skills for Health (SfH) and Skills for Care (SfC) adaptations/flexibilities to assessment principles, where it is not safe to gain direct observation of performance as primary evidence
- Make use of an Expert Witness Testimony and train Expert Witnesses to provide valid evidence.
- Use of remote technology where appropriate and following the SfC and SfH assessment principles adaptations/flexibilities
- Working with employers to plan for placements. Centres to have a strategy in place for reducing the risk and following local protocols
- Planning for placement and phasing these for Year 2 learners as a priority.

¹ Extremely exceptional circumstance relates to instances of protracted and persistent placement disruption for a duration longer than 4mths i.e. an academic term

- Consider block placements rather than weekly especially for second year learners
- Supporting employers by preparing learners and assessors in infection prevention and control and associated risk assessments
- Assessors/teachers/tutors to prioritise observations during visits and make use of outdoor environments to minimise risk especially in Childcare
- Creating a bubble by using a single assessor/teacher/tutor for each setting rather than by learner, which limits the risk and allows assessors/teachers/tutors to see more learners during visit
- Use of simulations where permitted in the individual unit guidance or qualification assessment strategy, however this cannot be used where interaction with individuals or children is required to achieve competence.

Full guidance will be issued in November (subject to Ofqual response in line with the joint statement recently released by Ofqual)

In the interim we recommend that all centres continue with employers on accessing placement/work experience for ongoing support and assessment. We appreciate that this may still be challenge, therefore we have agreed to review the work placement situation in January and prior to that we will be liaising with you all in December to gather further information on access to placement or work experience.

We wish you and your learners all the best for 2020/21.

Please check contact us if you have any urgent questions.

