**Investors in Families Lockdown Award checklist**

**This award will be given to schools that have supported children and families throughout the ‘lockdown’. Its aim is to celebrate and acknowledge the dedication, support, guidance, care and nurture that you have provided during the epidemic.**

**Communication**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **How have you communicated with families?** | **What platforms did you use?** | **Frequency of communication?** |
| Before the pandemic, Itec Traineeship provision have always ensured that they consider the whole family when engaging young people. However, this element has demonstrably proved fundamental to maintaining relationships with not only young people, but learners of all ages, on all programmes over lockdown.From providing basic provisions, ICT equipment and wellbeing support, to involving parents / carers / family in the learning process, and adaptation of learning methods and approaches to support individual learning requirements, ongoing communication to include parents and the needs of the family in programmes has been crucial for reaching and engaging learners throughout the pandemic. | Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and UK lockdown, all training providers closed for face-to-face learning on Friday 20 March. In the post-16 sector, providers moved to remote learning delivery, as far as possible, in the majority of cases primarily through digital methods; delivering flexible online learning and using “keeping in touch” strategies to keep learners engaged and families in contact. **Platforms included:*** Smart assessor electronic portfolio and communication system
* Google Classroom
* Telephone
* Whats app and text messages
* Outlook (email)
* Twitter
* Facebook
* Zoom
* Microsoft Teams
* Face to Face as required (socially distanced)
 | Before the announcement of the centre closures, each centre would have had its own timetable for communication with parents / families, depending on then learners’ individual circumstances.That regularity was maintained and increased to all learners / families to help foster an ongoing sense of community, ensuring the opportunity for parents to get in touch and to make it clear that Itec is still committed to their learners' education and wellbeing.Itec has taken a flexible approach to some communication, aiming to provide information as and when it is needed. The information we communicated ranged from factual messages on our delivery platforms and providing 'how to' guides, to offering support and guidance around mental health and safeguarding, to text messages and daily phone calls to the most vulnerable learners.Daily and weekly phone calls, or online zoom calls meant we were able to check in with every learner / family and make sure they were coping both mentally and with the extra stress of remote learning. By keeping this regular communication, it meant that when some learners needed more work or more differentiation, we were able to sort this quickly and get it delivered or arrange collection. |

**Engagement**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **How have you engaged with families?** | **Was this successful? What were the barriers?** | **What would you do differently?** |
| Itec are aware that every family has its own unique set of challenges. For some learners, challenges in focus, concentration, energy levels, work and family commitments, lack of digital resources or skillset and fear made online learning a cause of anxiety. Flexibility, contact and support from Itec practitioners – including engaging with parents / carers as appropriate -was hugely appreciated, particularly for those vulnerable learners including those on the spectrum who struggle with dealing with change, learners with disabilities and those where county lines operations were in place. Programme changes were adapted to move learning online, with wellbeing check ins implemented and delivery scheduled around learner’s individual circumstances, such as flexibility on hours / taking account of childcare / caring responsibilities. Itec engaged closely with families to keep in touch or provide young people with the technology they needed to join online activities keeping young people engaged with support services throughout lockdown. To build those relationships, organisations offered parents more information about services, held training sessions on their rights and how to tell if their child is at risk and supported them to know how to get in touch with their service. Itec engaged with families to provide basic provisions and wellbeing support, offering information on safeguarding, and supporting families during times of financial instability. Not having enough food and a lack of mental health support could cause a [“toxic environment”](https://www.dartington.org.uk/ourblog/familystress) for young people, which would have made it difficult for young people to engage with activities. To circumvent this, Itec adapted to help parents *first* by offering information and advice on local foodbanks, and delivering chromebooks, paper and work packages. Itec maintained the safe social distance, but the impact was that it let young people see someone outside of their family and gave them an additional access and support point. Itec developed shared activities that the whole family could take part in. cooking classes over online Zoom calls and other family fitness activities gave Itec the chance to perform unofficial safeguarding checks, as well as providing an opportunity to build improved family relationships and stronger engagement with the whole family. During lockdown learners were encouraged to think about their local communities for example what has happened locally as a response to COVID-19 – do neighbours talk more or less, do communities come out to clap for our carers, are people helping vulnerable or self-isolating people, have neighbours put up rainbows or teddy bears in their windows, and how can young people engage with their communities to make a difference when they are stuck at home. | Engagement strategies were hugely successful.This one is very close to our hearts, having the ability to say YES to all learner referrals, previously a number of learners had restrictions in terms of where they were able to go, such as not being able to go within the centre of Cardiff, this changed the moment we were able to offer a full digital learning approach, working closely with Probation and Careers Wales has allowed us to engage, start and offer a full learner experience.During the lockdown period, around 80% of learners were involved in e-learning. Many of the learners used android mobiles to engage in learning; particularly where access to Chromebooks or home computer systems was limited or not available. Learners have been facing various problems related to depression, anxiety, poor internet connectivity, and unfavourable study environment at home. Learners from remote areas and marginalised groups particularly faced enormous challenges during the pandemic. Targeted interventions to create a positive space for learning among learners was a priority, and ancillary evidence showed attendance rates, particularly amongst the employability routes, increased during lockdown, with many learners preferring the new flexible blended learner approach, and the work life balance it provided.The impact on learners during lockdown was reflected in wellbeing survey (August 2020), where learners commented on the impact lockdown will have on their qualification and mental health, with the need to talk being necessary more than ever before. Some learners struggled with missing friends / social interaction, losing the structure of work or centre based learning, no longer being able to access the support they relied upon previously. Many learners relied on and welcomed regular communication from Itec to feel connected, though a variety of collaborative digital platforms. Sessions allowed learners to have peer interaction, online learning schedule; digital activities and online lessons were a welcome distraction from the pandemic. **Learner quotes – Wellbeing questionnaire August 2020:** * *Assignments are given to me regularly and on time on a weekly basis with clear and appropriate deadlines*
* *My tutor communicates quickly not making me what for hours for a reply*
* *It’s interesting work that’s being set for us.*
* *I’m working and building my confidence*
* *I’m learning something new every day*
* *I’m loving that I have a routine back in my life.*
* *I’m loving that I am doing something now rather than being home doing nothing*

