

we can act with pace. We are providing additional stocks of liquid soap, tissues and paper towels and are increasing the cleaning regime across all buildings.

- Resources – we have set up a dedicated Business Continuity cell within our DOC and have brought in resources to supplement the BAU team.
- Communications – we have been in regular contact with our staff and have set up information channels on the Intranet. We have developed FAQs and are meeting our regional site leadership teams on a weekly basis. We are engaging with our Trade Union representatives to ensure information is shared quickly.
- Suppliers – we are working with central government on the approach to working with suppliers and managing critical risks. We have specific conversations planned with suppliers to critical infrastructure (e.g. IT, Facilities Management, Security) to manage these risks.

Business Continuity: Critical Functions

Our plans for the education and childcare sectors are based on the Government's broad aims: (a) to prevent, protect against and control the spread of a pandemic; (b) to keep the sectors operating as fully as possible during the pandemic, both for the sake of the care and education of children and students and also to minimise disruption to parents and the wider economy. Measures we propose taking in the Covid19 Bill are designed to ensure business critical functions continue in the event of a worst case scenario, including powers to:

- Close schools/nurseries but also keep open and re-open schools / nurseries
- have educational settings take on additional functions and for pupils to attend different premises
- disapply non-business critical legal provisions during the period of emergency

Critical functions include:

- **Ensuring minimum safeguarding standards** are being met in the care of children. This includes dealing with serious incidents, secure care and responding to failures in Local Authority children's services.
- **Processing payments to education settings** – we have existing payment mechanisms that can be used to continue routine, and also make emergency, payments. We have well developed business continuity plans in place for these services and are confident in them.
- **Support and communications to educational settings** – getting clear, accurate and helpful message to the sector will be essential – Regional Schools Commissioners are already undertaking this role and more departmental resource will be diverted to support operational colleagues as necessary
- **Critical decision making** – we will ensure clear governance and decision makers are in place, with continuity plans to cover critical decision-making roles in the event of sickness.
- **Running examinations** wherever it is reasonably possibly to do so. We are working closely with Ofqual to assist in contingency planning.

Business Continuity: Service Delivery Risks

There are multiple service delivery risks to the education and childcare sector. In a worst case scenario:

- Maintaining a sufficient child and family social work workforce to handle referrals to children’s social care and take action to ensure that children and young people are protected. In addition, we need to ensure there are sufficient placements for looked after children. We will prioritise these areas and are working closely with MHCLG.
- All schools / nurseries could be closed for unknown periods of time (depending on advice of the Chief Medical Officer) – remote learning may be possible for some children but educational outcomes would suffer over any prolonged period and staff sick absence would also impact on quality of education. We have good lines of communication open across the sector and are working through the multitude of issues that will need to be considered. This could affect DfE staffing due to lack of childcare for employees.
- Examinations could be seriously affected, with examination timetables changing or being cancelled for students, impacting on college and university admissions. We are supporting Ofqual and considering all options.
- Provision of school food could be affected and there may be a lack of suitable transport. We will reuse information developed for the EU Exit work.
- Some institutions (e.g. Further Education colleges) are reliant on funding from learners to maintain their business model. If there is a reduction in funding, from non-attendance, there is a significant risk to them. DfE are considering the likelihood and impact of this, and investigating possible mitigations.
- A large proportion of effort in DfE is the development and delivery of policy initiatives. With widespread staff absence, we will clearly need to scale back on many of the initiatives. The next step is to clearly identify which activities can be stopped/delayed and the impact of doing so.

Assessment & Next Steps

Area	RAG	Next steps
Internal Bus. Cont.	Green	Further development of BC plans and testing of procedures
Critical Functions	Yellow	More detailed planning to support running of functions
Delivery Risks	Yellow	Decisions on activities to stop/delay
Funding	Yellow	Identify potential funding gaps for the sector

Overall, we have made good progress on preparing for the reasonable worst case scenario. There is still a significant amount to do as predicting the impact on the education sector is extremely complex. We continue to do modelling and scenario planning, looking at the most prudent contingencies and workarounds. **We would assess our overall preparedness as AMBER.**

If an additional 20% of the workforce was unavailable, the assessment would remain the same. The impact would primarily fall on policy development and delivery, which would not be deemed as critical.