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Date	13 December 2021
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Dear Parent/Carer,

We are aware that this is a worrying and confusing time for everyone. The run up to the Christmas and New Year holidays is a busy time but we are asking you read this important information regarding updates to the current contact tracing and self-isolation guidance if a case of COVID-19 is linked to an early years, school or other education setting.

The COVID-19 situation is continually changing, meaning that the guidance is also continually changing. Part of our role is to ensure that we keep you informed of some of these key changes and explain how this will impact you and your children.

Omicron Variant

The Omicron variant is now confirmed in Scotland and there is evidence of transmission within our communities. Evidence on severity along with the effectiveness of vaccination to protect against severe disease is still being investigated. However, initial COVID-19 vaccinations plus the booster are expected to provide additional protection.

Initially, a stricter approach to contact tracing and isolation was being applied. However, from the 11/12/2021, **the public health management of ALL cases and contacts of COVID-19 (both Omicron and non-Omicron) will now be the same.**

The latest guidance:

- **All cases of COVID-19 will be asked to self-isolate for 10 days from symptom onset.**
- **All household contacts of a COVID-19 case should self-isolate for 10 days. Household contacts must continue to isolate regardless of vaccination status, age or PCR test results.**
 - **This guidance also applies to non-resident household contacts (e.g. a contact that does not live within the same household as the case, but spends long periods of time with the case, for example a sleepover, childminding or babysitter).**
- **Non-household contacts should also isolate for 10 days. However, if they are fully vaccinated, showing no symptoms of COVID-19 and their PCR test is negative, they can end isolation.**
- **All contacts under the age of 18 should follow the high/low risk approach:**

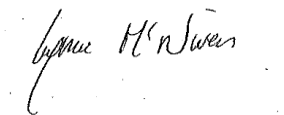
- **High risk contacts under the age of 18 (e.g. household, sleepover contacts, intense social care contacts, or non-household resident close contacts) should isolate for 10 days even if PCR test is negative and fully vaccinated. This also applies to under 5s.**
- **Low risk contacts under the age of 18 (e.g. classmates, car shares, out of school clubs) will not be required to isolate or do a PCR test. However, if there are multiple cases linked to a classroom or club, we would risk assess the situation and a stricter approach may be applied.**

If you were identified as a case or a contact before the 11/12/2021, please continue to follow the guidance you were given at the time by the contact tracers and complete the self-isolation as advised.

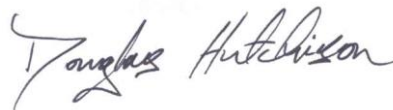
The COVID-19 situation continues to evolve and the Health Protection teams are working closely with our Local Authority colleagues and education settings to manage the situation.

For more information around self-isolating, testing and vaccination please read Appendix 1 or visit <https://bit.ly/3IX729L>.

Best wishes,



**Lynne McNiven
Director of Public Health**



**Douglas Hutchison
Depute Chief Executive and
Director – People
South Ayrshire Council**

Appendix 1. Testing and Vaccination Information and Advice.

You and your families can help protect yourself and others by:

- **Getting vaccinated** (whether your first two doses, or your booster when you are eligible) – this is the single most important thing you can do.

Click here for local information regarding the vaccination programme in Ayrshire: <https://www.nhsaaa.net/coronavirus-covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/>

All young people aged 12 to 17 years and any child or young person who are in at risk groups can receive their initial COVID-19 vaccination and second vaccine. For more information visit: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/12to15>

Call the National Vaccination Helpline: **0800 030 8013** or visit the Online Booking Portal: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/vaccinebooking>

- **Testing regularly using LFDs**

If your child is at Secondary school please encourage them to test twice per week.

Take Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) twice per week at home, even if you don't have symptoms. For more information on testing, visit <https://www.nhsaaa.net/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/>

- **Use of face coverings, hand hygiene and social distancing where possible**

If you have symptoms*, or have been identified as a close contact, you need to have a PCR test. You should book this via www.nhsinform.scot or by calling 119. You can also arrange to have a PCR test kit sent to your home.

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are a new continuous cough; high temperature (37.8°C or above); and / or a loss or change in sense of taste or smell. There may be other milder symptoms which can include hay fever symptoms, sore throat, runny nose, headaches, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Please do not send your child to school or ELC settings if they have any symptoms and book a PCR test.

Please use the apps: [COVID status](#) (vaccine passport), [Protect Scotland](#) and [Check-in Scotland](#) where possible.

Finally, could anyone contacted by Test and Protect or Public Health teams please be patient, co-operate and follow their advice, they are there to help.

In this ever-changing world of the COVID-19 pandemic, advice may change rapidly. We understand how concerning this will be to you and the inevitable disruption it may cause. We really appreciate your support as we learn to manage and live with this new variant to keep our schools and early learning and childcare settings as safe as possible.