Technology was certainly a challenge, even though as an organisation we were able to loan out quite a number of chromebooks, learners faced a number of challenges from having no internet at home, siblings having to share laptops and connection within some of the rural areas our learners live. Work Based Learning was certainly at a disadvantage to HE/FE who were able to access additional funding for technology and internet packages for learners.External support services hit crisis point during the pandemic and we found it hard to access services such as Housing/ Drugs and Mental Health organisations, many closed due to lack of funding and not being able to offer all the normal services on offer. | I line with the pandemic and UK lockdown, Itec needed to close all centres and move to 100% online delivery from the 20th March.This required a rapid redevelopment of Itecs delivery model and infrastructure, enabling learners to be supported under a learning / working from home model.Learners were provided with guidance and support on how to access systems, in addition to the delivery process going forward.However, due to the speed of system change, and priority given to learner understanding of the systems, the family were not updated / trained in as timely a manner. This resulted in family support initially being limited as parents were unable to help navigate the systems, or deal with any questions.  |

**Home Learning**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **How did you support Home learning?** | **What platforms did you use?** | **Frequency of Home Learning** |
| Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and UK lockdown, all training providers closed for face-to-face learning on 20 March. This resulted in the rapid redevelopment of Itec's delivery model and its infrastructure, enabling staff and learners to be supported under a working / learning from home model. Equipment normally securely stored in our delivery centres, such as Google Chromebooks and laptops were requisitioned and allocated to individual learners for their use to minimise the risk of digital exclusion. Remote working for Itec staff via VPN was upgraded affording staff access to internal services while working from home, and new previously unutilised digital platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom were utilised by Itec to enable effective communication and delivery. A large number of additional mobile phones were sourced and issued ensuring staff accessibility to support learners remotely. In addition, Itec implemented further online learning materials and resources to effectively support staff and learners while centre access and face to face visits remained unavailable.​Further sessions were developed to respond to the needs of the learners and to support remote learning during this time including; upskilling workplace Welsh skills on-line, ESDGC topics (such as time capsules, Black lives matter, healthy eating, cooking skills, fitness classes, VE day, virtual tours of cultural sites) and safeguarding topics (such as cohesive control, county lines, online safety, COVID-19 misinformation), all of which engage learners and supported transferable skills development. A**pprenticeships:** Itec has been developing and delivering flexible, engaging online learning in the majority of cases, and using “keeping in touch” strategies to keep learners engaged, and ensure that the breadth of the curriculum is maintained throughout lockdown, adapting the delivery of the curriculum to meet the individual’s needs, such as working around childcare and caring responsibilities. In apprenticeships, many practitioners use digital tools well to ensure most learners remain engaged, focused and progress, utilising a variety of digital systems and resources such as google classroom, (interactive demonstrations and whiteboards), zoom groups and the new digital review process that actively encourages more frequent ‘remote visits’, and learner led delivery. Practitioners use the e-portfolio Smart Assessor system well to support apprenticeship learners to progress. Internal quality assurance and EQA feedback evidences e-portfolios have improved learner resources and provided further opportunities for more independent learning and empowering learners. The development of the VLE system, with interactive workshops for many of the vocational routes at level 1, and the new H&SC core modules at levels 2, 3 and 5, allows learners to benefit from self-paced individualised learning providing the opportunity for learners to gain new skills working around individual circumstances.**Adult learning:** A variety of approaches and platforms are being used, many learners do not have access to devices, connectivity and/or skills to be able to learn remotely. This has been addressed through the provision of digital equipment and through print out of ‘hard copies’, which allow learners to continue to work on qualifications. Itec have reviewed their ESP partner network in line with geographical circumstances, making changes to the provision offer in response to differing needs. For example, learner engagement programme hours vary considerably, with Mid Wales – being very rural – reduced due to geographically wide-spread areas.  