C-19: GUIDANCE TO VOLUNTEERS[[1]](#footnote-1) IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN SUPPORTING KEY WORKERS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

The Department of Education (DE) appreciates schools are already making provision for the children of key workers and vulnerable children, with rota based allocation of staff available for work within PHA guidelines. The DE continues to work with schools and educational settings, as well as ongoing engagement with all stakeholders everyone works together through these challenging times.

In the context that the overarching message of the health professionals remains ‘***Stay at Home’*,** the aim of this guidance is to provide information to volunteers in the education sector in the event that it becomes critically necessary for volunteers to be deployed to support the school leaders and staff in C-19 schools and cluster schools to provide a supervised, safe environment for the children of key workers and vulnerable children as per the Minister’s statement of 20 March 2020.

The individual school or C-19 cluster school should be a facility which is used by those parents/carers who have no viable option for arrangements for their child and are working in essential roles in the fight against C -19. If parents/carers have any other options for childcare when they are working, they should use these. The individual school or C-19 cluster school should be a last resort.

**This guidance should be read in conjunction with the DE** **FAQs document which is regularly updated.**

**Individual schools and C-19 cluster schools**

Individual schools may provide a supervised, safe environment or a group of schools, for example, within a geographical location, an Area Learning Community or a Shared Education partnership, will come together to agree the use of the school estate to provide a C-19 cluster school to be used for supervising the children of key workers and vulnerable children.

For the purpose of C-19 clusters, the term ‘schools’ refers to nursery schools and voluntary playgroups, primary schools, post-primary and special schools

The C-19 cluster school will be registered with the Department of Education (DE) which provides appropriate indemnity for schools and staff, including the volunteers. The chair of governors should be informed of the use of the school building for the C-19 cluster.

For the individual schools and the C-19 cluster schools, the employing authorities and DE will have governance responsibility.

The individual school or C-19 cluster school will, at the moment, operate during normal school hours. These arrangements may change according to the needs of key worker parents. For example, children may require supervision at weekends and during the Easter holidays.

A nominated link officer in the individual schools or C-19 cluster will be supported by the Designated Education Support Officer from an interagency team of EA, CCMS, ETI and CSSC staff. The interagency link officer will be allocated on a locality basis and will work across sector and management type and will be available for all the hours and days the settings are open.

**Cluster school arrangements**

School leaders, including principals/playgroup leaders, vice-principals and senior teachers, from across the schools in the C-19 cluster should agree a rota, perhaps on a weekly basis with a core team assuming the remit of ‘Leader in Charge’.

A rota should be drawn up of available staff from all schools in the area and staff deployed, based on the numbers of children requiring supervision:

All staff, teaching, non-teaching, cleaning and support staff, across all the schools involved in the C-19 cluster, who are available for work within PHA guidelines, will be expected to work in the C-19 cluster school on a rota basis. Only where possible, at least one member of staff from each school within the C-19 cluster will be present to support the children from their school.

Volunteers from the public sector, with appropriate vetting, will support the supervision of children in the C-19 cluster school on a rota basis and under the direction of the staff from across the schools within the C-19 cluster.

The leader in charge will determine the number of children that can be safely accommodated in the C-19 school cluster in line with PHA guidance on social distancing and DE guidance on educational and childcare provision. Support will be available to the leader in charge from a link officer to help with decision making.

All of the staff will supervise and support children as they work through the learning packs which have been provided by their own schools. They will facilitate the children’s access to remote learning using technology and will supervise the children at play, break and lunch times.

The C-19 cluster will apply the safeguarding and child protection regulations as outlined in DE Circular 2017/04. A simplified version of the safeguarding arrangements and the safeguarding flowchart, with clear information for all staff, including volunteers will be available to all clusters from the CPSS.

Designated and Deputy Designated teachers, available for work within PHA guidelines, should be included in staff rotas; in the event that designated and deputy designated teachers are unavailable, the flowchart will provide clear information for the leader in charge and CPSS will be available to advise

Where possible, a child’s school should pass on any relevant medical, safeguarding or SEN information to the leader in charge. This will not always be possible due to staff absence as a result of illness or self-isolation. It will be important that parents provide this information.

EA will provide advice and support to centres on SEN provision as required.C-19 clusters will be required to be compliant with PHA guidance on social distancing and associated DE guidance[[2]](#footnote-2) on education and childcare provision, in particular around numbers of children in classrooms and play spaces, hand washing and cleaning arrangements.

**I am a redeployed public sector worker/other worker/volunteer from the education sector working – What does this mean?**

* You will be allocated by the EA to an individual school or a registered C-19 cluster school[[3]](#footnote-3) who will be informed by the EA of your allocation
* All teaching, non-teaching, caretaking and support staff and the allocated volunteers, for the individual school or C-19 cluster school, who are not ill, self-isolating or at risk ( as defined by PHA guidance), should be available on a rota basis to support the supervision of vulnerable children and those of key workers at the cluster school.
* The ‘Leader in Charge’ of the individual school or C-19 cluster school will inform all staff, including volunteer staff in respect of the rota. A rota should be drawn up based on staff working a reduced number of hours per day/days per week or alternate weeks without any loss in pay and staff deployed, based on the numbers of children requiring supervision.
1. Includes redeployed public sector and other workers in the education sector. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In a voluntary playgroup acting as a school centre this will include the HSCT Minimum Standards. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The registered C-19 cluster school has appropriate indemnity for schools and staff. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)