

24 March 2020

RE: DFE Contingency Arrangements for Covid – 19

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

Dear Employer of an 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 close all Schools and Colleges and cease face to face teaching and learning sessions. These interactions are to be replaced with access to online learning resources together with review sessions carried out via phone or Skype.

The college is currently working to continue to provide online learning experiences through the CANVAS platform to learners. Tutors are currently uploading additional activities and contacting learners to ensure they can access the CANVAS system from home or their phone. The IT department and IT service desk remain fully available to learners to answer any queries or issues about connecting to the service.

All learners will receive a communication from their Tutor /Trainer Assessor/ lecturer by the end of this week regarding any learning updates and what they can expect over the coming weeks. Skills Support Coaches will also support the process and be available to provide support and advice to learners, parents and employers.

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. More information on this will be made available in the coming days to minimise the impact to learners.

We understand this period may be creating some uncertainty for your business.

Apprentices are your employees, and as such will continue to look to you for advice and guidance on working arrangements and payment of salaries. **Please keep us informed if any circumstances change for apprentice**, for example if they are at risk of redundancy, Furlough or have to be made redundant. 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. We will be able to continue to offer signposting and advice to them. Similar to ourselves, continue to follow government guidelines at this time

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

We will continue to update you with any new or relevant information in the coming days and weeks. We are committed to supporting our partners during this time by working as flexibly as possible, with a focus on maintaining continuity for learners as much as possible, in an ever-changing world.

If you have any concerns, please contact a designated Skills support Coach or tutor / Trainer Assessor / lecturer in the first instance.

Further contact emails have been provided below.

We trust you stay safe and appreciate your continued support at this time.

Yours sincerely

Kathryn Stewart
Skills and Apprenticeships Manager

Generic queries to apprenticeships@belfastmet.ac.uk

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