



Centre for
Skills &
Apprenticeships

25 March 2020

RE: DFE Contingency Arrangements for Covid – 19

ApprenticeshipsNI 2013 Memo 5/2020 and ApprenticeshipsNI 2017 Memo 6/2020

Dear Apprentice, or Higher Level Apprentice,

Following recent announcements, I am writing to update you on the steps that Belfast Met's Centre for Skills & Apprenticeships is taking in response to the new guidance regarding social distancing and home working.

In response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) the 6 colleges in N Ireland have made the decision to cease face to face teaching and learning sessions, and replace them with access to online learning resources together with review sessions carried out via phone or Skype.

Reference www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid19-and-benefits#toc-10

How will this impact you?

- 1) With regards to your employment status and conditions, your employer will continue to follow government advice and guidance. They should communicate this clearly to you so that you understand whether you should attend work or work from home. If you are at risk of redundancy, furloughed or have been made redundant, let us know and we can signpost you to further support and guidance. Any apprentice made redundant will be terminated from the programme to allow them to access all available social security benefits. Resumption of training will be facilitated for all redundant apprentices when employment resumes.
- 2) Your college learning is moving to the online CANVAS platform. Do not attend college on your designated days anymore. The college buildings are now closed. The college is currently working to continue to provide online learning experiences through their CANVAS platform. Tutors are currently uploading additional activities and will contact you directly as the week progresses. The IT department and IT service desk remain fully available to learners to answer any queries or issues about connecting to the service.
- 3) The Belfast Met Quality team are working closely with our awarding organisations to ensure planned assessments are impacted as little as possible. In the short term, all planned face-to-face assessments will be cancelled and more information on this will be made available in the coming days to minimise the impact on you and your learning.

We will continue to update you with any new or relevant information in the coming days and weeks.

If you have any concerns, please contact any of the following:

- Your Tutor or Trainer Assessor or Lecturer
- Your Skills Support Coach (if you have been allocated one)
- One of the members of the hub staff
- For Apprentices, Chris Nelson – cnelson@belfastmet.ac.uk
- For Higher Level Apprentices, Anne Ferguson anneferguson@belfastmet.ac.uk

We are unsure how long this will affect us all so we would encourage you to follow Belfast Met on our social media channels e.g. Facebook, Twitter or Belfast Met website for updates.

Keep in touch with us and we will support you as best we can over the oncoming weeks.

We hope you and your families stay safe and well.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Stewart

Skills and Apprenticeships Manager





Information and Advice for those Apprentices facing redundancy (March 2020)

A number of our apprentices are facing uncertainty at the moment with regards to their employment status. Be reassured, that we will do everything we can to support you at this time.

Firstly, please make us aware if you have been made redundant or you are at risk of redundancy. Make contact with your Skills Support Coach or through one of our hub staff team.

- Diane Campbell dcampbell@belfastmet.ac.uk 0791 867 8433
- Mark Toman mtoman@belfastmet.ac.uk
- Veronica Chambers vchambers@belfastmet.ac.uk

Your employer will follow the government guidelines, and we can do a number of things to support you, such as suspend your training until you find another job or help you to link with other employers.

Here is a list of sources of information and advice.

1. To find out about continuing your college studies:
 - speak to your tutor in the first instance
 - You can also contact one of our Hub staff team or your Skills Support Coach
 - You can also contact the BMet Careers team at careers@belfastmet.ac.uk or phone them on 02890 265066
 - You can also contact DFE Careers Service
www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/contacts-az/careers-service
They offer a free web chat or you can speak to a careers Advisor on 0300 200 7820
2. To find out about benefits and claiming unemployment benefit:
 - You can access the government website at the Department for Communities.
<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/covid-19-service-updates>

Some of this information can be confusing if you have never claimed before, but there are people you can talk to who will support you.

Citizens Advice Bureau www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/northern-ireland/

They have a range of offices across N Ireland where you can call in and talk to an advisor

Advice NI also offers a range of information and support www.adviceni.net

3. Remember that all the BMet support services are still available to you including **Student Counselling**: Redundancy will be a very distressing time for many of our students, please be advised that Inspire Wellbeing will continue to ensure student counselling is provided.

24/7 Helpline on 0808 800 0032, structured telephone and video platformed counselling provision will also be facilitated.

Inspire have launched their new online Belfast Met student support hub

Link & log in details below

www.inspiresupporthub.org/students/

Log on details: BMC2019!

Lifeline: 24/7 Crisis intervention, support and advice line 0808 808 8000

Lifeline is the regional crisis support helpline. Lifeline will talk to anyone in crises e.g. suicidality, self-harm, mood disorders. Lifeline can stay on the line and call emergency service to come to you, if that is assessed to be appropriate.

The Student Wellbeing Service will continue to offer support remotely through email services - please contact Student Wellbeing email: centre4wellbeing@belfastmet.ac.uk

The BMet Student Union will maintain a service using the studentsunion@belfastmet.ac.uk email address as the communication platform.