Here partners and Itec have looked at reintroducing effective face to face delivery for the harder to help / vulnerable groups and those without digital skills. **Traineeships:** many practitioners effectively use a wide range of interesting activities, technology resources and collaborative tools to engage learners. Most practitioners ensure that they are skilled in digital literacy and techniques to enable them to develop learners’ critical thinking skills in the digital arena, helping young people become responsible digital citizens. During lockdown, digital tools were used well to complete daily activities as per curriculum topics. Activities included video fitness sessions with personal trainer, cooking demonstrations, cooking on a budget, healthy meals, and a variety of mindfulness games, worksheets and activities developed and delivered to learners. Remote and digital learning is embraced as part of the range of teaching and learning approaches support learner’s individual needs and circumstances.Traineeship delivery team responded at pace to develop a series of interesting and engaging workshops online to support learners core employability and soft skills development during the lockdown period and beyond. **Digitally Excluded and Differentiation:** A variety of approaches and platforms are being used, but many learners do not have access to digital devices, connectivity and/or the skills to be able to learn remotely.Where participants do not have access to IT equipment/or restrictions in place (offenders), Itec have worked closely with the learner and their family to identify the best way to support them and aid progression, including loaning of equipment, and the development of paper-based activities which are sent to participants, and followed up by telephone calls. Where learners fed back on a lack of technology, parents and guardians were contacted to discuss access. Where learners had caring responsibilities, plans were put in place for work to be completed outside of normal delivery hours, including access to pre-recorded activities and links. Learners with dyslexia were given directions on how to adapt their screens to support their learning, in addition to manual workarounds group on-line sessions were held so learners could still have peer interaction. One learner with severe dyslexia received paper print outs of tasks on blue paper, which was delivered to the learner throughout lockdown, receiving one to one support tutorial for each unit with their tutor who worked closely with the learner’s mother to enable additional support to be provided at home.ESW estimated grade calculation has been a significant and challenging piece of work to ensure learners are not disadvantaged by lockdown. Practitioners continue to develop and deliver online/remote learning in Welsh and English and to manage delivery of practical assessments for learners who cannot be awarded calculated results. Learners are continuing with their qualifications, and we are adapting assessment methods such as Hairdressing the blow-dry observation is being done via zoom with the learner’s mother as the customer.  | Itec has responded well to the changes in qualification delivery requirements, with a shift to remote learning delivery, primarily through digital methods; and the development of the Smartassessor Virtual Learning Environment system (SVLE), with interactive workshops for the new H&SC core modules at levels 2, 3 and 5. Itec made a considerable investment in technologies across the provision to allow for learning to be as digitally focussed as possible e.g. Chromebooks across traineeships and Windows tablets (Surface Pro Notepads) across apprenticeship delivery to improve efficiency of delivery and learner engagement. Most of the network’s apprenticeship programmes now use the Smart Assessor electronic portfolio systemFinancial investment was made into new systems, such as My Concern - an online safeguarding reporting communication tool - for use across the network, enabling designated safeguarding officers to report disclosures via the system, ensuring a more secure, recordable, and auditable record of learner welfare disclosures and concerns. Itec have extensively developed the digital provision, moving to more digital learning resulting in practitioners using a variety of technologic platforms to meet the needs of learners. Examples include WhatsApp, and the provision of chrome books / technology to support access to technology, roll out of Microsoft 365, development of a new website, installation of new servers and the roll out of an ac.uk domain, and the ability to design, implement and deliver new and innovative materials to the learners using several digital systems such as Google Docs/ Hangout and Zoom and being able gain, their feedback live.  | Traineeships and ESP - During lockdown, digital tools were used well to complete daily activities as per curriculum topics and in line with Welsh Government Traineeship and ESP Contractual hours.Apprenticeship weekly one to one session, with set activities inline with SASW guidelines and individual need. |

