**Advice for Christmas events in educational settings in Cumbria**

The Cumbria Education Infection Prevention Control (EIPC) team has produced this document to support educational settings in decision making about events. It has been adapted from draft guidance developed in Greater Manchester and provided by the Schools Taskforce group in the North West.

Rates of COVID-19 in Cumbria remain high. Educational settings are therefore asked to consider the potential COVID-19 related risk that an event might represent, and the measures that can reasonably be introduced that could reduce that risk.

For each event, a risk assessment should be completed that details the safety measures to be implemented. This risk assessment should enable the setting to put in place suitable mitigation measures. If an external venue is being used, it is good practice to swap risk assessments, so everyone is aware of who is responsible for which measures. Risk assessments should be kept under review and updated accordingly if the number of active COVID-19 cases within a setting changes.

A list of possible measures is included below. Each setting should identify which combination of measures is appropriate for each event – not all will be relevant or practical in each instance.

With sufficient mitigation events should be able to go ahead unless a setting is experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19 in a relevant class/year group or there are local restrictions in the community following public health advice.

**We recommend you consider the following as part of your planning and risk assessment:**

* **Ventilation:** Hold events in large, well-ventilated spaces. Ventilation is particularly important for any activities that encourage greater aerosol transmission e.g., singing and playing wind instruments.
* **Space:** Encourage social distancing. For example, can you split a performance over two nights and allow more space between seating? Can seating be arranged to avoid unnecessary close contact between groups of children or different households who don’t normally mix? Could one-way systems be used for entering and exiting spaces? Can you eliminate pinch points where crowding may occur? Could you use a ticketing or booking system to manage numbers?
* **Contact tracing:** You may need to contact individuals after the event to warn and inform them of contact with positive cases, so we recommend keeping an attendance list and ‘zoning’ seating, so you have a better idea of who has sat where
* **Face coverings:** The use of face coverings should be encouraged wherever possible if the event is indoors, and spaces are likely to be crowded
* **Symptoms:** Remind individuals not to attend if they have symptoms of COVID-19 (or feel generally unwell/ have other symptoms if advised by the EIPC team)
* **Testing:** In advance of the event consider recommending Lateral Flow testing to attendees where appropriate. Note that this cannot be enforced/checked on arrival, and is unlikely to be applicable to primary-age pupils
* **Household contacts of positive cases**: Ask attendees not to come if someone in their household tests positive for COVID-19 within 10 days of the event
* **Hands:** Ensure hand sanitiser is available. Encourage frequent use of hand sanitiser and handwashing
* **Cleaning before and after the event**: Pay particular attention to high touch point areas, and clean these regularly (light switches, door handles, toilet areas).
* **Transport**: due to the confined nature of transport and proximity of passengers, any transport arranged as part of the event is likely to be high risk. Encourage the use of face coverings and open windows. If a coach has non-opening windows, consider stopping every 30 minutes and opening the doors to let fresh air circulate. Keep a note of who is sat where.
* **Communications**: Communicate with event attendees prior to the event to remind them of the COVID-safe measures you would encourage them to take. We recommend including in any communications prior to the event the following type of message; ‘please be aware that the safety of our students, staff and wider school community is of the upmost importance to us, therefore we may have to change or cancel the event at short notice if we are advised to do so by public health’.

Considerations when weighing the balance of benefit and risk associated with an event should include:

* The educational, wellbeing and community benefit of the event
* The perceived importance of an event within the school and wider community
* Current public health advice in your school and its locality
* The risk of any cases occurring, resulting in the need to self-isolate for pupils, staff, parents, and others
* The risk that self-isolation results in staff absence with consequential business continuity challenges and a further loss of face-to-face teaching time.

In line with the national Contingency Framework, should any classes or year groups within your setting experience a high number of COVID-19 cases (indicating possible in-setting transmission), in the 14 days prior to your planned event, you should contact the Cumbria EIPC team via email (EducationIPC@cumbria.gov.uk), and we will work with you to risk assess whether or not the event can still take place, or if further COVID-safe measures are required for the event to continue safely. Special education needs schools and residential schools can also contact the local health protection team for additional advice on 0344 225 0562 (option 0 then option 2).