

Derby City Council Health Protection Team Support for Education Settings Managing Communicable Disease 2022-23 V3.1

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This document aims to set out Derby City Council Health Protection Team's (DCCHPT) recommended actions for education settings managing communicable disease in the academic year 2022-23. The document will include advice on COVID-19 alongside other common winter illnesses.

Who are we?

Your setting may have received support from the COVID Control Team (CCT) over the past 2 years. We are now known as the Derby City Council Health Protection Team (DCCHPT). We are a team that sits within Derby City Council Public Health. Staff members who have previously worked on the COVID response are still within the wider public health team, so knowledge and expertise are maintained. There are arrangements in place to increase capacity in DCCHPT over the winter period if necessary. We are still here to support you when needed.

The DCCHPT works closely with the Derby City Director of Public Health, Dr Robyn Dewis, we also work with partners from within the council such as health and safety, environmental health, and education, as well as outside organisations such as the NHS Infection prevention and control team. As Director of Public Health, Dr Robyn Dewis has a statutory responsibility to ensure that appropriate Health Protection arrangements are in place, whether they are carried out by the council or partners. This includes planning for and responding to incidents that present a threat to the public's health, such as an infectious disease outbreak.

Over the next academic year, the DCCHPT will work in partnership with the UKHSA East Midlands Team to support education settings with any infectious disease outbreaks in order to maintain service provision and to support our partners.

Who are our partners?

The UKHSA (UK Health Security Agency) were previously known as PHE (Public Health England). The UKHSA have a statutory duty to protect the health of the public. They have arrangements in place to plan for and respond to incidents such as infectious disease, air pollution, and water contamination. The UKHSA is a national body with regional centres. There are specific staff in the UKHSA East Midlands Team that cover Derby and Derbyshire and have a good understanding of the local context. If your setting has an outbreak of COVID or another infectious disease, staff in the UKHSA will lead the response to the outbreak.

Over the pandemic the DfE provided COVID support through their helpline. DCCHPT can contact colleagues in DfE where necessary to support your education setting, but do not generally work with them closely.

Recommended actions for education settings in the academic year 2022-23

Recommended actions:

- Ensure a plan for maintaining ventilation in all settings is in place, particularly over the winter
- Ensure systems and processes are in place which provide and maintain a clean and appropriate environment in premises, that facilitates the prevention and control of infections, particularly where staff, students or children have been unwell
- Have a policy in place that outlines the process for sending students, staff and children who are unwell home
- Identify an effective process for engaging with students, staff, children, and parents on symptom of illness and when absences are necessary or unnecessary
- Continue your support of the vaccination programme working collaboratively with the school age immunisation service (SAIS).
- Contact the UKHSA and DCCHPT in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease

Recommended planning:

- Have a staff member or team who understands who should be contacted in the event of a case or outbreak of illness. Please see 'Who to contact and when?' below.
- Have systems in place to record cases and outbreaks of infectious disease. Please see 'How to record and report cases?' below.
- Have clear governance arrangements in place at your setting to ensure that staff understand which staff members are able to make decisions about cases and outbreaks.
- Review risk assessments to ensure they cover potential infectious disease scenarios. Please see 'Risk assessments' below.

Who to contact and when?

Education settings should contact the UKHSA East Midlands Team (0344 225 4524) if:

- They have an outbreak of illness that is higher than previously experienced, or rapidly increasing
- There is evidence of severe disease (such as a hospitalisation)
- More than one infection is circulating in the same group of students, staff, or children at the same time.

They should also contact the DCCHPT (cct@derby.gov.uk).

Education settings must contact the UKHSA to report any of the following illnesses, as there may be specific actions the education setting is required to take:

- E. coli 0157 or E coli STEC infection
- food poisoning
- hepatitis
- measles, mumps, rubella (rubella is also called German measles)
- meningococcal meningitis or septicemia
- scarlet fever (if an outbreak or co-circulating chicken pox)
- tuberculosis (TB)
- whooping cough (also called pertussis)

Please see the [Health protection in education and childcare settings guidance](#) for more information.

How to record and report cases?

Please continue to record cases of infectious disease in your setting. Where there are outbreaks, it is useful to have a record of the below, as you will be asked for these details by the UKHSA:

- Illness/suspected illness (e.g., COVID, D&V)
- Symptoms (e.g., coughing, vomiting)
- Date symptoms are reported to have started
- Numbers of those affected
- Any food handlers affected
- Work area of staff/student/child (e.g., Class 2A, receptionist)
- Any known links to other cases (e.g., same class, shared friendship group, sibling)
- Any known events prior to outbreak (e.g., performances, school trips)
- Indications of severe disease (e.g., hospitalisations)
- Vaccination uptake
- Any test results or clinical assessments, if known
- If there are any individuals at higher risk from illness

You can record this information in a way that is most suitable for your setting and share it with UKHSA and DCCHPT as appropriate. If you would like to have a conversation about a case or outbreak, please email the DCCHPT.

