

51. After consideration of a number of options and crucially taking into account the wider socio-economic aspects for learners in further and higher education I am recommending that we maintain the very cautious approach agreed in January, with numbers kept at this stage to the absolute minimum:

- ♦ Work placements would continue as planned in order to continue vital workforce pipelines for key sectors especially healthcare;
- ♦ Universities will remain in Phase 1 and continue to bring limited numbers of critical-only students phased up to the end of March;
- ♦ Colleges will bring back the minimal numbers of critical learners;
- ♦ Senior phase school pupils will be allowed to attend college in very small numbers once senior phase pupils commence a limited return to school for essential practical course work. This would initially comprise c. 425 students on FA Level 6 engineering and scientific technologies courses. This will be subject to review aligned to the school phasing;
- ♦ Officials further explore and report back to Cabinet options around testing to support future student returns; and
- ♦ Any expansion of the types of students allowed to return to face to face teaching should be considered only after we have assessed the impact of the partial reopening of schools.

52. As noted above, unless a change is made to the existing January permissions, institutions will begin to bring small numbers of students back this week. So a decision on the way forward for time-critical studies is needed immediately.

Update of the *Strategic Framework*

53. Since last week's Cabinet discussion, there has been intensive work across portfolios, including over the weekend and today, to finalise the updated Strategic Framework for publication on 23 February. I am very grateful to Cabinet colleagues and their officials for their continuing close engagement and input both on the strategic content and the presentation of the document. A final draft, taking account as far as possible with colleagues' many comments and suggestions, is being circulated alongside this paper (*as SC(21)27(DRAFT Strategic Framework Update)*).

54. Given that there has been extensive discussion in correspondence, I propose to highlight only two specific points of substance in the final draft, where it is proposed to change the phasing of easings:

- ♦ **Non-contact outdoor sports activity for 12-17 year olds** - throughout the pandemic, our approach has been to permit as much sport and physical activity as possible, in particular prioritising under-18 sport, recognising the importance to both physical and mental health. We now know that that the risks of transmission in a controlled environment are reduced and that sport has