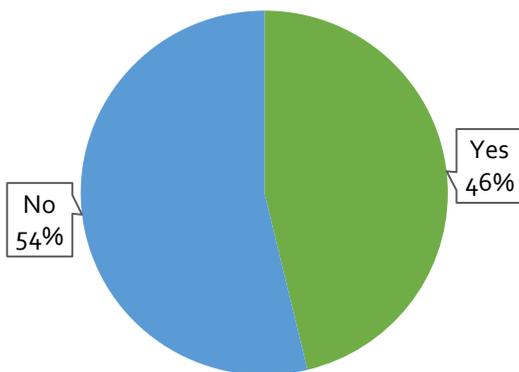


Survey Insights COVID-19 Safety Snapshot - December 2020

The major topic for the Autumn term was safety at work. We surveyed our members over the weekend of 12 December 2020, asking them whether they felt safe at work and what measures could be put in place to help them feel safer.

We had a good response, with over 100 respondents within the first hour of the survey going live, and 593 completed survey responses at its close.

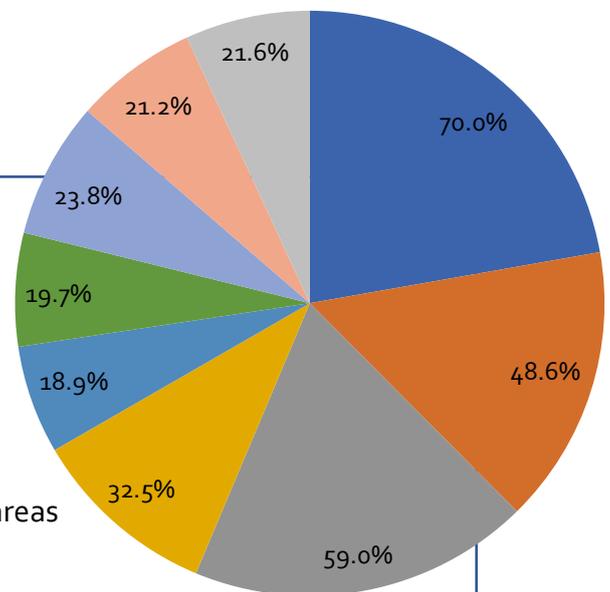


The results were more equally divided than in previous surveys, with only slightly more than half of the respondents expressing worry about their continued safety at work.

Many respondents commended their employers and workplaces for the measures and practises put in place to support their health and safety, not least of which was the risk assessment.

It is important, though, to recognise that having a risk assessment, and consistently implementing the measures are two different things. And a number of members have contacted us directly to express their concerns that measures, such as opening windows, and maintaining a safe distance at all times, are not being consistently observed, which is leading to increased anxiety and stress.

- Regular testing of staff
- Regular testing of children/students
- Priority vaccination for education staff
- Face coverings to be worn by staff in all areas
- Face coverings to be worn by children/students in all areas
- Greater use of other forms of PPE for staff
- For schools/colleges to adopt some form of rota system
- Additional/temporary (class)rooms to reduce class/group sizes
- Other (please specify):

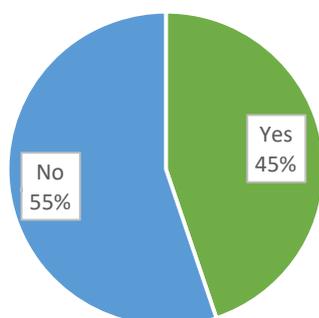
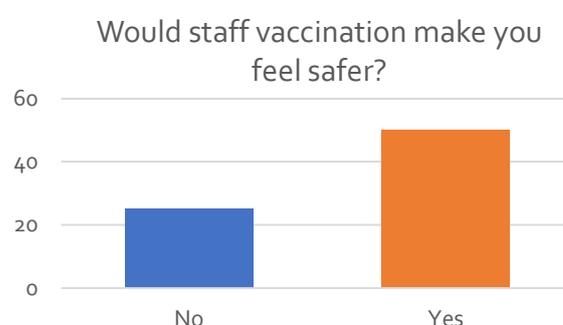


According to our survey, the two things that government and employers can do to support the education and early years workforce to feel safe at work is to introduce planned and supported mass testing of staff and pupils, and to prioritise staff for the vaccine as soon as possible.

Regular testing of staff (70%) was the most frequently cited method of improving feelings of safety in the education workplace, with testing of pupils (49%) significantly lower. This may be because of difficulties in testing children in certain settings such as early years and special education.

Indeed, in special education settings responses were much closer, with 57% recommending testing for both staff and pupils. They did not feel that priority vaccination would make them feel any safer and were also strongly dismissive of face coverings due to the negative impact this would have on communication with children – especially with pupils suffering hearing loss, or who struggle to speak.

Across all types of setting, 59% of respondents felt that vaccination for staff would make them feel safer. In early years particularly, two out of every three of respondents believed that all staff being vaccinated would help to make them feel safer. This is almost identical to the number who would like to see staff regularly tested. Conversely, only one in three felt that testing children in early years settings would make them feel any safer.



In schools, there was no clear feeling about whether staff currently felt safe, but along with staff in early years, respondents were equally clear that the vaccination (60%) would have a significant impact on feelings of safety, but they felt regular testing of staff (71%) would do more. Testing of pupils (51%) and wearing of face coverings in classrooms for staff (35%) and pupils (21%) were all notably less popular methods of possibly improving safety.

So too in sixth-form colleges and universities, respondents were evenly split about feeling safe at work, but university staff felt more safe than those working in colleges – possibly due to the earlier move to remote teaching in the HE sector. As with school staff, those in FE/HE were looking to regular testing as the best way of making them feel safe (60% in favour) and did not feel that vaccination would have the same impact (13% in favour).

We can see from the responses that there is support for priority vaccination for education and early years staff as well as significant support for mass testing of staff and, though less so, support for mass testing of pupils.

We will use this information when speaking on members’ behalf with government and other statutory agencies to push for these things, together with the appropriate support and training necessary to ensure they succeed and are not a further burden on our hard-working education staff and workplaces.