



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Dear colleagues,

Re: management of COVID-19 outbreaks in childcare settings.

With schools and childcare settings now reopened in Wales it is vitally important to stress that vigilance should continue to be exercised and strict adherence to official guidance from Welsh Government, Care Inspectorate Wales and Public Health Wales should be followed.

Building upon the Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (2020) Public Health Wales has provided specific advice regarding the investigation and management of clusters and outbreaks of COVID-19 in educational and childcare settings (attached to email). The advice outlines what steps should be taken to protect individuals and communities where outbreaks are occurring, as well as reducing spread to other communities:

1. Identification of cases in possible cluster
2. Gathering of minimum information
3. Initial cluster management and risk assessment
4. Declaration of outbreak and management

Identifying Clusters and Outbreaks

A potential **cluster** is defined as two or more cases of COVID-19 among children or staff in a childcare setting within 14 days or; an increased rate of absence due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID 19.

A potential **outbreak** is defined as two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 among children or staff who are direct close contacts, proximity contacts or in the same 'bubble'* in the setting, within 14 days". * This may be a class, year group or other defined group

It is important to highlight that if only one person has been identified with a case of COVID-19 in a setting the regular TTP contract tracing process should be followed.

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a setting should be flagged by local contact tracing teams and followed up with the childcare settings to establish the potential of clusters or outbreaks. However if a potential cluster or outbreak has been identified by the setting or Local Authority they must contact their Regional multi-agency TTP Team as soon as the potential cluster or outbreak has been identified.

Gathering of minimum information and managing a cluster

Regional TTP teams will work with the head of the setting and relevant Local Authority to gather a range of information related to the unique nature of the setting, the context and situation in which the cases have occurred and to establish if guidance on infection control measures/social distancing measures for children and staff has been followed. A risk assessment will be undertaken and if an outbreak is not declared the Regional TTP team will continue to work with the setting to manage and review the cluster.

When an Outbreak is declared.

Incident Management Team (IMT) is likely to be put in place to which key individuals who are needed to investigate and manage the situation will be invited.

Based on the individual circumstances of the outbreak and the setting the IMT will consider:

- a. Adjustments to how the setting is operating to facilitate Infection Prevention and Control measures and social distancing.
- b. If further groups need to be asked to self-isolate (e.g. class groups, other functional groups).
- c. Whether to undertake an enhanced investigation including testing of a wider group*.

**The group for testing may be wider than the group identified for exclusion and could include the whole setting or a distinct section of the setting.*

An outbreak will be declared over when there has been 28 days since the onset of the last confirmed case in the school/setting and the results of any possible cases in pupils or staff in that time have tested negative.

Rapid Deployment of PCR Antigen Testing

The rapid deployment of testing will be made available to support outbreaks in childcare settings by the NHS Wales TTP Programme and Local Health Boards.

The method for delivery and sampling of rapid antigen tests can be executed in a range of ways such as the deployment of Mobile Testing Units (MTUs), temporary testing satellites or home tests. The most appropriate testing channel will be discussed and agreed between all stakeholders.

Antibody Testing

Antibody tests are currently only available through a limited testing programme in some education and healthcare settings this is to assist in understanding the seroprevalence of the virus in this cohort.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Bennett

Director of Communities and Tackling Poverty
Welsh Government