

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

UPDATE TO PARENTS – COVID-19 AND SCHOOLS

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I wanted to write to you to thank you for your continuing support during the pandemic, and to update you on the current position within schools.

As you will be aware, the success of the vaccination programme in the UK has enabled the government to progress through its Pandemic Roadmap to the current stage of living with the virus. This has enabled the lifting of the majority of restrictions within schools to support a focus on face-to-face learning.

As a father myself I recognise the significant educational, social and developmental value that face-to-face education offers and the need to reduce the disruption of last year. However, with Covid-19 case rates high across the borough and the highest they have been in school aged children throughout the pandemic (see case rate graph on final page) I also recognise the risks this poses both to children, and to their families.

We are currently seeing high Covid-19 transmission within all communities in Rotherham, and this includes within our school communities. Schools are working hard to reduce the risks without impacting on face-to-face education, and to provide support to those children who do become positive and are required to isolate. I wanted to share the actions that you and your children can take to support schools and limit the impact of Covid-19 within our schools and communities.

Symptoms, Testing and Isolation

Keeping Covid-19 out of schools in the first place is the best way to reduce transmission in schools. You can support this by ensuring that your child does not attend school if they are showing any Covid-19 symptoms.

If they have a cough, fever or loss of taste/smell then please do not send them to school and arrange a PCR test immediately. If your child tests positive then they are still legally required to self-isolate at home for 10 days, and people they have been in contact with are recommended to book a PCR test too.

We know that not all cases of Covid-19 will display symptoms, and that this is especially the case in children. This is why we ask secondary school children to take a Lateral Flow Test (LFT) twice a week, to help identify cases early and prevent transmission. Please support your children to continue with this testing and ensure that they isolate and book a confirmatory PCR if they have a positive LFT. With current high case rates in school aged children this is also important in helping to protect families during the October Half Term break too, so please do use LFTs before visiting family, especially older relatives who may be more vulnerable to Covid-19.

Vaccination

Testing and isolation play a part in reducing transmission, but in the long term, as we have seen with adults, it is the vaccination programme that will have the biggest impact. Vaccination is now being offered to all children aged 12 to 15 through schools and is available to 16 and 17-year-olds through primary care.

In Rotherham over 20 per cent of children aged 12 to 15 have already been vaccinated through the school-based vaccination programme. This will continue to be rolled out throughout the current term. You should by now have received a Consent letter from the School Immunisation Service, and it is important to discuss the programme with your child and to return the consent form prior to the team's visit to your child's school.

www.rotherham.gov.uk/coronavirus

The vaccine has been approved for use in children aged 12 and above and is a safe and effective way of reducing their risk of infection and their likelihood of requiring hospitalisation with Covid-19, as well as reducing the chances of further disruption to their education. Vaccination will also reduce the likelihood of them transmitting Covid-19 to others, reducing the risk of spread into households and to more vulnerable older adults that we are currently seeing.

Vaccination is not just important for children. We know that there are still many adults yet to take up the vaccine too and are seeing spread into households and families due to the high case rates within schools at present. If you, or other family members aged 16 or over remain unvaccinated or are yet to have your second dose I would urge you to take up the offer of vaccination. You can book by calling **0300 3035258** or attend one of the 'Grab a Jab' walk in sessions advertised on NHS Rotherham CCG's Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/Rotherhamccg/>.

Further details about the vaccine can be found in the links at the end of this letter.

Behaviours

Finally, I cannot emphasise enough the continued importance of the everyday steps we can all take to reduce the spread of the virus. With Covid-19 rates across our communities remaining high it continues to be important to wash or sanitise hands regularly, to use a face covering and maintain a social distance from others in crowded places and to meet outside or in well ventilated spaces where possible.

Whilst vaccination is having a positive impact on the pandemic, it is as yet far from over. In Rotherham we are still seeing very high case rates and Covid-19 related hospital admissions occurring daily. Your support in tackling this crisis is greatly appreciated, and I know that together we can make a difference.

Yours sincerely

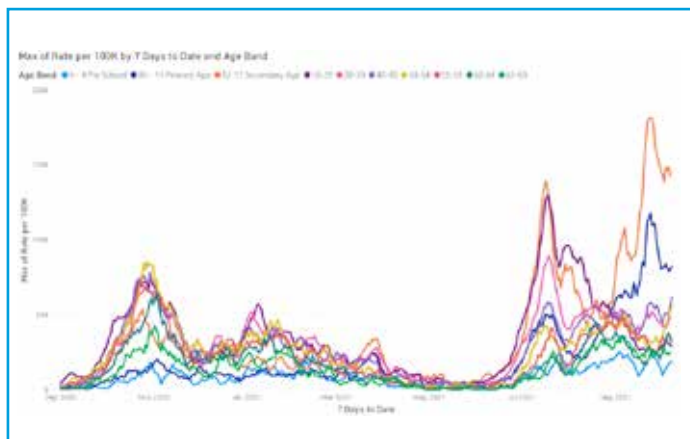
Ben Anderson

Director of Public Health

Vaccination leaflet links

- Covid-19 vaccination for children and young people aged 12 to 15 years
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1013193/PHE_12124_COVID-19_vaccination_for_at_risk_CYP_simple_text_leaflet.pdf
- Covid-19 vaccination programme for children and young people – guidance for parents
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1020602/PHE_12073_COVID-19_parents_leaflet.pdf
- Covid-19 vaccination: guide for adults – GOV.UK www.gov.uk
- Further information is available at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

Case Rate by age group September 2020 to 10 October 2021



Everyday steps for reducing Covid-19 transmission

**GET BOTH
DOSES
OF YOUR
VACCINE**

**WEAR
A FACE
COVERING**

**KEEP
YOUR
DISTANCE**

**GET
TESTED
REGULARLY**

**STAY AT
HOME IF
YOU TEST
POSITIVE**

**COVID'S NOT GONE YET.
LET'S MOVE FORWARD
TOGETHER**