

Bath & North East Somerset: Guidance for childcare and educational settings in the management of Covid-19

COVID-19 update

COVID-19 rates in Bath and North East Somerset are rising sharply, particularly amongst 5-19 and the 40–49-year-olds. Figures for B&NES show the seven-day case rate for 10–14-year-olds is over 4,000 per 100,000 at week ending Thursday 14th October. Case rates are also increasing rapidly amongst the 5–9-year-olds, those aged 15-19 years, and amongst 40–49-year-olds.

NHS Test and Trace have been investigating a laboratory issue and while this has been taking place, we have not seen a true picture of COVID-19 infection rates in the South West. The issue has now been resolved, however, we can expect to see our rates rise as a result.

We are seeing an increasing number of people in hospital with COVID-19, and our NHS remains under a lot of pressure.

We need everyone's help to stop the increase we are seeing in Bath and North East Somerset, and we are especially appealing to teenagers, parents, and carers to be alert to the virus and follow simple steps we all need to take if we have symptoms or are a close contact of someone with symptoms. These are:

1. Continue to wear a face covering in crowded places unless exempt, make space, meet outdoors where possible, ventilate indoor spaces, and if unwell recover at home.
2. We strongly encourage secondary school pupils (and parents) to continue to test themselves twice a week with the rapid lateral flow device test kits, 3 to 4 days apart. If you have a positive lateral flow test result, self-isolate and get a free PCR test as soon as possible to confirm whether or not you have COVID-19.
3. Those with COVID-19 symptoms, those with a positive LFD test result, and those that are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 should get a PCR test.
4. Close contacts (i.e. as identified by NHS Test and Trace) or household contacts of confirmed cases are encouraged to take daily LFD tests while awaiting their PCR test results and to continue to attend school (unless the test is positive, and in which case they should stay at home). This applies to primary as well as secondary age children, at parent/guardian discretion.
5. Be alert to symptoms. In addition to the main three COVID-19 symptoms (high temperature, new continuous cough, a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste) people can experience wider COVID-19 symptoms.
6. If you're eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine (including the booster vaccine and the vaccine for 12–15-year-olds) or your flu jab, it's really important to book this as soon as you can so you get fully protected.
7. If you have a child that has tested positive for COVID-19, please provide as much information as possible about their close contacts. As a minimum please provide the name and contact details of your child's form teacher within school, as well as names and contact details of children who your child has had close contact with outside of school.

Thank you to everyone who has continued to take these precautionary measures. If you are self-isolating due to COVID you can get support such as emergency food, mental health support and other help and advice from the Community Wellbeing Hub on 0300 247 0050.

Further information for parents and carers on COVID-19 and key control measures is attached below.

COVID-19 symptoms

The main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are:

- a **high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a **new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- a **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

People can experience wider symptoms in addition to or instead of the three main symptoms. Wider symptoms include (but are not limited to) **headache, runny nose, sneezing, and/or sore throat.**

How is the flu different from COVID-19?

Flu and COVID-19 are caused by two different and very distinct viruses. However, they do cause similar symptoms.

Common COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, headache, runny nose, sneezing, and a sore throat, which are all common flu symptoms. So how do we tell the difference? Research shows that loss of smell (anosmia) or loss of taste is still one of the most important predictors of testing positive for COVID-19, so it's an important symptom to look out for.

If you/your child is feeling unwell for any reason - whether it's a cold, flu or COVID-19 - it's a good idea to stay home and avoid spreading germs to others.

If you think that your child has COVID-19 symptoms they should have a PCR test.

PCR testing

Please continue to use PCR testing to determine whether you/your child has COVID-19 as someone that has symptoms and/or have had a positive LFD (lateral flow device) test result, or as a close contact (including household contacts) of someone with COVID-19.

LFD (lateral flow device) testing

- Use when asymptomatic to identify infection early.

- Continue to test twice a week, 3 to 4 days apart (secondary school age children and parents/carers).
- If you have a positive LFD result, self-isolate and get a free PCR test as soon as possible to confirm whether or not you have COVID-19.
- Daily LFD testing is advised for both primary and secondary school age children when waiting for a PCR result (see updated guidance below*).

