

Covid-19 Early Years and Childcare Briefing

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Considerations

- Bolton's current position and situation
- Epidemiology
- Activity/Impact on health and education
- Key challenges and recent SAGE minutes
- Emerging information about Omicron
- Bolton's Health Protection Board position statement
- Feedback regarding current additional baseline measures
- Guidance for Providers



Bolton's position & situation

(13/12/2021)

Epidemiology

- Case rates are currently high though relatively steady overall. Bolton rates are joint lowest in GM and lower than GM and UK average
- Highest rates are in the 11-16s followed by 5-10s then 25-59s and 17-18s
- Deprivation- case rates high across all areas; highest in more affluent group (decile 10) this week. Trend change from most deprived groups previously with the most affluent areas seeing higher case rates
- Alerts – common exposures, postcode coincidences and venue alerts all appear consistent with widespread community transmission. Large workplaces where the younger age profile workforce, high footfall shopping and leisure settings and venues. Increased shopping and leisure in the lead up to Christmas (note, these alerts do not necessarily indicate transmission events and can simply reflect footfall)

Activity / impact on health and education

- Health and Social Care Service:
 - Already managing winter pressures; much earlier than 'normal' years – viral cocktail
 - System under extreme pressure and on daily escalation - long waits for people in AE, ambulance handover and hospital discharge
 - Staffing shortages due to; high sickness, low morale; burn out; high vacancies and difficulties recruiting
 - Care Homes viral outbreaks; Norovirus, Respiratory, Covid and now Flu beginning
- Education:
 - DfE threshold for extra action was reached by mid-October in a number of primary, secondary & SEND settings – high number of children missing school days
 - A high number of outbreaks with high attack rates been observed across the Borough
 - Number of providers experiencing operational issues – due to staff burn out; respiratory; D&V; Covid; Flu



Key Challenges (as at 12th October 2021)

Rapid rise in cases - potential causes:

1. New Variant is very real possibility with either (i) increase transmissibility and/or (ii) vaccine escape (worst case scenario).

“Very high prevalence in schools combined with partly vaccinated 12-18 year olds in a highly mixing population provides ideal conditions for vaccine escape emergence.”

2. Waning immunity - Small change can generate major shift in hospital activity

3. Behaviour change - The greatest risk for us as we enter colder winter months (as natural ventilation becomes less appealing); a decrease in working from home, greater mixing within school cohorts and university student age-groups (and where vaccination uptake is relatively low), less physical distancing, less mask-use, a decline in testing and the opportunity to redress the restrictions of last Christmas season could all generate the perfect storm



Omicron Update (6th December 2021)

Current position in UK:

- Omicron is now present in the UK and community transmission in multiple regions of England
- Confirmed cases in Bolton – with rising case rates. Delta and Omicron variants are concurrently circulating

What we know about Omicron:

- Evidence that the variant is more transmissible and spreads more easily than any other forms of the virus. Information on infection severity is still emerging.
- Booster vaccinations have been shown to produce very strong antibody responses (high confidence) and are likely to provide protection against severe disease, hospitalisation and death from most variants at least in the short term, with protection against severe disease remaining higher than protection against infection
- The impacts on the UK are uncertain



SAGE on Omicron (27th November 2021)

- **Past SAGE advice on measures to reduce transmission remains highly relevant**, including but not limited to advice around ventilation, face coverings, hand hygiene, reducing contacts (for example by working from home), vaccination certification, and the importance of effective testing, contact tracing and isolation. Colder weather is likely to affect natural ventilation levels, as windows are less likely to be opened. There are some very preliminary indications that Omicron might show more airborne transmission (low confidence)
- **Lateral flow testing is a valuable way of identifying potentially infectious people and lateral flow devices have identified Omicron cases**, indicating that they are still effective for this variant. They are particularly valuable if used as a group diagnostic tool within households or following a common exposure event. If each in the group tests negative, there would be greater confidence that they are all negative. If, however, at least one person tests positive, then there is a higher likelihood that another person in the group is also infected, despite a negative test result. Lateral flow tests are useful to identify infection to avoid attendance at gatherings and pre-testing will be particularly important over the upcoming holiday period (high confidence).
- **The earlier measures to reduce transmission are introduced, the more stringent they are, and the wider their geographic coverage, the more effective they will be** (high confidence – see previous SAGE advice, including on Plan B). As with previous waves of infection, some settings (for example care homes) will require particular consideration.
- **Even if measures are introduced immediately, there may not be time to fully ascertain whether they are sufficient before decisions are needed on further action**. The situation could develop quickly over the coming weeks and decision-makers may need to act while there is still a high level of uncertainty including considering the potential need for stringent response measures.



