

Adult Care, Housing & Public Health

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Dear Parent / Guardian

Covid-19 update

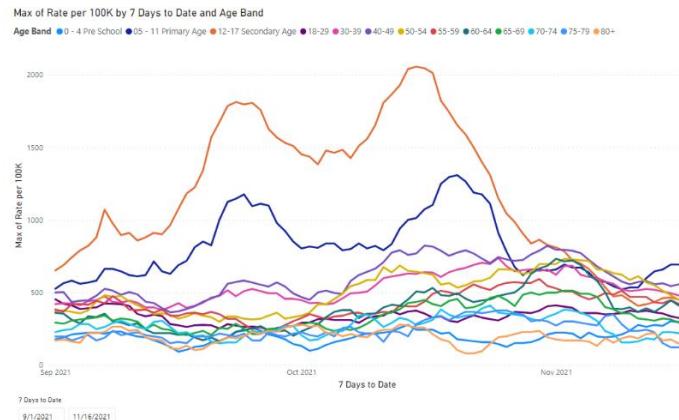
I wanted to write to update you on the other measures schools are taking to help pupils remain in their lessons and the progress of the COVID-19 vaccination programmes for 12-15 year olds and 16 - 17 year olds.

Pandemic progress and impact on schools

COVID-19 case rates in Rotherham have been consistently high since the end of June, with significant peaks around the European Football Championships in July and more recently in October.

Following the return to school in September, we have seen three 'mini-waves' of infection, each bigger than the last, mostly driven by infections in secondary school children.

These cases have led to parents, carers and other family members, including grandparents, catching the virus due to household mixing.



These waves of infection created significant disruption in schools with substantial numbers of pupil absences, along with some staff absences too. (See case rate graph).

Following half-term, I wrote to schools to advise them on additional measures they could implement to ease the number of cases in your children's schools while the impacts of the secondary school vaccination programmes take full effect.

Schools have been advised to implement a few measures to support the vaccination programme, such as using face coverings in communal areas; encouraging regular hand washing; cleaning and ventilating classrooms and shared spaces; and managing close contacts will all help to minimise the spread of infection in schools. Additional measures may be required where schools have outbreaks too.

While our local case rates remain high, it is still important that children and families take part in regular asymptomatic testing, stay home when they have symptoms, and isolate for 10 days following a positive test.

As the vaccination programme progresses, we hope to see reductions in cases that enable the lifting of some of the measures in schools.

COVID-19 Vaccination for Secondary School Aged Children

16 and 17 year olds

The vaccination of children aged 16 and 17 started during the summer holidays, with over 44% of this age group being vaccinated before the beginning of term. This resulted in a significantly lower COVID-19 case rate amongst college and sixth form pupils.

To date 62% of this age group have now had a single dose of the vaccine, which still leaves about 2,400 pupils in this age group yet to have any protection.

The Government has now announced that 16 and 17 year olds will be offered a second dose of the vaccine 12 weeks after their first dose.

Children aged 16 and 17 who are unvaccinated or are due their second dose can book this via the National Booking Service at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination or attend any of the Rotherham 'Grab a Jab' sessions advertised by Rotherham CCG through their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Rotherhamccg. Further information is available at yourhealthrotherham.co.uk/covid-vaccine.

Any young people under the age of 18 who tests positive for COVID-19 must wait 12 weeks before getting their vaccination.

12 to 15 year olds

The vaccination programme for 12 to 15 year olds was initially rolled out through schools, with all schools in Rotherham now having had a visit from the team. To date just over 47% of children aged 12-15 have been vaccinated in Rotherham and we are already seeing an impact from this in reducing transmission in schools.

There are still over 7,200 children yet to receive the vaccine, and we know that many could not access the school-based programme due to a recent COVID-19 infection or other absence from school.

A dedicated vaccination centre for 12-15 year olds has been set up at the Rotherham Hospital vaccination hub and will continue to offer vaccines for children only.

Children aged 12 – 15 can book an appointment at the hospital hub through the National Booking Service www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination. Children in this age group should only attend the Hospital hub site for their vaccine.

Any young people under the age of 18 who tests positive for COVID-19 must wait 12 weeks before getting their vaccination.

11 year olds

If your child is still 11 years old and due to turn 12 during this academic year, you will be able to book their vaccination through the hospital hub once they turn 12.

It is important to reduce further disruption to schools and to our children's learning that we have a high vaccination coverage rate.

I hope that this information is helpful in enabling you to access this for your child. For any adults in your family yet to be vaccinated, or over 40 who are due their 6 month booster vaccination, you can still book an appointment via the National Booking Service or attend a 'Grab a Jab' drop in session.

Thank you for your continued support in tackling the pandemic.

Yours sincerely



Ben Anderson
Director of Public Health