

Briefing Note for B&FC Employers

As part of the cross-government efforts to respond to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is implementing new measures, until further notice, to make it easier for apprenticeships to continue and complete in a different way if they need to, or to break and resume an apprenticeship later when that becomes possible.

The detailed guidance changes can be accessed [HERE](#) but we have summarised those that we think are most relevant to you in this document.

ESFA advises that this guidance will be kept under active review and updated regularly with further developments. We will continue to update our briefing note as this happens.

We hope that the frequently asked questions, and the responses, are helpful to you. However, please do not hesitate to contact your Skills Coach or Customer Relationship Manager with any queries. If you are struggling to contact them then please contact Colleen.Hickson@blackpool.ac.uk or Sarah.Hall@blackpool.ac.uk

At B&FC, we are committed to our apprentices and employers, and your experience, particularly during such unprecedented times as these. As such we have developed our delivery offer to enable our apprentices to progress and achieve, and remain fully compliant with statutory requirements.

1. Can my apprentices continue their apprenticeship?

There is nothing preventing your existing apprentices from progressing with their apprenticeship, even if you have had to furlough your apprentices through the job retention scheme.

Current apprentices who have been furloughed can continue working towards their apprenticeship, as long as they continue to hold a contract of employment, apprenticeship agreement and commitment statement, and are being paid at least the apprenticeship minimum wage (where applicable) for the time they spend on their apprenticeship. At B&FC we will work with you to make sure your apprentice is in a position to continue with their studies.

If you would like more information about the job retention scheme and how it applies to apprentices, please read the Government's guidance [HERE](#)

2. What about any additional learning support my apprentice needs?

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rules for learning support remain unchanged. Where an apprentice has a need for additional learning support, and where this can be delivered remotely, it can and will continue. B&FC will continue to provide extra assistance to all of our students who need additional learning support.

3. If my apprentice needs to self-isolate, what will happen to their apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships have been designed to be responsive to changes in apprentices' circumstances, for example during a period of illness. If the apprentice needs to self-isolate, we would ask them to talk to you, as their employer, and ourselves at B&FC about the best way to continue with their apprenticeship.

Options could include:

- Continuing with their online learning if they are self-isolating but not ill.
- A short pause of less than 4 weeks in their apprenticeship. This will not affect the planned end-date of their apprenticeship.
- A formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more. This will result in the planned end-date of the apprenticeship being re-planned.
- Re-scheduling planned assessment activity for a later date.

4. My apprentice needs to take care of a family member. Can they continue their apprenticeship learning at home?

Yes, this will be possible as we have an on-line learning model. Please discuss this with your contact at B&FC.

5. How can my apprentices continue their learning with current social distancing measures?

We will be operating a mix of on and off site learning which will cover everything the apprentice needs. Apprentices will continue to engage in digital or distance learning at a convenient time within their agreed working hours. B&FC is a COVID-19 secure employer and apprentices will be able to attend our site, as required, as part of their programme of delivery from September 2020.

6. I am having to move staff into different and/or business critical roles that aren't related to their apprenticeship. What happens to their apprenticeship?

It is our goal that apprentices can promptly resume their apprenticeship and continue to successful completion of end-point assessment. If you can make us aware of this then we can explore and agree with you the best option.

We can put in place a temporary break in learning if necessary.

If the move becomes permanent, we can look to see which alternative apprenticeship your apprentice can transfer onto.

7. How do I start my apprentices learning again after a break has been agreed?

We will keep in touch with you on a monthly basis to discuss when the apprentice is likely to return to learning. If the apprentice is able to return sooner then please contact B&FC at any time and we can arrange this.

8. What do I do if I think an apprentice is not well enough to work (especially in a health setting)?

Employers should follow [the government's guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

9. My apprentice is due to take their end-point assessment soon? Will they still be able to take end-point assessment?

In many cases, modification of end-point assessment (EPA) arrangements, including remote assessments wherever practicable and possible will replace the planned EPA. This is in order to support them to maintain progress and achievement of their programme.

Where this is currently not possible, we will continue to work with the awarding bodies to find a solution for your apprentice. If they are ready for assessment, but cannot be assessed due to COVID-19 issues, we will make sure their end-point assessment is rescheduled. If they are ready to go through gateway and this has been delayed, we will ensure that they can have an extension to the assessment time frame.

10. I am a non-levy paying employer recruiting for/having apprentices due to start. Can I still go ahead and reserve funds on the system?

Yes, employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy are able to reserve apprenticeship funding through the apprenticeship service in line with the published guidance. Your contact at B&FC would be pleased to talk you through this process.

11. What happens to my funding reservation as a non-levy employer, if my apprentice can't start?

Reservations will expire if they are not turned into a commitment within three months of the apprenticeship start date, as detailed in the reservation. Where a commitment is needed, and a previous reservation has expired, a new reservation must first be made. Your contact at B&FC would be pleased to talk you through this process.

12. What will happen if my apprentice is not well enough to take their end-point assessment?

If they are unwell, or in a period of self-isolation, and unable to attend the end-point assessment, please contact B&FC as soon as you are able, to allow us maximum time to re-schedule the assessment.

This not an exhaustive list of questions and responses, and if there is any specific question please do discuss this with your Skills Coach/Client Relationship Manager.

There are also some changes to assessment which may affect you and your apprentice. We will identify this for you where that is the case, and discuss with you the best options for you and your apprentice.

Further Information

If you want to understand the detailed position and guidance from the Institute for Apprenticeships (IAFTE) you can read more about this [HERE](#)

This information should be read alongside [the government's COVID-19 guidance and support for businesses](#), in particular the salary support for furloughed employees, which also applies to apprentices

As an employer you can also [find additional advice and guidance from ACAS](#)