LFD (lateral flow device) tests are very helpful for identifying current COVID-19 infection, and in including in those who don't develop any symptoms.

LFD tests are better at identifying COVID-19 infection when a person is most infectious and so are most likely to pass the virus onto others (whether they are displaying symptoms or not). This is why it is important to test twice weekly; as at some point during the week a person with COVID-19 will have their most infectious period.

When someone tests positive via an LFD test they are more likely to have COVID-19 than not, even if another LFD test taken at the same time does not identify COVID-19. If someone tests negative via an LFD test, because the LFD test will not identify all cases (and especially when viral load is low), a negative LFD does not mean that someone does not have COVID-19.

Please engage in twice weekly LFD testing to identify COVID-19 infection early.

Remember not to eat or drink anything in the 30 minutes before taking the test.

*Updated UK Health Security Guidance enables LFD testing to be used whilst children and young people are awaiting a PCR test result as a close contact (i.e. as identified by NHS Test and Trace) or household contact. **This applies to primary as well as secondary aged children, at parent/guardian discretion.** The child/young person should continue to attend school, unless they test positive, and in which case they should stay at home. This will be important in helping identify asymptomatic carriage earlier and before children/young people go into school.

Accessing and using LFD tests for close contacts

Order tests to do at home

You can get rapid lateral flow test kits sent to your home.

[Order rapid lateral flow home test kits on GOV.UK](#)

Pick up tests from a pharmacy

You can get up to 2 packs of 7 rapid tests from a local pharmacy.

If you give the pharmacy a 'collect code' when you pick up the tests, it helps the NHS match your details to the tests. [Get a collect code on GOV.UK](#)

[Find a pharmacy near you where you can collect rapid tests](#)

Pick up tests from test sites

In B&NES you can pick up free home test kits from our City Centre test site at 19 New Bond Street Bath which is open Monday – Friday 8am - 5.30pm and Saturday 9am – 2pm or from our Mobile Testing Van which is touring the area. Find out when the testing van is going to be in your area <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information-and-advice/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-everyone> You can also pick up test kits from most of our community libraires and our One Stop Shop in Bath.

[Find a test collection point near you](#)

You should not use LFD tests if you are symptomatic (isolate and book a PCR test). You should also not LFD or PCR test if you have previously received a positive PCR test result in the last 90 days.

While awaiting a PCR test result, LFD tests can be undertaken by primary as well as secondary aged pupils, at their parent/carers' discretion.

Key information to provide Test and Trace

Please provide the national and local Test and Trace teams with as much information as possible. The information you provide helps to reduce COVID-19 transmission.

If you have a child that has tested positive for COVID-19 please provide as much information as possible about their close contacts. **As a minimum please provide the name and contact details of your child's form teacher within school*, as well as names and contact details of children who your child has had close contact with outside of school.**

Where more than one household member is affected, please provide full details of the household contacts. It is then possible for the national and local Test and Trace teams to link household contacts together, which will reduce the number of times Test and Trace contacts the same household.

**Or child's nursery/pre-school setting if you have younger children.*

COVID-19 vaccinations

The NHS is currently offering the Covid-19 vaccine to:

- children aged 12 to 15 years old with underlying health conditions or who live with someone who is more likely to get infections;
- children aged 12 to 15 years old (to be given in schools, and additional clinics being made available outside of schools);
- people aged 16 and 17 years, who can book via the [National Booking System](#) and also can attend some [walk-in centres](#).
- all people aged 18 or over.

How to book a vaccine appointment:

Children aged 16 and 17 can access first dose vaccinations by booking an appointment through the [National Booking System](#) or by finding their nearest [walk-in centre](#).

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

Improving People's Lives

All children aged between 12 and 15 years will be offered the chance to have the coronavirus vaccine at their school. The vaccine will be administered by a member of Virgin Care's Immunisation Service team, and both child and parent consent will be required before vaccination can take place. Please look out for the consent form that will be sent via your child's school as there will be a short turn-around time for parents to provide consent. Virgin Care will also offer vaccination to all home- schooled children at a community vaccination clinic.

Further information on expanding access to vaccination appointments for 12 to 15 year olds will be communicated by [Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group](#) and via [B&NES Council e-connect newsletter](#).