

Dear Colleague,

Clarification around COVID guidance

I am writing further to our earlier communications around guidance for dealing with cases of COVID.

Following officers having individual discussions with a number of settings and separately following helpful discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and Department for Education (DfE) I thought it would be helpful to clarify a few issues.

Firstly, we are definitively not asking early years settings to carry on with contact tracing of pupils. In accordance with government guidance this function is now the responsibility of NHS Test and Trace. We are however, as you know, asking parents to tell you of confirmed cases and in turn we are asking you to notify us of confirmed cases. I attach to this letter the short form we ask you to complete where there is a confirmed case in your setting, which asks for much less information than the versions you were sending earlier in the year.

The provision and collation of this form is an important tool to inform our collective management of this stage of the pandemic, and to ensure that we follow DfE advice in supporting you in potential outbreak situations. Thanks in advance for your co-operation in completing this.

Please remember that close contacts of confirmed cases do not now need to self-isolate unless they are above the age of 18 (and a half) and are not fully vaccinated against COVID.

Please also remember to continue to apply the testing, ventilation, hygiene and messaging measures described in [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak guidance](#) to help manage transmission day to day.

Warn and Inform letters for parents

In addition to the above, we are further asking that following confirmation of a confirmed case and in advance of NHS test and trace fulfilling their role you undertake a very quick analysis of possible close contacts in the setting and send the parents/carers of these pupils the following revised “warn and inform” letter.

As a reminder, the main aim of the warn and inform letter is to encourage parents to be on higher alert for symptoms. This will help in catching cases earlier to minimise spread of COVID and avoid outbreaks.

For information, this letter has now been adjusted to clarify and confirm that we are not asking or expecting you to carry on tracing of children, and that this role sits squarely with NHS Test and Trace. We believe it is important that obvious close contacts of a confirmed case are encouraged to adhere strongly to public health guidance as soon as possible after their contact. We believe our local approach will not be onerous to settings, contributes in a helpful way to the management of the pandemic and actually complements the excellent work that NHS Test and Trace are doing.

Identifying staff members that are contacts

While identifying of staff members that are contacts of confirmed cases is also the responsibility of NHS Test and Trace, settings are encouraged to take action with regard to staff members.

Where there has been a positive case of a child or staff member in your setting, you can help to minimise risk by identifying any staff that is known to have come into contact, using the standard definition that has been in place throughout the pandemic. For any staff member that is not able or willing to provide evidence that they are double vaccinated, they should be asked to self-isolate for the usual time period of 10 days from point of last contact. Staff members that are double vaccinated should be encouraged to take a PCR test as soon as possible, but are not required to leave setting/self-isolate.

Summary

We have tried to go into detail with the above, but to summarise our asks in relation to what happens when you become aware of a positive case

1. Let us know about it
2. Send them the 'warn and inform' letter to parents of children that may have been in contact
3. Identify any staff in contact with the positive case, and ask them to isolate if not double vaccinated

As always, please contact public.health@walthamforest.gov.uk with any questions, whether about this guidance, or any situations you are encountering.

Regards

David Kilgallon