

Health and Safety Bulletin 2021 No9.

Updates to Covid-19 guidance

What has changed:

1. Covid-19 risk assessment.
2. Outbreak Management Plans.
3. Reporting individual cases of Covid-19 to DCS Alert.
4. RIDDOR reporting cases of staff Covid cases.
5. Attendance in school of persons with Covid-19 symptoms or a positive test result.
6. Asymptomatic testing in SILC or Alternative Provision settings.
7. Existing stocks of LFD tests in school settings.
8. Access to free Covid tests from 1st April 2022.

What has not changed:

1. Risk assessments for staff and pupils at higher risk.

Introduction

In line with the government's strategy for "Living with Covid" a large number of changes to the myriad of guidance documents and sources begins today. The strategy has now moved to Living safely with respiratory infections, including Covid [Living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

The basis of this guidance is that it is still good practice to keep some of the measures in place that can help limit the spread of Covid-19 and other respiratory illnesses:

"There are simple things you can do in your daily life that will help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections and protect those at highest risk. Things you can choose to do are:

- Get vaccinated.
- Let fresh air in if meeting others indoors.
- Practice good hygiene:
 - wash your hands
 - cover your coughs and sneezes
 - clean your surroundings frequently
- Wear a face covering or a face mask.
- If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, you are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people."

In addition to this there is no longer a requirement to have a Covid specific risk assessment [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) – Advice for workplaces \(hse.gov.uk\)](#):

"COVID-19 restrictions are being replaced by public health advice

COVID-19 will remain a public health issue, and guidance for workplaces is being replaced with [public health advice](#).

HSE no longer requires every business to consider COVID-19 in their risk assessment or to have specific measures in place. There is a requirement to protect those who will [come into contact with the virus](#) due to their work activity. You can find advice for [people who may be at higher risk](#) such as those who are immunosuppressed.

Under COSHH Regulations, employers must protect workers who come into contact with COVID-19:

- directly through their work, for example in researching the virus in laboratories,
- due to their work activity, such as health and social care workers caring for infectious patients.

In these cases, employers must still do a risk assessment and implement control measures. COSHH does not cover situations where:

- one employee catches a respiratory infection from another,
- a member of the public has infected an employee with coronavirus through general transmission in the workplace.”

In line with this, and building on the good practices schools have put in place regarding hygiene, cleaning, hand washing and ventilation, we intend to move to a generic sample Infection Control in Schools risk assessment after the Easter break. Over the Easter break we will be reviewing all the guidance produced by bodies such as the HSE, RCOG, UKHSA, DfE and DHSC to ensure the assessment reflects current best practice.

Many of the controls that have been in place for Covid-19 also have benefits for managing other infectious illnesses that are common in schools e.g Norovirus, colds and flu, slapped cheek. There are also additional benefits from ensuring good ventilation such as improved health, better concentration, and better quality of sleep so it makes sense to continue to maintain good ventilation in settings.

2. Summary of the main changes.

What has changed:

1. **Covid-19 Risk Assessment** – there is **no longer** a requirement to have a Covid specific risk assessment. Please keep copies of your risk assessments as they will be needed in the case of claims for Long Covid alleged to have been caught in the workplace. They may also be useful if restrictions are re-introduced at any time in the future and the control measures and actions taken may help in future outbreak management control.

As identified above we will be moving to a more generic infection control risk assessment. Please continue to ensure good ventilation, regular cleaning and good hand hygiene in the meantime.

2. **Outbreak Management Plans (OMP)** – it is anticipated covid specific outbreak management plans will no longer be required. However, many of the measures identified and the actions to be taken will still have relevance for other infectious illnesses. It is our intention to move the sample Covid OMP to a generic one to support the risk assessment and capture the good practices schools have been able to implement quickly in managing Covid outbreaks as many of these will be of benefit to managing other types of illness outbreaks.
3. **Reporting individual cases of Covid-19 to DCS Alert** – schools **no longer** need to send in notifications of individual cases of Covid-19 to DCS Alert. Schools can continue to contact us for advice if you suspect you have an outbreak and need support. Please keep your records of cases as they will be needed for any claims of Long Covid caught in the workplace. We will advise shortly how long these should be kept for.

