



Circular Letter 0023/2020

To: The Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

The following arrangements apply to learner payments in Education and Training Boards

The arrangements contained in this circular should be applied in respect of learner payments for further education and training courses and craft apprenticeships

The Department reserves the right to change these arrangements at any time to reflect updated public health advice from the HSE.

Please ensure that copies of this Circular are made available to all members of your organisation and its contents are brought to the attention of all staff in your employment including those on leave of absence.

This Circular can be accessed on the Department's website at www.education.gov.ie

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Definitions

For the purposes of this Circular the following terms have the meanings assigned to them here unless the context indicates otherwise.

Learner payment – means a payment to an individual who is attending a further education and training course or off-the-job training as part of a designated craft apprenticeship and who has an entitlement to a training allowance.

School or Centre – Any location where a further education and training course or off-the-job training as part of a designated apprenticeship is provided.

ETB – means Education and Training Board.

HSE – means Health Service Executive.

Self-isolate – refers to learners who are medically/HSE-recommended to restrict their movements. Confirmation will be required in all instances.

The Department means the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is a virus that can cause illness affecting the lungs and airways.
- 1.2 The ETB are reminded of their duty of care to ensure the safety and welfare of all learners to whom they provide education and training.
- 1.3 ETBs and learners should follow the guidance set out by the HSE and/or their doctor.

2. Purpose of this Circular

- 2.1. The purpose of this Circular is to advise of the arrangements for learner payments for those learners who have contracted COVID-19 and also those who have not got the virus but have been advised to self-isolate to prevent the spread of the virus.

3. Self-Isolation

- 3.1 The HSE sets out the criteria for self-isolation at:-
<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation-and-limited-social-interaction.html>.
- 3.2 Where medical advice is that the learner who is not ill should self-isolate, then the ETB should continue to provide learner payments as applicable.
- 3.3 The payment of additional learner supports e.g. travel, accommodation and meal allowances should be dealt with under normal arrangements for authorised absences.
- 3.4 When the recommended period of self-isolation has passed, medical advice and HSE Guidelines should be followed regarding return to education and training.

4. School or Centre Closure

- 4.1 If, following HSE advice, a school or centre is closed as a result of COVID-19, the ETB will continue to pay learner payments as applicable.
- 4.2 ETBs are encouraged to review their business continuity plans in light of the emerging situation.

5. Application Procedures

- 5.1 The learner should notify the ETB as soon as possible in the event of diagnosis or having to self-isolate so that arrangements can be made for the continuation of learner payment. This should include appropriate medical or HSE confirmation of COVID-19 diagnosis or recommendation to self-isolate in accordance with the HSE guidelines.

6. Data Protection

- 6.1 All documentation relating to the application of this circular must be retained by the ETB with the relevant records in a safe and secure manner and in line with the ETB's data protection policy and data protection regulations.