
Date: 28 January 2021

Dear Colleague

Title – Lateral Flow Testing in early years provision

We are aware of the ongoing concern in early years settings regarding the programme of lateral flow testing which was proposed by the government. In particular, we are aware of concerns regarding the difference in the distribution of tests to the maintained sector and the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, which represent the majority of early years providers in West Sussex.

We received notification from the government about the distribution of the lateral flow devices (LFDs) at the same time as early years providers. As I'm sure you can appreciate, the logistics of arranging access to tests is extremely complicated given the number of early years settings and practitioners in the county.

We would like to assure you that we are working to find a practical solution to the logistical issues raised by the above policy. We will notify you as to how you can access asymptomatic staff testing as soon as we are able. In the meantime, I am writing to clarify the WSCC public health view on the issues that have been raised in relation to this type of testing.

- The LFDs are less good at 'finding' positive Covid cases than the standard PCR tests.
- PCR testing is currently available to those with symptoms of Covid. Any staff or children with symptoms of Covid should access the PCR testing that is available across the county and self-isolate whilst they await results.
- For any setting wanting to test those without symptoms using the LFDs, we agree that, where possible and practical, these should be made available in order that those with Covid and anyone making close contact during the infectious period are isolated immediately.
- However, it is also important to point out that these tests miss a high percentage of positive cases. You must communicate with staff in your setting that a negative test result using an LFD test is not definite confirmation that they do not have Covid, only that they do not currently have a high viral load of Covid.
- Therefore, although those testing negative with the LFDs can continue to work (as long as they have no symptoms), they need to follow the same strict social distancing guidance as they should be anyway.

- Whilst we recognise this is very difficult with young children, it is possible to take action to reduce transmission in adults ie staff to staff or staff/parent or vice versa.
- For example:
 - Not car sharing with anyone outside your bubble
 - Avoiding being less than 1m from anyone outside your bubble, ie no face to face conversations at less than 2metres, no skin to skin contact, not coughing on anyone
 - Not coming within 2metres of anyone for more than 15 minutes
 - Making sure parents socially distance and don't group together when dropping children off

This is a fast-changing situation and we will get back to you in due course.

I would like to extend my thanks, from myself and the public health team in West Sussex, for the incredible contribution you and your teams make to the wellbeing of our children and hope that you are taking steps to keep yourselves well during this extremely challenging time.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Hill

Interim Director of Public Health