

Colin Cox • Director of Public Health • Cumbria County Council
107-117 Botchergate • Carlisle • CA1 1RD

5th January 2022

Preventing the spread of COVID-19: Guidance for parents and carers

Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for supporting our local COVID-19 control measures and for helping to keep staff, children, and young people safe.

Cases of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 are rapidly increasing in Cumbria. We want to limit the spread of COVID-19 to reduce the risk of outbreaks and staff absences, this will help maintain face-to-face learning where possible.

The updated national and local guidance for people who are contacts of someone with COVID-19 are outlined below. This letter is long, but please take time to read it carefully (depending on the ages of your children, some sections may not be relevant).

National guidance

From Tuesday 14 December, the national guidance for contacts of people with COVID-19 infection changed. Further details of this guidance can be found in the national [stay at home guidance](#) and guidance for [contacts of people with confirmed COVID-19 infection who do not live with the person](#).

This guidance says:

- Children aged 5 years and over who are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 should conduct daily lateral flow (LFD) tests.
- For children who live with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (household contacts), the LFD tests should be taken every day for 7 days, or until the household member who has COVID-19 reaches the end of their self-isolation period if this is earlier.
- For children who are a contact of someone with COVID-19 who they DO NOT live with, the LFD tests should be taken every day for 7 days, or until 10 days after their last contact with the person who tested positive if this is earlier.
- Each LFD test should be taken before the child leaves the household for the first time that day. 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 continue to self-isolate and follow the [stay at home guidance](#). 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.
- Children under the age of 5 who are contacts of a positive case do not need to self-isolate or take part in daily LFD testing. However, children under 5 who are household contacts of a positive case will still be advised to get a PCR test. They do not need to isolate while waiting for the results.

Additional local guidance for Cumbria

The guidance for children attending educational settings in Cumbria is now largely the same as the national guidance. However, there are a couple of important exceptions, which are outlined below.

This is because case rates remain high in school age children, and we have continued to see a significant number of outbreaks in education settings. These have a significant impact on children and their families, affect staffing levels, and risk causing additional outbreaks in the local community.

1. Children in early years settings (aged under 5 years)

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

- Our local guidance remains that children under the age of five who live in the same household as someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 are advised to stay at home for 5 days, starting from the onset of symptoms in the household contact who has tested positive (or test date if the positive case had no symptoms).
- Children are exempt from this local guidance (and can attend the setting as normal) if there are significant concerns about the impact of exclusion on the child. Children may also be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and advised to get a PCR test.

Children who are close contacts of a positive case that they do not live with

- Children under the age of 5 who are close contacts of a positive case that they do **not** live with should follow the national guidance. They are not required to isolate or take part in daily LFD testing.
- If the child develops symptoms of COVID-19, they should immediately isolate and get a PCR test.

2. Children in primary, infant, and junior schools (aged 5 years and above)

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

- Children in primary, infant, and junior schools (aged 5 years and above), who live with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 can choose to follow the national guidance on daily LFD testing outlined above.
- 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.
- As a local alternative to daily LFD testing, children who live in the same household as someone who has COVID-19 still have the option to stay at home. Five days after the symptoms began in the household contact who tested positive (or test date if the positive case had no symptoms), the child should get a PCR test. If the PCR is negative, they can return to school, but should isolate again immediately and get another test if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 later.
- Children are exempt from this local guidance if there are significant concerns about the impact of exclusion on the child.

Children who are close contacts of a positive case that they do not live with

- Children aged 5 years and over who are close contacts of a positive case that they do **not** live with should follow the national guidance on daily LFD testing.

- 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.

3. Pupils in secondary schools (aged up to 18+6 months)

- Pupils attending secondary schools who are either a close contact of a positive case in their household or who are a close contact of someone they do not live with should conduct daily LFD testing as outlined in the national guidance.
- 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.

Additional advice

- Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 should get a PCR test and stay at home until the result is known. Individuals informed by Test & Trace to isolate should stay at home for the time advised.
- Outside of daily testing periods, we encourage all secondary school aged children to self-test twice weekly with lateral flow devices.
- Until further notice, secondary school aged children are encouraged to wear face coverings in classrooms, indoor communal areas and on dedicated school transport unless they are exempt.
- We also recommend anyone eligible in your household gets any recommended doses of the [COVID-19 vaccine](#) if they have not done so already.

Supply of LFD tests has been a national problem recently, although the government are confident that there should be adequate supply to provide for the testing mentioned above. **If you have tested positive and are not able to 'test-to-release' because you do not have a test kit, please continue to isolate until the end of the period, or until you are able to LFD test negative for 2 days in a row if earlier.**

The additional local measures outlined in this letter are guidance from Cumbria Public Health, they are not law. However, we strongly advise parents and carers to follow them, or at the very least, follow national guidance.

The additional local control measures will continue to be reviewed every 2 weeks and I will write to parents and carers again when they are revised or removed.

Thank you again for your support.

Yours Sincerely,



Colin Cox
Director of Public Health
Cumbria County Council