ECDC: Implications of the further emergence and spread of the SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.529 variant of concern (Omicron) for the EU/EEA – first update

- Risk assessment 2nd December 2021
- Based on the currently available limited evidence, and considering the high level of uncertainty, the overall level of risk for EU/EEA countries associated with the further emergence and spread of the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron VOC is assessed as **HIGH TO VERY HIGH**.
- 15th December World Health Organisation assessed risk as **VERY HIGH**



Safer behaviours & actions that reduce the spread of Covid-19

“Airborne transmission is a very significant way that the virus circulates” (www.gov.uk)

In the event of increasing case rates, **earlier intervention** would reduce the need for more stringent, disruptive, & longer-lasting measures



Measures to enable us to get through winter – and deliver our business for our residents

Universal – for all persons

Health & Care

Education

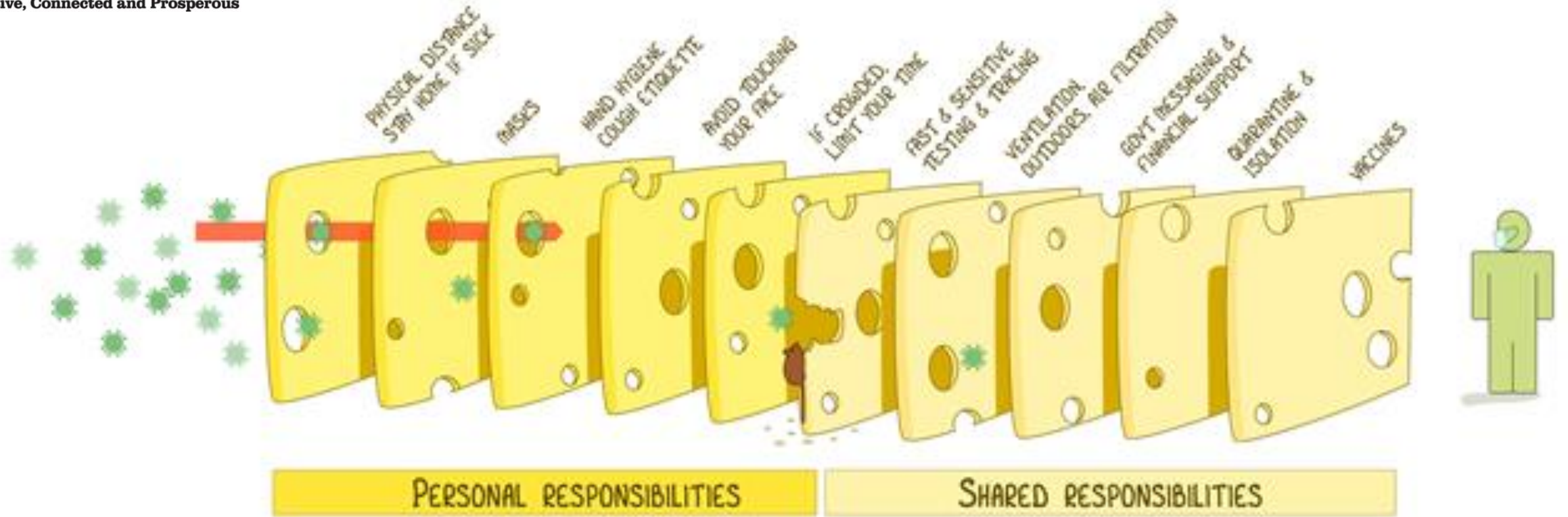
Businesses

Council



THE SWISS CHEESE RESPIRATORY VIRUS PANDEMIC DEFENCE

RECOGNISING THAT NO SINGLE INTERVENTION IS PERFECT AT PREVENTING SPREAD



EACH INTERVENTION (LAYER) HAS IMPERFECTIONS (HOLES).
(MULTIPLE LAYERS IMPROVE SUCCESS.)

