

**Coventry City Council  
Occupational Health Safety and Wellbeing Service**

**Advice for Schools - First Aid Cover During COVID 19 (April 2020)**

**Introduction**

This guidance is provided to help schools and other educational settings who still have direct contact with pupils on their premises, to consider practical, safe working arrangements for first aid cover in the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much of the guidance comes from the Resuscitation Council UK, who's guidance may change with current developments. Under the circumstances, it is advisable to keep checking the COVID – 19 web-page for the most up to date information:

<https://www.resus.org.uk/media/statements/resuscitation-council-uk-statements-on-covid-19-coronavirus-cpr-and-resuscitation/covid-crisis-conversations/>

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. We have reduced numbers of pupils and staff in school do we still need to have first aiders on site every day?**

The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 require employers to provide adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities and personnel to ensure their employees receive immediate attention if they are injured or taken ill at work. These Regulations apply to all workplaces including those with less than five employees and to the self-employed.

The Regulations do not place a legal duty on employers to make first-aid provision for non-employees. However, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) strongly recommends that non-employees are included in an assessment of first-aid needs and that provision is made for them.

The HSE states, if first aid cover for a school is reduced because of coronavirus or employees are unable to undertake the first aid training required, schools can still comply with the law by carrying out a first aid needs assessment and deciding on the level of cover which needs to be provided.

In the first instance schools should try to rota in first aid cover, being aware of any specific needs of staff and pupils and those at higher risk. First aid cover to be considered will include those with a full First Aid at Work Certificate, and those that have Basic First Aid and Emergency First Aid qualifications, for example; staff having undertaken Emergency First Aid (6 hour course) could provide first aid cover as long as they are confident and competent to do so for the ages on site. It is important to ensure that staff available to provide first aid are competent and confident to deal with any foreseeable incident.

For further information see link below to the First Aid Guidelines:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/>

It is likely, with less people coming into school, that requirements for first aid cover will be reduced. It is advised that with reduced cover, that higher risk activities should be avoided.

Schools should review their risk assessments in consideration of changing circumstances, including changes in numbers of staff and pupils on site from day to day.

The HSE states that first aiders can be shared between schools, however it needs to be ensured that the first aiders have sufficient knowledge, experience and availability to cover the first aid needs of the establishment(s).

An e-learning revision course will be made available on line in May 2020 for those with first aid qualifications who would benefit from revision.

If you have any queries please contact The Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service on: 02476833285, or email on: [ohsw@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:ohsw@coventry.gov.uk)

### **Key considerations for shared first aider cover:**

First aiders should:

- Be aware of the type of injuries or illnesses that have been identified in the school
- know enough about the school environment and its first aid facilities
- be able to get to the workplace in good time if needed
- ensure that everyone is clear on who will respond to first aid events
- where the first aid record of treatment is kept,
- where first aid kits are kept.

It is important that changes to information are updated and communicated using the most appropriate means for the setting.

## **2. Our staff are working on a rota basis and a First Aider at Work is not always available, what should we do?**

In order to decide what provision needs to be made a first-aid needs assessment must be undertaken. This assessment should consider the workplace hazards and risks and the employees that may be present. The findings will help decide what first-aid arrangements need to be put in place.

### **Some considerations when doing the needs assessment:**

- What hazards and risks are present and what may have changed with the present circumstances?
- Will there be any lone working?
- How many staff are on site at any time, how has this changed?
- Has accessibility to emergency services changed?
- Will there be any visitors on site, how often and when?

When doing the needs assessment, remember to consider all day to day activities and any practicalities such as the first aid provider being able to leave what they are doing straight away, to attend to an emergency.

For a first aid emergency always call 999, where you will be provided with instructions from a trained responder.

Remember to make sure that a member of staff checks the first aid kits to ensure the contents is in date and replace any items that have expired.

Ensure the first aid boxes are in a prominent place and that all staff, including anyone providing cover, knows where to find them.

