



Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref MA/KW/1063/20  
Heads of establishments/Principals

31 March 2020

Dear colleague

I am writing to you in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact this is having on specialist further education (FE) establishments.

I recognise the complex challenges that the sector is facing in dealing with the current situation, and that the first priority for specialist FE establishments is the wellbeing of their students and staff. I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for the hard work and dedication shown to supporting young people with learning difficulties and their families, particularly at this difficult time.

Last week, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Welsh Government made announcements to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus across the country. This included advice that schools and other education settings should close.

However, I emphasised the need for the continuation of care provided to vulnerable children during this time. These children include those with safeguarding needs and supported by social care; children in receipt of care and support or support plans; children on the child protection register and looked after children; young carers; disabled children and those with statements of special educational needs. To that end, the advice issued to residential special schools and special settings was that they should continue to care for children wherever possible as providing some continuum of support for children and young people with learning difficulties is fair and the right thing to do.

Special settings include specialist further education (FE) establishments who are funded to deliver education, training and in many cases, also care, to young people with severe and complex learning difficulties. Therefore, where it is safe to do so, specialist FE establishments should continue to care for those vulnerable young people.

The Welsh Ministers have a duty to secure education and training for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many specialist FE establishments provide residential provision for young people as part of their agreed programme of study. To ensure young people can continue to be cared for in specialist FE establishments, now and in the future, I can confirm that we will continue to fund until the end of this academic year those programmes of study already agreed by Welsh Government which are disrupted by

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

coronavirus. This funding will be provided even where a young person is not attending due to coronavirus and even if a specialist FE establishment temporarily closes or reduces its services, in response to the coronavirus outbreak. A review of this arrangement will take place at the end of the current academic year.

In the meantime, the Welsh Government will continue to consider and make decisions on applications for funding placements at specialist FE establishments due to commence from September 2020.

As a Government we want to ensure we continue to support our vulnerable learners and ensure our educational settings are able to deliver sustainably during this most challenging of times. I hope that this letter gives you some reassurance that we will take all reasonable action to maintain stability for specialist FE establishments and their learners during this time. My officials are available to help with any queries or issues, which you can send to [Covid19Education@gov.wales](mailto:Covid19Education@gov.wales)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kirsty Williams'.

**Kirsty Williams AC/AM**  
Y Gweinidog Addysg  
Minister for Education