

FAQs

What does the ESFA Covid-19 guidance mean for Apprentices in Health and Care settings?

This guidance is aimed to help but please understand this is a very fast paced moving situation and advice and guidance may change and that we will continue to endeavour to represent our apprentices, employers and TPs, and keep everyone up to date.

Should I put all my clinical learners on a break in learning?

Where possible, apprentices should continue their apprenticeship programme of study. You should work closely with your training provider to determine which apprenticeships you can continue to support. It may be that some of your apprenticeships can continue by utilising digital solutions. You may want to also consider extending the duration of the apprenticeship to allow them more time to complete the apprenticeship.

Apprentices should only be withdrawn from an apprenticeship if there is no possibility of them returning to learning in the future..

My Trust is not allowing external visitors, how can assessors continue to observe apprentices?

Where it is not possible for apprentices to undertake face to face study days, or their assessors cannot visit them in practice due to COVID-19 restrictions, alternative arrangement should be made, such as e-learning or virtual conversations.

My apprentices are being deployed into a different clinical settings or roles to help with Covid-19, can they still undertake their apprenticeship?

Where apprentices cannot meet the 20% Off the Job Training element of their apprenticeship because they have moved roles temporarily, or the organisation needs them to focus their efforts solely on their job, the learner should be put on a break in learning.

Due to Covid-19 service pressures, do apprentices still have to meet the 20% off the job requirement?

Where apprentices remain on their apprenticeship, they should continue to fulfil their 20% Off the Job Training requirements. This learning can be done through remote observations, new training in the workplace, e-learning whilst at work etc. Your training provider should provide you with alternatives.

25/03/2020

Will payments to my training providers continue?

Payments from your digital account will continue to be paid to your training providers if your learners are on program. If you instigate a break in learning the payments to your provider will be paused. Training providers will not receive payments for learners who are on breaks in learning. Payments will resume once your learner returns to their apprenticeship and you restart them on your digital apprenticeship service.

Can EPA still go ahead?

Where apprentices are at gateway or due to undertake their EPA, a discussion needs to be held with your training provider. EPA should still be undertaken where possible. Modifications to the type of assessment are permitted, but not substitution – i.e. portfolios can be assessed remotely rather than in person, professional discussions can take place over the phone/skype rather than in person etc. EPA must still be carried out by the EPAO, and any modifications must be agreed by the EPAO.

Where it is not possible to undertake the EPA in a suitable way, the apprentice can be paused for up to 12 weeks at gateway .

Can I use my own staff to invigilate exams and undertake EPA assessments?

IFATE, Ofqual and ESFA are introducing flexibilities to enable apprentices to complete their apprenticeship in the event of disruption to assessment.

Remote tests should be supervised by an appropriately trained invigilator, or assessor who has the necessary qualifications, training or experience, and who has not been involved in the training, preparation or line management of the apprentice.

Tests must only be carried out within a supervised and controlled environment. EPAOs must ensure all testing meets security requirements, and that the details of invigilators are recorded and available for confirmation by EQAPs. Please see the IFATE website for detailed assessment guidance [here](#).

My apprentices are on fixed term contracts, do I have to extend them?

When you put a learner on a break in learning the end date of their apprenticeship is extended to allow for the break, and they will resume their apprenticeship when possible. Their contract of employment should be extended to cover the entire duration of their apprenticeship, including time for EPA.

25/03/2020

Some of my apprentices are self-isolating and are unable to take part in clinical placement hours but they are carrying on with theory at home. Is this permissible and what is the impact of this?

If your apprentices are self-isolating and continuing the theory element at home that is permissible within the funding rules, you may want to consider an increase in e-learning and using digital learning to support them.

Your apprentice can also take a short pause of less than 4 weeks while they self-isolate. This will not affect the planned end-date of the apprenticeship and they don't need to be paused on the apprenticeship service. If they self-isolate for longer than 4 weeks you should talk to your training provider about putting them on a break in learning.

Talk to your training provider about how the clinical placement hours of the apprenticeship can be rearranged for when they return to the workplace.

What should I pay my apprentice during a break in learning?

If the apprentice is on apprenticeship national minimum wage (NMW) and on a full break in learning (not being utilised on bank or in other substantive roles) then you can continue to pay them apprenticeship NMW.

If they are on a break and you are using them for other substantive duties, they need to be paid correctly for their age as they are no longer in learning. Where it is not possible to undertake the EPA in a suitable way, the apprenticeship can be paused for up to 12 weeks at gateway .

What is the process to put a learner on a break in learning?

During March, you should not use the apprenticeship service to 'pause' or 'stop' payments to the training provider, where some training has been delivered in March. Doing so will result in the training provider not receiving any payment for these apprentices.

You should talk to your training providers before pausing apprentices on the digital apprenticeship service. After speaking to your training provider, you should use the 'Pause' function in the service. You must only use the 'Stop' function when you are certain that training will not resume at any point.

Using 'Pause' will stop payments temporarily and allow you and apprentice to resume the apprenticeship later. The ESFA are reviewing options to simplify the process of re-starting apprentices on the service, including to facilitate a transfer to a different apprenticeship or employer in due course.

Due to Covid-19 service pressures can I make my apprentices take a break in learning, even if the apprentice doesn't want to take a break?

During these unprecedented times service delivery takes priority. Wherever possible try and work with the flexibilities to allow the apprentice to continue in their learning, but where the delivery of patient services takes precedence you can enforce a break in learning.

Can apprentices return to the same apprenticeship after a break in learning?

After a break in learning most apprentices should be able to return to their original apprenticeship, unless they have moved to a different role permanently, in which case you should look to see which alternative apprenticeship your apprentice can transfer to.

If the apprentice was on a learning aim prior to their break that is no longer valid when they return (for example, the certification date has passed), then you cannot class this as a break in learning. This limits the length of time that a learner can have as a break in learning. You should speak to your training provider if you think the apprenticeship will have been replaced by a new version when they return to learning.