Health Protection Board Position Statement

- **Vaccination:** If still need to come forward for your 1st, 2nd or Booster COVID-19 vaccination-please take up the offer. Offers good protection; you're much less likely to become seriously ill. Effectiveness wanes over time, so important to get your Booster to increase protection
- **Vaccination:** Many children aged children, 12-15 years, have had their jab in schools & you can now book appointments for your child/children through the national booking system
- **Face-coverings:** Covid-19 is airborne, so wear a face covering when in crowded indoor spaces or on public transport. The closer you are sitting to someone, the easier it is to catch the virus
- **Ventilation:** Keep your home & workplace airy & well ventilated by opening doors & windows
- **Hand Hygiene:** Remember to wash your hands frequently
- **Lateral Flow Tests:** Many people who become infected with the virus don't have symptoms but can still infect others. Remember to take LFD test twice a week – & record result on the NHS website
- **Symptoms:** If you have symptoms, please isolate & book a PCR test as soon as possible. COVID-19 Symptoms can be similar to flu, coughs & colds. If you're uncertain - take a PCR test.
- **Work from home:** Whenever you can, WFH – this helps people who can't work from home
- **Flu:** We're expecting large numbers of flu cases, so take up the flu vaccine when offered. If you're not within one of the eligible groups where you get a free vaccine, you can still have the flu vaccine for a small fee at your local pharmacy



Additional baseline measures recommended from 18th October 2021

- **Clear messaging & communications:** encourage staff and visitors, & their households to undertake twice-weekly lateral flow testing without symptoms
- **Encourage the wearing of face coverings in communal areas** for staff and visitors
- **Household close contacts in KS2 & above who are exempt from isolation & attending school are encouraged to carry out daily lateral flow testing for 10 days after the onset of symptoms** (or positive test if asymptomatic) in the case in their household, & only attend school if their lateral flow test is negative. They are also encouraged to follow national guidance for all contacts and access a PCR test at COVID-19: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). People who have tested positive with a PCR test within the last 90 days do not need to be tested.
- **Consider opportunities to reduce indoor gathering & mixing between year groups**, e.g. virtual events
- **Promote social distancing between staff within setting**

Effective until 31st December 2021 and subject to review



Feedback on current measures

- Largest volume of queries was regarding the interpretation of recommendations on limiting intergroup mixing, particularly with regard to Christmas activities like nativities, Christmas fairs and theatre trips
- Giving information about review dates and recommendations being in place for the entire half term provided a degree of certainty/stability and helped support planning of Christmas events and activities, open events
- A number of providers had already chosen to retain some COVID measures on return in September



DRAFT Recommendations

- Extend the current recommendations to February half term, with regular review (fortnightly) and the option to step up or down accordingly



Review panel and consultation

7th December 2021

- Lynn Donkin, AD/Consultant in Public Health
- Paul Rankin, Deputy Director Children's Services
- Kristina Poole, Consultant in Health Protection, UKHSA

8th December 2021

- Bolton schools 'Tactical' group



Plan B of the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan,

- Critical importance of not disrupting the education of children and young people and the Government will prioritise keeping all education and childcare settings open.
- **Attendance**
School attendance remains mandatory and all the usual rules continue to apply. Enabling children and young people to attend their education setting regularly continues to be a national priority.

Wrap around provision

Schools and early years settings should continue to offer their usual before and after-school activities, including wraparound childcare. These activities provide valuable childcare for working parents and carers and promote the wellbeing of children and young people.



Plan B of the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan, cont...

- **Working from home**

All education and childcare settings, to continue to provide face-to-face teaching, and staff should continue to attend their place of work if required, in order to deliver this. Teaching and learning should not be moved online as a result of the work from home guidance...Therapists and wider children's service professionals should continue to be invited into education and childcare settings.

- Education and childcare leaders are best placed to determine the workforce required to meet the needs of their children, pupils and students. Education and childcare leaders will need to consider whether it is possible for specific staff undertaking certain roles to work from home, while minimising disruption to face-to-face education and care.
- People previously considered to be particularly vulnerable, clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV), and high or higher-risk are not being advised to shield again. They should attend their setting and should follow the same [COVID-19 guidance](#) as the rest of the population. A child or young person may have received personal advice from their specialist or clinician on additional precautions to take and they should continue to follow that advice.



Plan B of the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan, cont...

Tracing close contacts and isolation **GUIDANCE CHANGE 14th December**

- If you live with or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, you will **not** need to self-isolate if:
 - you're fully vaccinated – this means 14 days have passed since your final dose of a COVID-19 vaccine given by the NHS
 - you're aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months
 - you're taking part or have taken part in an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
 - you're not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons
- Contacts of someone with COVID-19 who are exempt from isolation (as above) are strongly encouraged to take rapid lateral flow tests every day for 7 days. If you test positive or develop symptoms, you need to self-isolate for 10 days.



Plan B of the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan, cont...

- **January return**

We continue to learn more about the impacts of the Omicron variant. To prepare for any possible changes in public health advice, all education and childcare settings should now revisit their existing outbreak plans to ensure they are well prepared for any future changes and ensure they are familiar with the [Contingency Framework Guidance](#).