### 3. My First Aid at Work Certificate has expired, am I still able to provide cover?

#### First aid certificate extensions

If you hold a first aid certificate that expires on or after 16 March 2020 and cannot access requalification as a direct result of COVID-19 and the related government guidance, the validity of certificates can be extended temporarily by up to 3 months.

This applies to:

- First Aid at Work (FAW)
- Requalification
- Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW)
- Paediatric First Aid

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### 4. We don't have a Paediatric First Aider?

For those not trained in paediatric first aid, the most important thing is to act quickly to ensure the child gets the treatment they need in a critical situation.

The importance of calling an ambulance and taking immediate action in an emergency such as breathing difficulties, choking, cardiac arrest or excessive bleeding cannot be stressed enough, to avoid the emergency becoming critical.

Where rescue breaths are required, it is recommended that this is still performed for children. Although there is an increased risk of transmitting the COVID-19 virus, either to the first aider or the child/infant, the risk is small compared to the risk of not taking this action, which could lead to the death of the child.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) normally requires at least one person who has a current paediatric first aid certificate to always be on the premises and available when children are present. However, with the wider risks around COVID -19 reducing numbers of staff, children and first aiders, it is likely that schools will be able to maintain a safe environment with a lower than usual level of first aid cover.

As a reasonably practicable measure during the pandemic, where qualified first aiders are willing to treat paediatric aged children, they need to be confident and aware of the difference between adult and paediatric techniques. Some guidance can be found on the following link: <https://www.resus.org.uk/resuscitation-guidelines/>

### 5. Should I carry out mouth to mouth resuscitation for an adult who needs CPR?

Because of the increased risk of COVID-19 infection during CPR, the **Resuscitation Council UK** offers the following advice:

- Recognise cardiac arrest by looking for the absence of signs of life and the absence of normal breathing. Do not listen or feel for breathing by placing your ear and cheek close to the casualty's mouth. If you are in any doubt about confirming cardiac arrest, the default position is to start chest compressions until help arrives.
- Make sure an ambulance is on its way. If COVID 19 is suspected, tell them when you call 999.

- If there is a perceived risk of infection, first aiders should place a cloth/towel over the casualty's mouth and nose and attempt compression only CPR and early defibrillation until the ambulance arrives. Put hands together in the middle of the chest and push hard and fast.
- Early use of a defibrillator significantly increases the person's chances of survival and does not increase risk of infection.
- If the first aider has access to personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. FFP3 face mask, disposable gloves, eye protection), these should be worn.
- After performing compression-only CPR, all first aiders should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water; alcohol-based hand gel is a convenient alternative. They should seek advice from the NHS 111 Coronavirus Advice Service or their medical adviser if concerned.

## 6. How do you maintain social distancing and provide first aid?

- It is always good practice to wear gloves when administering first aid. These are provided in first aid kits.
- With minor injuries you may be able to instruct a person in what to do, or pass them the items that they need and stand at a distance if it is age appropriate to do so.
- Always maintain good hand hygiene after administering first aid by washing your hands.
- If first aid such as CPR is required and you suspect the individual has symptoms of Coronavirus, the Resuscitation Council UK guidance advises that you do not administer rescue breaths, use chest compressions only. It is recognised that some first aiders will still chose to administer rescue breaths or instinctively respond in this way. This is a personal choice.

## 7. Do first aiders need PPE?

The Resuscitation Council UK has not been involved in the PHE guidance regarding personal protective equipment (PPE). If the first aider has access to personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. FFP3 face mask, disposable gloves, eye protection), these should be worn.

## 8. If someone needs medical care do, we still call an ambulance/send them to A&E?

Assess the casualty and, if necessary, dial 999 or 112 for an ambulance. If a person isn't breathing normally, **call an ambulance** and start cardiac compression straight away if you can.

### References and Useful Links:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/first-aid-certificate-coronavirus.htm>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/firstaid/legislation.htm>