**Updates to the national guidance: a briefing for settings and schools**

**National guidance for contacts of people who have COVID-19**

On Tuesday 14th December, the national guidance for contacts of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 changed. The new guidance applies to all contacts in any setting (including the household and education settings). This guidance is summarised below, but further details can be found in the national [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#samehousehold) (for household contacts) and guidance for [contacts of people with confirmed COVID-19 infection who do not live with the person](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-contacts-of-people-with-possible-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19-infection-who-do-not-live-with-the-person).

* **Adults who are not fully vaccinated.**

Adults (over the age of 18 years and 6 months) who are not fully vaccinated[[1]](#footnote-1) are legally required to self-isolate for 10 full days if they are a contact of someone with COVID-19 (whether the Omicron variant or not). They are also advised to get a PCR test as soon as possible (unless they have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days).

* **Adults who are fully vaccinated1 and children between the ages of 5 to 18 years and 6 months**.

Adults who are fully vaccinated1 and children aged 5 years and above who are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 (whether the Omicron variant or not) are advised to conduct daily lateral flow (LFD) tests before they leave the household for the first time each day.

For household contacts, the LFD tests should be taken every day for 7 consecutive days, or until the household member who has COVID-19 reaches the end of their self-isolation period if this is earlier.

For non-household contacts, the LFD tests should be taken every day for 7 consecutive days, or until 10 days after their last contact with the person who tested positive if this is earlier.

If they test negative on their LFD tests, they can continue to attend their education setting, and do not need to self-isolate.

Anyone who receives a positive LFD test result, or who develops COVID-19 symptoms, should immediately self-isolate and take a PCR test.

If the PCR result comes back positive, contacts must self-isolate for 10 full days from the day they took the positive PCR test (or developed symptoms). If the PCR result comes back negative, contacts can leave self-isolation but should continue to take daily LFD tests for the remainder of their daily testing period.

Daily LFD testing is not mandatory; only strongly advised. If people are eligible for daily LFD testing but cannot access test kits or do not want to do it, they will not be required to self-isolate instead.

Adults who are fully vaccinated and children between the ages of 5 to 18 years and 6 months who are currently isolating due to being a contact of someone that has Omicron, will be able to switch over to daily testing instead.

All staff and secondary aged pupils and students should have access to LFD tests through their education setting. If your setting requires additional test kits sooner than they would be available through the standard ordering process, or will run out of test kits imminently, you can contact 119 to request an emergency replenishment. For primary aged children [LFD test kits are available through the usual routes](https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests?utm_source=13%20December%202021%20C19&utm_medium=Daily%20Email%20C19&utm_campaign=DfE%20C19) (community test sites, local pharmacies or online).

* **Children under the age of 5**.

Children under the age of 5 do not need to isolate or take part in daily lateral flow testing if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

There is still no national requirement for education settings to identify close contacts of positive cases within their setting. However, if you do have positive cases within your setting, and wish to inform parents and carers that their child could be a close contact, the EIPC team can provide support and letter templates if needed.

We appreciate that the changes to the national guidance may mean that educational settings will require support from the Education Infection Prevention and Control (EIPC) team during the Christmas break, particularly if they are notified of cases after the end of term. The EIPC team will be available up to and including the 23rd December, including Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th December, (0900-1700 on weekdays and 1000-1600 at the weekend) to answer any queries and provide support if needed (email EducationIPC@cumbria.gov.uk).

**Updates to the local enhanced guidance for household contacts**

The local enhanced guidance for household contacts of people who test positive for COVID-19 is currently being reviewed and updated in light of the changes to the national guidance. Further communication about this will follow in the coming days. The letter templates and threshold guidance on the [Cumbria County Council webpage](https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/coronavirus/education.asp) will also be updated.

We recommend taking the following approach for the rest of the term:

* **Early years settings (children under the age of 5)**

Children who are close contacts of a positive case in their household

Early years settings can still follow the local enhanced guidance and ask parents to keep children who are household contacts of positive cases at home for up to 5 days.

Children who are close contacts of a positive case in the setting

No action required as children under the age of 5 are not asked to LFD test

* **Primary Schools (children aged 5 years and over)**

Children who are close contacts of a positive case in their household

Ask parents to keep household close contact children at home for 5 days and then PCR test on day 5 (under local enhanced guidance) **OR** continue to attend school and LFD test daily for up to 7 days (increase from 5 days to align to national guidance).

Children who are close contacts of a positive case in the setting

           Should be advised to LFD test daily for up to 7 days

* **Secondary schools**

Household close contacts **AND** close contacts from the setting

Pupils should be advised to LFD test daily for up to **7** days (increase from 5 days to align to national guidance)

**Christmas events**

The EIPC team is receiving a large number of queries in relation to Christmas events and whether or not they can still go ahead (given the additional measures that have been introduced nationally).

There remains no national policy that requires education settings to cancel nativities and Christmas events. However, we appreciate that many people will have concerns about holding them. If you would like advice or support with your risk assessment for upcoming Christmas events, please contact the EIPC team (email EducationIPC@cumbria.gov.uk).

If you decide to continue with plans to hold Christmas events, please continue to ensure events are risk assessed and measures are put in place to minimise the spread of COVID-19. Further information can be found in the Christmas events document on the [County Council website](https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/coronavirus/education.asp).

1. People are fully vaccinated 14 days after having received two doses of an approved vaccine (such as Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca or Moderna/Spikevax) or one dose of the single-dose Janssen vaccine. People are also considered fully vaccinated if they are unable to be vaccinated for medical reasons. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)