- For those in settings closing over Christmas, all staff and students should test over the holidays in line with national guidance. This means that they should test if they will be in a high-risk situation that day and before visiting people who are at higher risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19.
- For settings remaining open over the Christmas period (such as private nurseries, higher education or adult education providers), staff and students should continue to test at home twice per week over the holiday period.
- Staff in all educational and childcare settings, should take one self-test at home either the evening or morning before they return in January. Then they should continue to test in line with government guidelines and we recommend all staff and eligible students take up the offer of a vaccine.



When should settings should consider further action- outbreaks?

For most education and childcare settings, whichever of these thresholds is reached first:

- 5 children, pupils, students or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period; or
- 10% of children, pupils, students or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

For special schools, residential settings, and settings that operate with 20 or fewer children, pupils, students and staff at any one time:

- 2 children, pupils, students and staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

Close mixing

this could include:

- *a class group or subject class*
- *a friendship group mixing at breaktimes*
- *a sports team*
- *a group in an after-school activity*

Extract taken on 10.12.21 from [Contingency framework: education and childcare settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contingency-framework-education-and-childcare-settings)

➤ **Contact Bolton COVID-19 SPOC on 01204 336004**

Monday – Friday 8.30-5.30; Sat, Sun 9.00-1.30



Plan B of the COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan, cont...

- **Inspection**
- Early years settings, schools and colleges will be using the final days of term to put in place these measures and consider contingency measures for January. In order to do that contingency planning, the Secretary of State for Education and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector have agreed that early years settings, schools and colleges will not be inspected next week unless there are safeguarding concerns.



COVID-19 test kits – ordering and deliveries

- The deadline for ordering ATS and self-test kits for use over the holidays and during the first week of January was 5pm on Tuesday 30 November. Any orders placed after this deadline will be scheduled for delivery during the week commencing Monday 3 January.
- If you missed the deadline but still require test kits to enable testing over the holidays and on return in January, please call NHS Test and Trace on 119.
- Further information on testing over the holidays and in the first week of January can be found on the early years and primary schools document sharing platform
- [Early Years and Primary Schools Document Sharing Platform - Google Drive](#)



Childminders DfE FAQ

EY and Schools Document Sharing Platform [Frequently asked questions - Google Drive](#)

- **Someone living in a household that is used as a childminding business tests positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19. Can I still operate my Childminding business?**
- No. When someone living in your home¹ has any of the main symptoms of COVID-19, or a positive test, you cannot care for children in your home. You cannot childmind children in your home¹ until everyone living with you who has symptoms, or a positive test, has finished self-isolating
- However, childminders can continue to look after children on other premises – e.g. other domestic premises. You must notify Ofsted to let them know if you are working in other premises. You will still need to follow the EYFS statutory guidance. You must review your risk assessment and check your public liability insurance before making a temporary change to your premises.
- Use of unregistered non-domestic premises should only be considered if a longer-term option is required because any new people aged 16 or over who live and work on the premises where childminding will take place will have to be suitability checked, which includes the requirement to apply for a DBS certificate for each new person, and at cost to the childminder.
- You can read more about making a temporary change to your premises in DfE's Q&A document [here](#).



Updates to all sector specific Guidance to support Plan B

- [Actions for early years and childcare providers during the COVID-19 pandemic \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [COVID-19: Actions for out-of-school settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Managing coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in education and childcare settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [What parents and carers need to know about early years providers, schools and colleges during COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Protective measures for holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings for children during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) outbreak - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- Please read and update your risk assessments/ policies with staff accordingly



HR Update

- **No changes to advice on non-vaccinated staff**
 - Non vaccinated staff have to isolate as a result of being identified as direct contact of a positive case
- **No changes to guidance for Clinically Vulnerable, Clinically Extremely Vulnerable or Pregnant staff**
- **Staff returning from Holiday abroad**
 - Staff who choose to travel abroad – there is requirement to quarantine while waiting for the result of PCR test upon return to the UK, different for vaccinated/ non vaccinated staff
 - [Providing apprenticeships during the COVID-19 pandemic - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/providing-apprenticeships-during-the-covid-19-pandemic)
 - **contact ACAS/ your HR provider for support during this period.**

Advice also provided from representative bodies such as Pacey and EY Alliance

Pacey [Coronavirus - FAQs | PACEY](#)

EY Alliance [Operating during the coronavirus lockdown and beyond | early years alliance \(eyalliance.org.uk\)](https://eyalliance.org.uk/operating-during-the-coronavirus-lockdown-and-beyond-early-years-alliance)





Please email your questions to
startwellbookings@bolton.gov.uk

