



## **Equality Impact Assessment (EIA): Returning to work during the COVID-19 pandemic**

### **Introduction**

To fulfil the public body 'Equality Duty' to have 'due regard' to equality considerations under the Equalities Act 2010, an organisation must, whenever significant decisions are being made or policies developed, give thought to equality implications for people with particular protected characteristics. An equality impact assessment (EIA) should be completed to evidence its duty to have due regard to the needs of pupils and staff, with increased vulnerability to infection or poorer outcomes from COVID-19, when making the decision for school/trust operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This EIA seeks to identify the challenges presented by the current circumstances and provides advice and guidance on mitigating actions to address potential negative impacts. Given the nature of the challenge and the rapid, nature of the pandemic, identifying what it might mean for the Pathfinder Schools community as we start to return to school/the workplace more widely, is not straightforward. This EIA therefore does not present an exhaustive list of impacts; it sets out what we have identified to date. If and when there are major changes to national government guidance, or regional measures we will revisit this EIA to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

In line with our commitment to 'Inspire Greatness' we have gone beyond legislation wherever possible, a broader range of protected characteristics than those contained within the Equality Act have been considered. In addition, when considering the impact on colleagues with a disability thought has been given to the following:

- Physical impairments and long-term illness
- Mental health conditions
- Those who may not have disclosed a disability
- Those who do not have a diagnosis of a disability but are living with a significant health condition or impairment

## COVID-19: Equality Impact Assessment – Staff- Returning to work during the COVID-19 pandemic

<b>Policy or Decision:</b>	COVID-19: Wider opening of schools, shielding arrangements no longer in place prompting those deemed extremely clinically vulnerable returning to the workplace.	<b>Assessment conducted by – name:</b>	Nina Adams
<b>Organisation name:</b>	Pathfinder Schools	<b>Assessment conducted by – job title:</b>	HR Manager
<b>Covered by this assessment:</b>	Staff	<b>Assessment date:</b>	20/08/2020

Groups with protected characteristics	Potential negative impact	Mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts	Person/s responsible
Age	<p>Staff aged over 70, who are classed as vulnerable, may feel particularly anxious about returning to the school environment/workplace</p> <p>Some staff may have new caring responsibilities for elderly relatives as a result of the pandemic</p>	<p>A workforce Risk Assessment - 'Increased Vulnerability' has been completed</p> <p>Individual risk assessment to be completed where appropriate</p> <p>Ensure that wellbeing support and signposting to counselling/wellbeing resources are well promoted and available.</p> <p>Consider support from Occupational Health where appropriate</p>	<p>Headteachers</p> <p>Leadership team/s</p> <p>Line Managers</p> <p>School level HR representatives</p>

Groups with protected characteristics	Potential negative impact	Mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts	Person/s responsible
Disability-physical and long term illness	<p>Routes for navigating the school/workplace may have been changed to accommodate distancing</p> <p>Visually impaired staff may not see some of the new COVID-19 distancing signage</p> <p>Staff with a hearing impairment who lip read may have their ability to do reduced if colleagues are wearing masks/visors</p> <p>Staff who are 'clinically/extremely clinically vulnerable' and have a higher risk in relation to COVID-19 may have concerns regarding immunity to infection, but staff may have other diseases, that do not make them 'clinically/extremely clinically vulnerable' but mean they share concerns regarding immunity to infection</p>	<p>A workforce Risk Assessment - 'Increased Vulnerability' has been completed</p> <p>Give staff with disabilities time to find the most appropriate route(s) around school and support them in doing so</p> <p>Ensure visually impaired staff are briefed on the change in working practices/environment and are supported to achieve social distancing without or with limited access to visual indicators</p> <p>A limited number of staff will be wearing masks/visors-consideration to be given to those who they work closely with to ensure that communication is not compromised</p> <p>Ensure staff with a health condition or impairment are given an opportunity to discuss changes to the working environment and what it might mean for them and adjustments made as necessary before returning to school/the workplace.</p> <p>Ensure an appropriate individual risk assessment is carried out with staff who have a health condition or impairment or a long-term illness (previously advised to shield)</p>	Headteachers Leadership team/s Line Managers School level HR representatives

Groups with protected characteristics	Potential negative impact	Mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts	Person/s responsible
		<p>Ensure that wellbeing support and signposting to counselling/wellbeing resources are well promoted and available.</p> <p>Consider support from Occupational Health as appropriate</p>	
Disability-mental illness	<p>Potential challenges and causes of anxiety/stress for staff with mental health problems or disorders include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of structure and routine</li> <li>• Introduction of new workplace practices</li> <li>• Lack of confidence in reaching out to colleagues for interaction or support</li> <li>• Concern for the health and wellbeing of family, friends and colleagues</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure a risk assessment is carried out for appropriate colleagues</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments to be put in place, where possible, in response to any identified negative impact</p> <p>Ensure that wellbeing support and signposting to counselling/wellbeing resources are well promoted and available.</p> <p>Proactively look out for signs that the mental health of any member of staff is deteriorating and address this as appropriate, seeking support where needed</p> <p>Consider support from Occupational Health as appropriate</p>	<p>Mental Health First Aiders</p> <p>Headteachers</p> <p>Leadership team/s</p> <p>Line Managers</p> <p>School level HR representatives</p>