**Health and Wellbeing**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **How did you promote Emotional Health and Wellbeing?** | **How was this monitored?** | **Is further work required in this area, what will you be doing?** |
| The coronavirus pandemic dramatically changed learners’ day-to-day lives and the landscape of WBL in previously un-thought ways in mere months. With most teaching moved online, assessments cancelled or delayed, many learners working or learning from home and the continued challenges as we transition out of lockdown. As a result of such fundamental changes, supporting mental health and wellbeing for learners has risen to the top of the agenda. Itec mobilised quickly to respond to the challenges of Covid-19, working innovatively and at pace to ensure the continued support of learners’ progress and wellbeing. The safety and wellbeing of learners and staff was the first consideration in all decisions. Priority was given to the provision of additional support for vulnerable learners, for example those experiencing mental health issues; at risk of disengagement, additional learning needs; and caring responsibilities, including regular ‘keeping in touch’ strategies, safeguarding referrals and continued access to online counselling and other services. Itec updated appropriate procedures to continue to ensure effective safeguarding practices during this time, including COVID-19 safeguarding procedure, collaborative platform guidance and learner resources in relation to on-line safety and the increased risks of frauds, scams and misinformation during a pandemic. Good resources were developed in relation to safeguarding for practitioners and learners and made available on digital platforms. Various informative safeguarding updates were provided to partners to ensure all learners were well supported during lockdown. Itec has developed a robust blended learning approach to support learners, wherever practicable, to continue their learning and progress to their next stage of learning and/or employment, including working with professional bodies and awarding organisations to help ensure learners meet relevant standards for their chosen profession or industry. Individualised resources were developed and support to provide engaging, innovative models of online/remote delivery.Smart Assessor has a wellbeing section that is accessible for learners and includes a bank of resources with help, support and signposting information around a variety of health, wellbeing and safeguarding topics.In response to COVID-19, the curriculum has been further developed with additional workshops, wellbeing resources, and online courses (e.g. 'infection prevention', 'covid19 awareness'), with a focus on specific welfare topics such as - online safety, mental health awareness, looking after self and others, and mindfulness techniques to help ease learner anxiety.Itec introduced a number of ‘feel good activities’ to support learner mental wellbeing. For example, working with Newport YOS team Itec learners prepared Hygiene packs for the NHS and care homes in Newport and created a Clap for carers campaign by Learners for social media. Certificates of appreciation have been given out to learners due to their fantastic engagement, and Itec worked closely with the Marketing department on a number of case studies/ blogs and social media posts to promote the work of the learners.  | Learner wellbeing post lockdown 1 questionnaires shows: * 100% of learners across all programmes believe that Itec practitioners were flexible over the lockdown period, worked innovatively and at pace to ensure that they supported their learners’ progress and wellbeing, including regular ‘keeping in touch’ strategies, safeguarding referrals, access to online counselling and other services.
* Nearly all learners agree that Itec have developed a robust blended learning approach to support learners, wherever practicable, including the development of individualised resources and support to provide engaging, innovative models of online/remote delivery, to continue their learning and help progress them to their next stage of learning and/or employment.
* 96% of ESP learners, 97% of traineeship, and 100% of apprenticeship learners agree that Itec is doing a good job in maintaining services, training and support, with 100% of learners on all programmes believing that Itec is an organisation that cares for its learners.

**Learner quotes - Wellbeing questionnaire August 2020:*** *I am loving that Itec has the rules for us to follow due to the covid19*
* *I can do the work whatever time before 4 because then it’s sometimes flexible for me*
* *I feel the support that I have been given with the working arrangements during these difficult times, have been very helpful.*
* *I receive the best support from our counsellor. I get weekly phone calls to check on my progress.*
* *I can send work in by Thursday at the end of the week because it gives me time to take care of my nan and gives me time to catch-up on work that needs to be completed.*
* *I can do things in my own time and I am thankful that my tutor understands when I have to look after my family.*

**Wellbeing Questionnaires – March – May 2021 Lockdown 2****Apprenticeships** * 76% would definitely describe their provider as an organisation that cares for its learners, 20% probably would.
* 96% of learners understands the steps taken by its provider to be considerate and supportive to their needs
* 92% of learners know where to go to or talk to for support regarding H&S, Safeguarding etc
* 100% of learners felt their assessor was / is flexible around their home, work and personal life
* 96% of learners agreed their assessor kept regular contact
* 100% of learners feel that their providers are good at maintaining services
* 92% of learners felt they are coping well with the lockdowns and Covid situations etc
* 88% of learners felt that their relationship with their assessors has improved during lockdown
* 100% of learners felt the new digital review process was effective
* 100% of learners felt that they had made a lot of progress during lockdown