The UKHSA East Midlands Team can be contacted on 0344 225 4524

The DCCHPT can be contacted at cct@derby.gov.uk

What support will you receive from the Derby City Council Health Protection Team?

Support from Derby City Council Health Protection Team will be offered to education settings in liaison with the UKHSA. DCCHPT will offer support for common winter infections, including COVID. We will support you with outbreak management, making risk assessments about your setting, understanding local and national trends, decision-making, interpreting guidance, managing specific concerns, communications, and general questions.

We will continue to be accessible on email (cct@derby.gov.uk) and on the phone.

How will we contact you?

DCCHPT will contact your setting individually if we have intelligence that suggests there is an outbreak or incident in your setting- this will normally be via phone or email

More generally, we will send updates out via the newsletter shared by the DCC education team.

We may attend School Business Manager meetings and Head's meetings to provide updates, if necessary.

What support is no longer available?

As the national response to the COVID pandemic has changed, the tools that are available to us to support you have changed.

As of April 2022, DCCHPT no longer have access to supplies of LFDs, therefore, without a change in national guidance, the DCCHPT cannot necessarily support you with testing in the event of an outbreak.

In addition, due to general changes in national testing guidance, we no longer have access to the large amount of data about new COVID cases that we did last academic year. This means we may no longer be able to detect cases in your setting through other national and local data channels and will rely on the information you provide to us.

What will happen next winter?

As COVID is still a relatively new disease it is unclear what levels of infection will be experienced during the winter of 2022-23.

It is usual for levels of many infectious diseases to increase during the winter period. We hope by following the principles set out above, your education setting will not be subject to the levels of disruption experienced during the earlier stages of the pandemic.

The level to which rates of COVID and other winter illness will disrupt education settings this winter depends on several factors:

- The high level of COVID-19 vaccination coverage in the UK
- The ability of new variants to evade protection offered by vaccination
- Circulation of other common winter illnesses
- Lack of exposure to common illnesses in some populations of children

The UK has good coverage of COVID-19 vaccination, which should lessen the disruption to education settings this year. However, immunity may be waning, and new variants of the virus may have the ability to evade the protection given by vaccination, recent examples of this are the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron variants. New variants are unpredictable by nature, which makes their potential impact unpredictable.

Due to protective measures such as physical distancing that have been in place over the past two winters, other common infections have not been circulating at their usual winter rates. As we anticipate that these high levels of protective measures will not be in place this winter, we are expecting an increase in other infections relative to the past two winters. These infections may co-circulate with COVID. Some groups of children will never have been exposed to common childhood and winter infections and will therefore not have built up immunity and will be more susceptible. This will impact the circulation of these infections in education settings.

As you know, national guidance has changed regularly over the past 2 years. One theme of our conversations with education settings has been the difficulty in changing plans and enacting protective measures in your settings with little or no warning. The 'Living with COVID' guidance means we are not anticipating a return to the high levels of protective measures advised in 2020-21 and 2021-22, and we expect that the rate of guidance change should slow.

However, we are asking you to cover a variety and high level of protective measures in your risk assessment. We do not expect to ask you to put these measures in place, but we hope that by covering these measures in your risk assessment, any changes in national guidance or local advice will be easier to enact. We are also asking that your risk assessments are general enough to cover several infectious diseases, as we expect that other infections will be more prevalent this winter.

We know that you and your staff have built up expertise in managing the public health response in your education setting since 2020, please trust your instincts and we ask that you maintain this expertise and come to us where you need additional support.

Risk assessments

Please ensure your risk assessments cover protective measures that you may be asked to introduce as a result of an infectious disease outbreak. You should consider how you would enact:

- enhanced cleaning
- enhanced ventilation
- face coverings
- increased communications
- limiting mixing/movement
- limiting attendance

You should consider how you would enact these measures generally and to specific activities (sports, breakfast clubs etc).

As discussed above, we think it is very unlikely that you will be asked to enact the more challenging of these measures, but we would ask that you consider them.

These measures can be considered as part of your normal risk assessments, or it can form its own infectious disease risk assessment. You may want to reuse aspects of your risk assessments from the previous two years.

Resources

We are developing resources to support you that will be shared in September:

- Education setting crib sheets – Fact sheets to support staff responding to infections
- Parent crib sheets- Fact sheets to support parents when their children become ill
- Posters and other resources- resources around infections and measures to prevent infection