Groups with protected characteristics	Potential negative impact	Mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts	Person/s responsible
Gender	<p>Evidence of males being at higher risk of being admitted to hospital.</p> <p>Staff in abusive home situations may be anxious about what limitations an abusive partner/family member might impose on them when they return to the workplace.</p>	<p>A workforce Risk Assessment - 'Increased Vulnerability' has been completed, a COVID-19: Individual Staff Risk Assessment is completed dependent upon cumulative vulnerability and job role.</p> <p>Raise concerns if there are signs that something might be wrong e.g. nonattendance at meetings, work, emails not answered or always answered at a particular/irregular time, obvious increase in levels of anxiety, signs of physical abuse</p>	<p>Headteachers Leadership team/s Line Managers School level HR representatives</p>
Marriage and civil partnership (including those who are single)	<p>Staff who are single and live alone may have become used to their own company and be anxious about returning to the workplace</p> <p>Staff going through divorce or relationship breakdown may be particularly vulnerable to poor mental health</p>	<p>Particular attention paid to the wellbeing of staff who live alone or who are going through a relationship breakdown</p>	<p>Headteachers Leadership team/s Line Managers School level HR representatives</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Pregnant staff may have concerns/anxieties regarding their health and the health of their unborn child/baby if they were to contract COVID-19</p> <p>Returning from maternity leave during this period may have caused some staff to feel isolated and less connected to work than they were, and</p>	<p>Guidance document issued to pregnant staff in July 2020 outlining arrangements for 09/20</p> <p>Ensure an appropriate risk assessment has been carried out with pregnant staff</p>	<p>Headteachers Leadership team/s Line Managers School level HR representatives</p>

Groups with protected characteristics	Potential negative impact	Mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts	Person/s responsible
	returning to the workplace may feel quite daunting	<p>Ensure staff returning to work from maternity leave have been briefed on risk assessments and changed working practices</p> <p>Consideration given to colleagues in the later stages of pregnancy working from home or being redeployed</p> <p>Managers with a member of staff in their team who is pregnant to regularly revisit pregnancy risk assessment and COVID-19 risk assessment (particularly if we go into lockdown again), adapting it as necessary</p>	
Race	Evidence to show the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people are at greater risk of death from COVID-19	<p>A workforce Risk Assessment - 'Increased Vulnerability' has been completed, a COVID-19:</p> <p>Individual Staff Risk Assessment is completed dependent upon cumulative vulnerability and job role.</p>	Headteachers Leadership team/s Line Managers School level HR representatives
Religion or belief	No evidence of impact	n/a	n/a
Sexual orientation	No evidence of impact	n/a	n/a
Caring responsibilities	Potential causes of anxiety/stress for staff with caring responsibilities include:	Special/discretionary leave available to staff	Headteachers Leadership team/s Line Managers

Groups with protected characteristics	Potential negative impact	Mitigating actions to address identified negative impacts	Person/s responsible
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) trying to balance working and caring responsibilities, including dealing with potential local lockdowns which means their child's school is closed for a period of time</li> <li>(ii) having taken on additional responsibilities in relation to caring for older or vulnerable family members being concerned about how to continue to manage that</li> <li>(iii) needing to devote additional time to caring for older or vulnerable family members, meaning less time for relaxation and taking care of own wellbeing</li> <li>(iv) some staff may live with someone who is recovering from COVID-19 and be concerned about the impact on them of returning to the workplace as well as balancing work and caring for them</li> </ul>	<p>Flexible working arrangements available to staff</p> <p>Ensure that wellbeing support and signposting to counselling/wellbeing resources are well promoted and available.</p>	School level HR representatives
Socio-economic background	<p>Uncertainty over job stability could be particularly worrying for staff from low socio-economic backgrounds, meaning they are anxious about returning to work and potentially spending more on travel and subsistence than they have done in lockdown</p> <p>Staff on furlough may be anxious about when/if they are going to return to the workplace and the ongoing impact this has on their ability to meet their financial commitments</p>	<p>Provide signposts for financial support and advice</p> <p>Ensure staff members on furlough receive timely, clear and accurate information</p> <p>Ensure wellbeing support available to colleagues is promoted and readily available</p>	

