# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Autumn term planning for Higher Education and adult learners in Further Education Colleges, work based and community learning**  |
| **DATE**  | **30 June 2021** |
| **BY** | **Jeremy Miles MS, Minister for Education and Welsh Language** |

I announced Monday that education in Wales would be moving to a framework based approach in the autumn term. This does not mean a wholesale removal of mitigating measures, but would mean schools, colleges, universities and learning providers will be able to make decisions based on the balance of harms and minimising disruption to learning - all within the wider context of a national framework and our successful vaccine programme.

Firstly, I would like to reiterate the importance of staff in education settings taking up the offer of a vaccine and I would also like to encourage our students and adult learners who are over the age of 18 to also get their vaccine as soon as possible so we can see a high proportion of them double vaccinated before the start of the next academic year.

For adult learners in Higher and Further Education, work-based and community learning, we are hopeful that from this autumn, we will be able, in the teaching and learning environment to move away from the strict 2m social distancing model for university students, adult and part-time learners. This will allow more in person learning in the autumn term if we continue to see low or moderate risk.

For adult learners in Higher and Further Education this will mean our universities, colleges and learning providers can make plans based on contact groups where risk assessments show it is safe to do so.

Our guiding principle has to be a move towards education being enabled to operate as “normally” as possible in the autumn, so we are planning on the basis that adult education will operate in step with what we can do in wider society. To enable this we are planning to model the adult education contact groups on groups that will be familiar in other areas of life, modelled on more than one group of up to 6, or single groups of up to 30 depending on the setting, room capacity and risk assessments in the setting, which must be in line with the requirements to take all reasonable measures. This approach would apply when the risk levels are low to moderate and we have other robust mitigations in place.

Contact groups for adult learners will mean we can have more in person learning and this must be our priority to rebalance the harms to education and our learners. We may still see close contacts asked to self-isolate if Test Trace Protect contact tracers deem they should. We will work with our partners in the coming weeks to develop the framework and provide further detailed guidance on how these groups will work.

If restrictions in wider society continue to be eased, the same restrictions would apply for adult education in universities, colleges, community and work-based learning.

I am very grateful to all our of our education staff who have worked tirelessly to support learners throughout the pandemic and who have helped ensure that their settings are as Covid-safe as possible.

We must all remember that while we are able to do more things, it is important we continue to stay safe and keep Wales safe by self-isolating when unwell, accessing regular testing, supporting Test Trace Protect, wearing face coverings in indoor public areas, remembering to wash our hands and thinking about good ventilation.