



Consortia Gwella Ysgolion Rhanbarthol
Regional School Improvement Consortia



Cadw'n Ddiogel.  Stay Safe.
Dal ati i Ddysgu. Stay Learning.

Developing approaches to support distance learning



Continuity of learning

The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system has been disrupted but remains of central importance.

During this time when most learners are not able to attend settings and schools in person, Welsh Government and its partners are working across the education system in a number of ways to offer support to leaders, governors, practitioners, parents, carers and learners in key priority areas.

The Minister for Education launched Wales' 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning' programme on 20 April to support education professionals and learners as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this programme regional school improvement consortia, in conjunction with Estyn and ADEW have developed this advice for settings, schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) to support them in their work with learners. This document is not statutory.

This advice can be read in conjunction with advice on continuing with school and PRU business during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also relates to advice for parents/carers through the 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning' programme.

Separate guidance has been provided for staff working in hubs and schools developing effective provision for children of critical workers and for vulnerable children.

We would like to thank the following partners for their contributions:

- Central South Consortium
- EAS
- ERW
- GwE
- Estyn
- Welsh Government

For further information go to
hwb.gov.wales/staysafestaylearning



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Introduction

Staff in schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and settings across Wales have shown great courage under challenging circumstances. They have had to adapt quickly to new arrangements and are coming to terms with a new way of working. Provision will not mirror what schools would offer during normal times. Welsh Government is currently considering how the legal framework can be altered to reflect this (including around the curriculum). As a result, schools have the opportunity to consider what learning is appropriate to their learners. They are showing energy and dedication in creating and maintaining different ways of supporting learners and their colleagues, prioritising well-being as well as continuing with providing distance learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Aim

The **Stay Safe, Stay Learning** policy statement states:

“...we believe the most important thing in this time of unprecedented change and disruption is the safety and well-being of our children and our workforce and doing all we can to support the physical and mental well-being of our children and young people throughout this period.”

Across our education system we are prioritising support for all learners to keep learning and transition effectively back into school when the time comes. Therefore, this advice focuses on the work of settings and schools in considering how all learners can be supported to return to education in a positive frame of mind, and to continue as seamlessly as possible with their learning.

To help make this happen schools, PRUs and settings are advised to make all efforts to:

- keep all children safe and well
- offer access to childcare for critical workers
- ensure learners who are at most risk are being supported
- support the well-being of the education workforce
- allow learners to access learning through digital or other accessible methods in a practical and uncomplicated way
- support all partners' shared understanding of how effective, organised distance learning can provide a breadth of learning experiences
- support parents/carers access to guidance to understand their role in supporting their children within distance learning
- support the well-being and basic skills of learners through effective contact and communications.

Settings and schools will have access to support from regional consortia and local authorities as they develop their approaches to distance learning. This advice includes signposting to some models that settings and schools may wish to adopt or adapt as part of their distance learning strategy.

Underlying principles

Settings and schools will be at different stages in developing their support for learning at home. The following advice does not seek to replace existing effective practice but may help to refine and develop it further.

- Individual staff, learner and parent/carer well-being is a key priority.
- Careful consideration should be given to what is practically achievable in the current situation. We are not trying to duplicate the school experience within the home environment. School staff, learners and parents/carers are all sharing their homes with work. It is important to strike the right balance between home life and work life to avoid unnecessary pressures.
- Each school's approach will vary according to their context, and the availability of the right skills and technology.

Supporting schools to deliver distance learning

As part of developing and implementing the distance learning strategy, the regional consortia will work with schools to identify opportunities for supporting leaders, and teaching and support staff. This will involve building on the current good practice in many schools and will include:

- technical guidance and operational support to cover use of Hwb and how to ensure digital safeguarding for all
- accessing web-based professional learning in using digital technologies
- support for using accessible platforms such as Microsoft Teams
- modelling what the experience and provision should look like for different ages and abilities
- modelling the holistic experience over an extended period of time
- supporting schools to meet the needs of parents/carers under different circumstances
- looking at alternative ways to support learners and parents/carers who don't have access to digital technology
- developing learning experiences that best suit the conditions of the learner and the parent/carer
- building on existing collaborations to support learning across their school and networks of schools where possible.

For further information and technical guidance on the best and safest use of available tools please visit the [Hwb website](#).

Schools should closely adhere to their safeguarding policies when determining whether live streaming is appropriate to host lessons. Should a decision be made to use live streaming then schools should refer to the 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning'. Safeguarding principles and practices of live streaming guidance document' and any relevant local authority guidance.

The principle of equity

The principle of equity in this sense represents the commitment to all learners having access to all aspects of learning and experience. This provision will not mirror what schools would offer during normal times. Welsh Government is currently considering how the legal framework can be altered to reflect this (including around the curriculum). Schools have the opportunity to consider what learning is appropriate to their learners based on:

- time for maintaining and developing literacy, numeracy and digital skills
- building resilience and reflection on personal well-being
- offering opportunities to maintain connections with teaching and support staff and peers during this period of potential social isolation.

Through careful consideration of the points above, decisions can be made on the most appropriate form of distance learning. It is suggested that providing opportunities for learners to engage independently in their own time is possibly best at this time. In this way, teaching and support staff are able to create a range of experiences for learners to work through at their own pace so that they have time to absorb the content and learning.

There should also be equity for Welsh-medium learners in the provision offered through distance learning. When considering this, schools and settings should be mindful of what parents/carers may need to support such learning at home, particularly if they are not Welsh speakers.

Distance learning models

There are many approaches to effective distance learning **and exemplar models will** aim to show how schools can consider how best to support their learners during this period. Alongside the exemplar models, further guidance on planning and assessment will be provided.

The exemplar models vary depending on the nature and age of the learner as well as the context of the school. Having realistic expectations of what is achievable is important as it is likely that tasks may take longer to complete due to a variety of factors.

Teaching and support staff, parents/carers and learners will have to work closely together to ensure effective distance learning during this period of school closure. There will be important considerations that each school will have to take into account to ensure effective contact and communication to support the well-being and basic skills of learners.