A massive thankyou for your diligence and support in sending these in over the past 2 years – it has been invaluable in managing Covid in schools and ensuring all the Teams in LCC could offer timely and relevant support and guidance.

The success of this has shown us that getting timely information from schools about infectious illnesses can make a real difference in managing outbreaks. We are currently working with our Public Health colleagues to move this notification process to one based on outbreak notification for the range of infectious illnesses common in schools, including guidance on what constitutes an outbreak for the different illnesses, actions to take and where to go for further advice and support.

4. **Reporting cases of staff Covid cases likely to have been caught in the workplace to the HSE** - there is no longer a requirement to report school staff cases of covid to the HSE therefore schools no longer need to submit CF50s for staff cases. [RIDDOR reporting of COVID-19 - RIDDOR reporting of COVID-19 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

“What not to report

Under RIDDOR you are not required to report:

- cases of disease or deaths of members of the public, patients, care home residents or service users from COVID-19,
- cases where an employee has infected another employee with coronavirus through general transmission in the workplace,
- cases where a member of the public has infected an employee with coronavirus through general transmission in the workplace, unless infection is likely to have occurred from working in an environment with a person known to have COVID-19, for example in health or social care.”

5. Attendance in school of persons with Covid-19 symptoms or a positive test result – it is no longer advised that symptomatic or asymptomatic persons carry out covid tests. Instead the advice in [People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19) is detailed below.

What this means for school staff and pupils has been summarised in the attached new flowcharts “Flowchart for action to take as an adult close household contact of a positive case v2.0 010422” and “Flow Chart of action to take for staff and pupils with respiratory illness symptoms or a positive Covid-19 test result V1.0 010422”. These supersede all other flowcharts for positive and symptomatic cases.

Adults with symptoms of respiratory illness including Covid

“If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or you do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, you are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.

Symptoms of COVID-19, flu and common respiratory infections include:

continuous cough	high temperature, fever or chills	loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell	shortness of breath
unexplained tiredness, lack of energy	muscle aches or pains that are not due to exercise	not wanting to eat or not feeling hungry	headache that is unusual or longer lasting than usual
sore throat, stuffy or runny nose	diarrhoea, feeling sick or being sick.		

If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as COVID-19, and you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people, until you no longer have a high temperature (if you had one) or until you no longer feel unwell.

It is particularly important to avoid close contact with anyone who you know is at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell if they are infected with COVID-19 and other respiratory infections, especially those whose immune system means that they are at higher risk of serious illness, despite vaccination.

Try to work from home if you can. If you are unable to work from home, talk to your employer about options available to you.

The following actions will reduce the chance of passing on your infection to others:

- wearing a well-fitting face covering made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask,
- avoiding crowded places such as public transport, large social gatherings, or anywhere that is enclosed or poorly ventilated,
- covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze; wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose and before you eat or handle food; avoid touching your face.”

Children and young people (aged 18 years and under) with symptoms of respiratory illness including Covid:

“Respiratory infections are common in children and young people, particularly during the winter months. Symptoms can be caused by several respiratory infections including the common cold, COVID-19 and RSV.

For most children and young people, these illnesses will not be serious, and they will soon recover following rest and plenty of fluids. Attending education is hugely important for children and young people's health and their future. Children and young people with mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, or slight cough, who are otherwise well, can continue to attend their education setting.

Children and young people who are unwell and have a high temperature should stay at home and avoid contact with other people, where they can. They can go back to school, college or childcare, and resume normal activities when they no longer have a high temperature and they are well enough to attend.

All children and young people with respiratory symptoms should be encouraged to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing and/or sneezing and to wash their hands after using or disposing of tissues."

Adults with a positive COVID-19 test result:

"Try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people. If you have a positive COVID-19 test result, it is very likely that you have COVID-19 even if you do not have any symptoms. You can pass on the infection to others, even if you have no symptoms. Many people with COVID-19 will no longer be infectious to others after 5 days. If you have a positive COVID-19 test result, try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days after the day you took your test.

Try to work from home if you can. If you are unable to work from home, talk to your employer about options available to you.

At the end of this period, if you have a high temperature or feel unwell, try to follow this advice until you feel well enough to resume normal activities and you no longer have a high temperature if you had one.

