

Cumbria County Council Public Health Update

04 March 2021

1. COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

Colin Cox, Director of Public Health at Cumbria County Council is writing to schools this week in relation to the COVID-19 vaccination programme, so please keep an eye out for his letter.

2. Extension to isolation period required for individuals who develop symptoms AFTER a positive test result

Public Health England has advised us that any individual who is asymptomatic (i.e. has NO symptoms of illness) when they test positive for COVID-19 will need to extend their isolation period if they go on to develop symptoms during their 10-day isolation period.

So, for example, if a staff member who is asymptomatic tests positive for COVID-19 via LFD on the 3rd March, their full ten-day isolation period is counted from tomorrow (4th March), so their last day of isolation would be 13th March. HOWEVER, if they go on to develop symptoms on e.g. 5th March, their isolation period would need to be extended and the 10-day isolation period re-started (counted from the day following the onset of symptoms). So, their end of isolation date would now be 15th March.

The isolation period for household members would also need to be extended. Please be aware that when NHS Track and Trace contact positive cases, they will advise extending the isolation period for those developing symptoms after testing positive.

3. Infectious period prior to onset of symptoms/test now 2 days (rather than 48 hours)

Public Health England have updated their guidance and the infectious period will now always be calculated as the 2 days prior to onset of symptoms (or positive test if person is asymptomatic), rather than 48 hours.

New guidance reads:

A person is thought to be infectious from two days before symptoms appear, and up to ten days after they start displaying symptoms. The onset of infectious period is counted from the morning of the 2 days before the date of onset of symptoms and not 48 hours from the time of onset of symptoms. For example, a person who developed symptoms at 2pm on the 15th March would be asked to identify contacts from the morning of 13th March onwards.

We are currently updating our flow charts and resource packs to reflect this.

4. Wider symptoms of COVID-19

The Cumbria Education COVID-19 Outbreak Control Team has agreed the following approach to considering potential wider symptoms of COVID-19 in staff and children across educational settings:

If a child or member of staff shows symptoms of COVID-19 (a new continuous cough, a temperature or a change to/loss of sense of taste and smell) they should [get a PCR test](#) as soon as possible (please do not use lateral flow tests in an individual who has symptoms). The entire household should stay at home until the test result is known.

In addition, if any of staff or children in a setting test positive for COVID-19, please be aware that public health may advise others in the same setting get tested and isolate if they experience other symptoms including: headache, diarrhoea, severe fatigue and sore throat. The setting should let all parents and carers know immediately if this advice is given.

The Education OCT is suggesting this approach so we can flag potential other symptoms, without saying that every child that experiences these symptoms will need to get tested. Back in September when the schools re-opened fully, we saw a heavy cold virus circulate (it wasn't COVID-19 – tests came back negative) and the same may happen again this time. Therefore, this approach strikes a balance between giving us the option to advise wider testing where appropriate, whilst doing all we can to avoid putting children and staff through unnecessary testing and isolation if they are unlikely to have COVID-19.

5. Lateral Flow Testing

Members of households, childcare or support bubbles of school staff and pupils can now access lateral flow devices to carry out rapid testing at home. See [here](#).

From 1 March 2021, if someone is a member of a household, childcare bubble or support bubble of staff or a pupil, they can get a twice-weekly test through their employer (if they offer testing to employees), at a local test site, by collecting a home test kit from a test site or by ordering a home test kit online.

The following test sites in Cumbria can be attended to either have a supervised rapid test onsite or to collect kits to take home:

- Allerdale House Overflow Car Park (Workington)
- Barrow Town Hall Courtyard (Barrow)
- Carlisle Airport (Carlisle)
- Castle Meadows Car Park (Whitehaven)
- Cecil Street Car Park (Carlisle)
- County Hall Car Park (Kendal)
- Sandgate Car Park (Penrith)

Please be aware that other people attending these sites may be symptomatic and there to have a COVID-19 PCR test, so please ensure you strictly maintain 2 metres distancing and wear a face covering at all times.

Some important points to note:

- If you are collecting kits from a local test site, you need to be aged 18+
- You should only request home delivery if there is a genuine reason why you cannot access a local testing site or kits via your employee
- The guidance states 'primary school pupils will not be asked to test at this time', however there is no specified lower age limit specified for the lateral flow testing available to households. We are seeking further clarification on this and will confirm as soon as possible.

6. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Children

The advice for pupils who have been confirmed as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) is to shield and stay at home as much as possible until further notice. See [here](#) page 32. They are advised not to attend school while shielding advice applies nationally. All 16 to 18-year olds with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality will be offered a vaccine in priority group 6 of the vaccination programme. At present, these children should continue to shield, and self-isolate if they have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if they have been vaccinated. Current CEV advice will remain in place until at least the 31 March 2021.

You **will** be able to request from parents a copy of the shielding letter sent to CEV children, to confirm that they are advised not to attend school or other educational settings whilst shielding guidance is in place.

The CEV guidance is advice and whilst we strongly encourage families with CEV children to follow the advice given, for a number of reasons, parents may still be keen for their CEV child to return to school on the 8 March. If you do have a parent who wants their CEV child to return to school, we recommend the following approach:

- Ensure the family are aware that the national advice is still that children identified as being clinically extremely vulnerable should stay at home wherever possible.
- If they are aware and still want the child to return, request written confirmation (ideally from the child's consultant or GP) that they believe they are safe to return to the setting. The letter ideally needs to confirm that risk has been assessed in consideration of the COVID-safe practices that can and cannot be achieved within the setting (e.g. the letter ideally needs to confirm that it is safe for the child to return even if 2m distancing cannot be maintained if this is the case).
- We also recommend asking the parent for written confirmation that they are happy for their child to return to school in the context of the COVID-safe measures that can be achieved.

- We also recommend a final written correspondence from the school to both the clinician and the parent confirming the information you have received from them and confirm the return date to school.

Any queries about this update, please contact the Cumbria County Council Public Health Team by emailing EducationIPC@cumbria.gov.uk

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