**Public Health Update for Educational Settings in Cumbria**

**8th October 2021**

Rates of COVID-19 remain above the national and regional averages in all Cumbrian districts except Eden.

In the week ending 1st October 2021, the 12-18 age group accounted for the greatest number of new cases in Cumbria followed by the 5-11 age group (+774 and +427 new cases respectively). The 12-18 and 5-11 age groups also accounted for by far the greatest rates of new cases in Cumbria (2,113 and 1,146 new cases per 100k population respectively). However, new cases decreased slightly from the previous week in the 12-18 and 5-11 age groups (-2% and -11% respectively).

While this slight reduction in cases is encouraging, case rates remain high and managing COVID-19 continues to be a challenge for educational settings in Cumbria. As such, Cumbria’s Director of Public Health, Colin Cox and education leaders have agreed to continue with local additional COVID-19 outbreak management measures. These have been updated and are outlined below.

The revised measures will become operational on Monday 11th October and will be reviewed every 2 weeks.

**Guidance for household contacts of positive cases**

1. **Children aged 4 and under**

Parents of children aged 4 and under who are household contacts of a positive case should be asked to keep them at home for 5 days, starting from the onset of symptoms in the household contact who has tested positive (or test date if the positive case had no symptoms). They should only have a PCR test if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.

1. **Children and young people between the ages of 5 and 18+6 months**

Children and young people between the ages of 5 and 18+6 months (unless exempt – see below), who are household contacts of a positive case, should be advised to stay at home. Five days following the onset of symptoms in the household contact who has tested positive (or test date if the positive case had no symptoms), the close contact child should get a PCR test. If this is negative, they can return to the setting, but should isolate again immediately and get another test if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 at a later date.

Children and young people in this situation can be released from this self-isolation guidance and can continue to attend the setting while they are waiting for their PCR result **if** they conduct daily Lateral Flow tests, and these remain negative. If they develop symptoms of COVID-19, or receive a positive Lateral Flow test result, they should immediately isolate and get a PCR test. This approach is likely to be the norm for secondary school pupils, but it is also an option for primary school pupils if the parents/carers and school are in agreement.

PCR tests can be arranged through the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) by ticking either the box to say that they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus or the box that says that they have been told to get a test by their local council, health protection team or healthcare professional.

The groups exempt from this advice and able to continue to attend the setting when identified as a household contact of a positive case are:

* Any child or young person who has had at least one dose of the vaccine more than 14 days ago
* Any child or young person who has tested positive for COVID-19 themselves via a PCR test within the past 90 days.
* Where there are significant concerns about the impact of exclusion on the child or young person, and a risk assessment indicates that the risks of exclusion to the individual child outweigh the wider benefits.

**THIS ADVICE IS NOT ENFORCEABLE.** Anyparents or carers who still want their child to continue to attend school have the right to send their child into the setting. In these situations, we strongly advise the child or young person identified as a household close contact to get a PCR test before attending the setting.

Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 should continue to get a PCR test and stay at home. Individuals informed by Test & Trace to isolate should stay at home for the time advised.

The local Cumbria framework previously developed to support early years settings, schools and colleges to manage outbreaks and in-setting transmission has been updated to reflect the guidance set out in this letter.

The updated framework is being circulated to schools for information, but please do continue to email the Education IPC team at Cumbria County Council for advice on managing cases and outbreaks: EducationIPC@cumbria.gov.uk.

**Local guidance for managing non-standard symptoms of COVID-19 in educational settings (children and pupils aged 5 years and over)**

National guidance advises self-isolation and COVID-19 PCR testing for people who have a recent onset of; (i) a new continuous cough, (ii) a high temperature or (iii) a loss of, or change in their normal sense of taste or smell. However, we know that the symptoms of COVID-19 can differ from these three main symptoms. For example, many people experience extreme tiredness (fatigue), sore throat, runny nose, headache, or diarrhoea. These symptoms are extremely common in people who do not have COVID-19, making it difficult to differentiate COVID-19 infection from other common viral infections that may be circulating.

Over winter, we are expecting the numbers of children and young people affected by common viral illnesses to increase. This guidance supports educational settings in situations where COVID-19 and other viral illnesses are thought to be co-circulating in the setting.

Settings that have **reached the threshold for extra action** outlined in [Contingency framework: education and childcare settings (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1011704/20210817_Contingency_Framework_FINAL.pdf)[[1]](#footnote-1), should consider taking the following approach if a child or young person in the setting develops any of the symptoms in Box 1.

**Box 1:** Symptoms of COVID-19 that differ from the main three symptoms

• nausea, diarrhoea, or loss of appetite

• headache

• extreme or unusual tiredness (fatigue)

• aching muscles

• sore throat and other ‘heavy cold-like’ symptoms

1. If the child or young person has one or more of the 3 main symptoms of COVID-19 (a high temperature, continuous cough, changes / loss of sense of taste or smell), they should arrange to have a PCR test and stay at home until the result is known.
2. If the child/pupil/student is aged 5 years and over and does NOT have one of the three main symptoms of COVID-19 but DOES have one or more of the symptoms listed in Box 1 AND within the last 10 days, they are either:
* A household contact of a positive case of COVID-19 OR
* A member of a class or group where there have been multiple cases of COVID-19

consider asking the child/pupil/student to get a PCR test before returning to the setting (unless they have had a positive COVID-19 PCR test in the past 90 days) (flowchart overleaf). Testing can be arranged through the [Government website](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) by ticking either the box to say that they have symptoms or the box that says that they have been told to get a test by their local council, health protection team or healthcare professional.

1. If a PCR test is taken, the child or young person should isolate while waiting for the results.
2. If additional testing is introduced, the measures should be reviewed after 2 weeks, and stepped down if in-setting COVID-19 transmission is thought to have stopped.
3. Please note that the measures can only be advised and not mandated.

**Flowchart for managing non-standard symptoms in educational settings when the risk of COVID-19 infection is considered to be high (see above)**

**START**

Child/young person (5 years or over) has symptoms of:

• nausea, diarrhoea, or loss of appetite

• headache

• extreme or unusual tiredness (fatigue)

• aching muscles

• sore throat and other ‘heavy cold-like’ symptoms

Individual should follow [stay at home guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection)and arrange [**PCR** testing](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test).

Follow guidance for managing confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19

Child/pupil/student also has any of:

* a new continuous cough,
* a high temperature,
* a loss of, or change in their normal sense of taste or smell.

PCR test negative

PCR test positive.

Ask individual to consider a PCR test (once nausea and vomiting have stopped if applicable) and to isolate pending the results.

Individual HAS tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days

Individual has NOT tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days

1. If the individual has diarrhoea or vomiting, advise exclusion from the setting until 48 hours after these symptoms have stopped and the individual feels well enough to return.
2. Identify whether they have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 90 days

NO

Individual should follow the [stay at home guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection).

They should complete their 10-day isolation period from:

* The onset of the non-standard symptoms if the positive PCR test was taken within 2 days of their onset.
* The date of the test if the PCR was taken more than 2 days after the onset of the non-standard symptoms.

Follow guidance for managing confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19

YES

Return to school if all the following criteria are met:

* The individual has not had diarrhoea or vomiting for 48 hours AND
* They have not developed one or more of the 3 main symptoms of COVID-19 AND
* They feel well
1. 5 children, pupils, students, or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period OR 10% of children, pupils, students or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period. For special schools, residential settings, and settings that operate with 20 or fewer children, pupils, students, and staff at any one time: 2 children, pupils, students and staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)