Although many people will no longer be infectious to others after 5 days, some people may be infectious to other people for up to 10 days from the start of their infection. You should avoid meeting people at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19, especially those whose immune system means that they are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, despite vaccination, for 10 days after the day you took your test.

If you leave your home during the 5 days after your positive test result the following steps will reduce the chance of passing on COVID-19 to others:

- wear a well-fitting face covering made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask,
- avoid crowded places such as public transport, large social gatherings, or anywhere that is enclosed or poorly ventilated,
- cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze; wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose and before you eat or handle food; avoid touching your face."

Children and young people aged 18 years and under who have a positive test result:

"It is not recommended that children and young people are tested for COVID-19 unless directed to by a health professional.

- If a child or young person has a positive COVID-19 test result they should try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 3 days after the day they took the test, if they can. After 3 days, if they feel well and do not have a high temperature, the risk of passing the infection on to others is much lower. This is because children and young people tend to be infectious to other people for less time than adults.

Children and young people who usually go to school, college or childcare and who live with someone who has a positive COVID-19 test result should continue to attend as normal."

Close contacts of someone who has had a positive test result for COVID-19:

"People who live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 are at the highest risk of becoming infected because they are most likely to have prolonged close contact. People who stayed overnight in the household of someone with COVID-19 while they were infectious are also at high risk.

If you are a household or overnight contact of someone who has had a positive COVID -19 test result it can take up to 10 days for your infection to develop. It is possible to pass on COVID-19 to others, even if you have no symptoms.

You can reduce the risk to other people by taking the following steps:

- avoid contact with anyone you know who is at higher risk of becoming severely unwell if they are infected with COVID-19, especially those whose immune system means they are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID-19, despite vaccination,
- limit close contact with other people outside your household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces,
- wear a well-fitting face covering made with multiple layers or a surgical face mask if you do need to have close contact with other people, or you are in a crowded place,
- wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitiser,
- If you develop symptoms of a respiratory infection try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people and follow the guidance for people with symptoms.

If you are a contact of someone with COVID-19 but do not live with them or did not stay in their household overnight, you are at lower risk of becoming infected. There is guidance on protecting yourself and others in living safely with respiratory infections, including COVID-19.”

6. Asymptomatic testing in SILC or Alternative Provision settings – staff or secondary aged pupils in these settings no longer need to carry out regular LFD testing.

7. Existing stocks of LFD tests in school settings – the DfE have advised if schools and settings have surplus supplies of test kits they should not be handed out to staff and pupils. They have said we will receive advice in due course about what to do with these.

8. Access to free Covid Tests from 1st April - from 1st April free tests for people who have COVID-19 symptoms will only continue to be provided to the following groups:

- NHS patients in hospital,
- those eligible for COVID-19 antiviral and other treatments, who will be sent a pack of tests and can request replacements if they need them – this may include staff and pupils who have been identified as being eligible,
- NHS staff and staff working in NHS-funded independent healthcare provision,
- adult social care staff in care homes, homecare organisations, extra care and supported living settings and adult day care centres, as well as residents in care homes and extra care and supported living settings via the established organisation ordering portal,
- adult social care social workers, personal assistants, Shared Lives carers and CQC inspectors,
- staff and patients in hospices,
- staff and detainees in prisons and other places of detention,
- staff and detainees in immigration removal centres,
- staff and users of high-risk domestic abuse refuges and homelessness settings.

Asymptomatic testing - during periods of high prevalence, asymptomatic testing will continue to mitigate risk.

Testing will continue to be provided for:

- adult social care staff and a small number of visitors providing personal care,
- hospice staff,
- patient-facing staff in the NHS and NHS-funded independent healthcare provision,
- some staff in prisons and other places of detention, and some refuges and shelters,
- Care home outbreak testing for all staff and residents will also continue all year.

If people do not fall into the categories listed above but wish to test themselves for COVID-19, lateral flow tests will continue to be available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, including online.

What has not changed:

1. Risk assessments for staff and pupils at higher risk – staff and pupils at higher risk of respiratory illnesses including Covid-19 should still have a risk assessment in place that is regularly reviewed. Many of the control measures already in place such as vaccination, good ventilation, the wearing of face coverings, regular cleaning, good hand hygiene and distancing where possible will still be relevant.

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