**ESP*** All provision 69% would definitely describe their provider as an organisation that cares for its learners, 28% probably would.
* 100% of learners understands the steps taken by its provider to be considerate and supportive to their needs
* 100% of learners agree that they understand the changes expected in the way they complete their work
* 94% of learners know where to go to or talk to for support regarding H&S, Safeguarding etc
* 97% of learners are happy with the flexible way of working
* 97.5% of learners agreed their tutor kept regular contact
* 100% of learners feel that their providers are good at maintaining services
* 78% of learners felt they are coping well with the lockdowns and Covid situations etc

**Traineeships*** 100% of learners felt they had everything they needed to complete their learning and work at home
* 100% of learners understands the steps taken by its provider to be considerate and supportive to their needs
* 95% of learners know where to go to or talk to for support regarding H&S, Safeguarding etc
* 95% of learners are happy with the flexible way of working
* 100% of learners agreed their tutor kept regular contact
* 100% of learners feel that their providers are good at maintaining services
* 55% of learners felt they are coping well with the lockdowns and Covid situations etc
* 85% of learners felt that they had made a lot of progress during lockdown

Virtual observations of the learners teaching, learning and assessment show most learners were fully engaged within the sessions and good relationships maintained / developed with the practitioners on all programs. | Itec has maintained a specific focus on the support of the mental health and wellbeing of learners and staff throughout lockdown and beyond, and is working closely with the provider network to analyse the impact of Covid-19 on learner retention and drop-out. Arrangements put in place to monitor and support apprentices made redundant or furloughed as a result of Covid-19 and identifying ways to support learners at greater risk of disengaging from learning, including planning routes for re-engagement.While returning to work and or centre-based learning is likely to be positive for many young people’s mental health, the readjustment following a long break and the changes Itec and workplaces are having to make to their environment and timetables will be very challenging for many. Itec will continue to make wellbeing a top priority, with continued flexibility and individualised support plans where appropriate to support learner individual needs.Social distancing and returning to face to face delivery requirements, requiring Itec and its partners, to build capacity and resilience so that we can respond to challenges quickly and efficiently, means that the network needs to work together to envisage and plan for a “new normal” which may last for some time, and may look very different form traditional learning delivery. The physical capacity of learning environments to adhere to social distancing rules is a key factor and varies widely across providers and centres. Some forms of face to face delivery has resumed, albeit with the potential for further cycles of restriction. Itec are working with the Welsh Government and its partners to support a phased return to face-to-face learning, focusing on priority groups of learners and, above all, on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our learners and staff. We envisage that a “blended” approach to learning will continue for some time for many learners, this may be a very different experience, with practitioners and learners trying new techniques for social interaction, group working, differentiated learning, enrichment, and support. |

**Innovation**

|  |
| --- |
| **How else have you gone above and beyond to support your children and families?** |
| **Specialist support:** During lockdown, food parcels, hygiene products and ICT equipment was delivered to learners in need and practitioners supported learners – in partnerships with social services – that had to move into independent living. Itec and its partners was able to continue to provide an excellent range of specialist support for learner’s which included access to an online counselling service, Lead Workers and additional learning support (ALS) workers. Highly effective links between these support mechanisms ensured that learners in need received highly specialist professional support which enabled learners to achieve, attend and progress. Practitioners and support staff collaborated and communicated well with other professionals and support agencies, such as GPs, social services, youth offending service and CAMHS, to ensure learners received very good ongoing specialist professional support where able. Nearly all learners within the Itec network rate the support on offer regarding personal issues or issues relating to their training as good and/or excellent. **Adaptation / innovation:** Digital system tracking has been further enhanced over the lockdown period with the introduction of a digital review process, and an end-to-end digital sign up / on boarding process. Digital systems during lockdown have extensively supported learner retention, engagement and progression, enabling more frequent remote ‘visits’, increasing transparency and clarity of learner progress via progress bars and targets, actively ensuring the process is learner led. This has been further enhanced with the development of a standardised electronic learner induction (English and Welsh versions available) to be used across the provision. The induction includes a variety of relevant learning and support resource sheets and links in addition to a series of stretching questions and answers which checks learner understanding before the induction can be signed off.  When questioned, 90% of learners felt they were able to be more independent in their learning now that digital solutions are in place for the course. |