

Public Health Update for Early Years and Educational Settings

6th September 2022

1. Introduction

COVID-19 is still around us and the new school year provides a good opportunity to remind pupils, parents/carers and staff about the key messages so that we all can take steps to keep each other safe. This update also includes the latest development on the polio vaccination.

The public health team would like to say huge thank you to everyone for your incredible support and collaboration over the past year in keeping children, young people, and the school community safe in Merton.

2. How to live safely with COVID-19

- Remind people to keep up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations – it is the best defence against severe disease and hospitalisation. Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination - NHS (www.nhs.uk) Please see more information on the COVID booster below.
- Remind people of COVID-19 safe behaviours such as wearing a mask in crowded places, opening windows, and washing hands regularly.
- Anyone with symptoms of a respiratory infection and a high temperature or who feels unwell, is recommended to try and stay at home or away from others – especially from older or vulnerable people. School attendance is important for children's learning and therefore children with minor symptoms such as a runny nose should continue to attend school.
- Advise people with a weakened immune system to have lateral flow tests at home, available for free via <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>, so they can test and get antiviral treatment if they are eligible for it.
- **Resources:** We have developed young people friendly poster/image on 5 ways to living safely with COVID-19 for you to share widely using your channels especially with families. Also attached are the national messages on Living with COVID-19 and key behaviours.

3. Polio vaccine booster campaign in London

In August, the NHS launched an urgent polio vaccine booster campaign for 1-9 year olds in response to detection of poliovirus in sewage. The NHS will contact children when it is their turn to have the vaccine. Children aged 1-4 years will be vaccinated at their GP surgery and those aged 5-9 years will be vaccinated at the mass vaccination sites. Polio vaccine will be offered to those children who are unvaccinated (no/incomplete polio vaccination) and a booster will be offered to those who are fully vaccinated.

The risk to the population of developing symptomatic polio is assessed to be low, due to high vaccine coverage overall, and currently there have been no notified cases of polio in the UK. However, in some areas/communities with lower vaccine coverage, unvaccinated individuals may be at risk. The indicative timeline is to offer the polio vaccine to all 1 to 9 year olds in London by 26th September.

Parents and guardians can check their child's red book if they are unsure if their child has received this vaccine. More information and a short video clip on polio can be found here: 1) <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/polio/> 2) [IPV booster campaign video](#)

4. COVID Booster

For the 2022 autumn booster programme, the primary objective is to increase immunity in those at higher risk from COVID-19 and thereby optimise protection against severe COVID-19, specifically hospitalisation and death, over winter 2022/23. The eligible groups are listed below - we recognise many staff in the early years and educational settings may fall in these groups, for example pregnant staff. The roll out of the vaccination programme will be gradual, starting with those in the highest risk groups. Eligible staff can book via the [National Booking System](#) when it opens up for each group – currently booking has opened for those over 75 years and those over 12 years who are immunocompromised.

Priority groups

- residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults
- frontline health and social care workers. Staff working in SEND schools are eligible for the autumn booster.
- all adults aged 50 years and over
- persons aged 5 to 49 years in a clinical risk group. This includes pregnant women.
- persons aged 5 to 49 years who are household contacts of people with immunosuppression
- persons aged 16 to 49 years who are carers

5. Advice and guidance on managing a range of infectious diseases

See [Health protection in education and childcare settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) for useful information on:

- introduction to infections
- infection prevention and control
- managing specific infections and exclusion advice
- actions in the event of an outbreak or incident including when and how to seek help
- immunisation
- Contact details of your local SWL Health Protection team can be found here: [Find your local health protection team in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

6. Merton Public Health Team

Please continue to contact us for advice and guidance. From September 2022, we will only have one IPC Coordinator in the Children and Young People's team to provide settings with advice and information. Our email address remains the same: cypcov19@merton.gov.uk

Our COVID Resilience Project with schools has now ended however we can arrange regular (bi-monthly/quarterly) webinar to provide public health updates if this will be useful.