**Cumbria County Council Public Health Update**

**31 March 2021**

1. **Lateral Flow Device Testing**

Guidance has been updated - a confirmatory PCR test is now required for ALL positive LFD tests.

In summary, the following approach now stands:

All positive results from rapid tests, whether conducted at home or at a school or college need to be confirmed with a PCR test within two days of the positive lateral flow test. Following a positive lateral flow test, a confirmatory PCR test should be booked immediately either online or by calling 119. Whilst awaiting the PCR result, pupils, students and staff and close contacts should continue to self-isolate. If the PCR test is negative, provided it was taken within two days of the positive LFT, it overrides the lateral flow test and pupils, students and staff can return to school or college, and close contacts and other household members can stop self-isolating.

1. **Non-evidence-based information being sent to schools**

The public health team has been made aware of communications being sent to schools that challenge a number of COVID-19 prevention and management practices, including the use of face coverings, social distancing and vaccinations. Please be cautious and always check information is from a reliable source.

Our public health advice remains unchanged:

* Follow the national guidance wherever possible and do not hesitate to contact the Public Health team if you have any queries about the recommendations and advice given.
* National guidance is regularly updated to reflect the growing COVID-19 evidence-base and epidemiology. We will always endeavour to keep you informed of changes to national policy and guidance.
* Specifically, in relation to:
	+ Face coverings: Follow the [national guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/967285/Face_coverings_in_education-March-2021.pdf) relevant to your setting. Current measures are due to be reviewed at Easter.
	+ Vaccinations: Ensure staff and parents have clear information to help them make an informed decision about participating in the vaccination programme. The [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIs4mxr63Y7wIVg8x3Ch0RwwtdEAAYASAAEgIFfPD_BwE) is a useful resource to signpost to.
1. **Requesting proof of test results**

GP colleagues are reporting parents are asking them for proof of negative COVID-19 test results because their children cannot return to school without them.

If a child visits a GP or local hospital due to viral illness symptoms, the doctor will assess if a COVID-19 test is needed and if so, the result will generally be phoned through to the parent, so no written proof is given (unlike if a test is booked via the national system, in which case a text message and/or email is sent to the parent with the result).

Please remember parents are not under obligation to provide proof of negative results before their children can return to school (however we do recommend checking that a child with COVID-19 symptoms has had a negative PCR test, as opposed to a negative LFD test, before coming back to school).

1. **Confidentially sharing information**

Please take care when sharing information about suspected or positive cases with other families in your school community. Please avoid using the individual’s name and other personal details. Identifying the bubble, class or year group is acceptable as this helps to flag any risk for potential close contacts.

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

Claire King, Consultant in Public Health, Cumbria County Council