

COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SETTINGS

Version 1.0

Date of issue: 10 February 2022

CONTENTS

1. SUMMARY	3
2. OVERVIEW	4
3. SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19	4
4. VACCINATION	5
5. INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL	5
6. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)	6
7. TRACING CLOSE CONTACTS AND ISOLATION	6
Health and Social Care Staff	7
Car Sharing for Essential Practice	7
8. TESTING	7
All Settings	7
Asymptomatic HSC Staff	7
Group Living Settings	8
Testing for Asymptomatic Children and Young People	9
Foster Care and Supported Lodgings	9
9. CONTACT AND VISITORS	9
10. SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	10
11. SHORT BREAKS	12
12. EDUCATION	12
ANNEX A: KEY CONTACTS	14
PHA	14
HSC Trust Designated Nurses for Residential Children's Homes	14
Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Aged 16-21 Years/ Adoption Services	16
Fostering /Supported Lodgings	16
ANNEX B: USEFUL RESOURCES	17
General Advice and Guidance	17
Infection Prevention and Control	17
Vaccines	17
Tracing close contacts and isolation	17
Testing	18

Sources of support	18
ANNEX C: COVID-19 INFECTION PREVENTION AIDE MEMOIR FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES NI	20
ANNEX D: INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION CHECKLIST	23

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This guidance explains the actions children's social care settings should take to reduce the risk of transmission and the impact of COVID-19 in their setting. This includes public health advice, in line with National Infection and Prevention Control advice and guidance. The guidance has been developed in consultation with and agreed by the Public Health Agency (PHA).
- 1.2 The guidance is for:
 - Managers and staff in children's residential homes (including the Secure Care Centre at Lakewood);
 - Providers of jointly commissioned/funded supported accommodation projects for young people aged 16-21+; and
 - HSC Trusts and Agencies who provide services to adoptive parents, dually approved and concurrent carers and prospective adoptive parents, foster carers and supported lodgings hosts.
- 1.3 Separate guidance is available, and reviewed and updated regularly, for:
 - Schools and other education settings <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/section-1-introduction#toc-1>.
 - Childcare settings and childminders <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-about-childcare>.
 - Supported living services <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/guidance-supported-living-providers>.
 - Homeless service providers <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/covid-19-guidance-homeless-service-providers-northern-ireland>.
 - Information on COVID-19, including guidance on preventing the spread of infection, is available on the PHA website at: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public>.
- 1.4 The guidance should be read alongside individual providers' COVID-19 contingency plans, which should include actions to be taken in the event that a child/young person or staff member develops COVID-19 symptoms, tests positive for COVID-19, or where there is a COVID-19 outbreak (that is, two or more cases—possible or confirmed—within a 14 day period among residents or staff). The PHA has also developed an Infection Prevention and Control Aide Memoire and Checklist for children's residential homes, which have been circulated separately to HSC Trusts and can also be found at **Annexes C and D** respectively.
- 1.5 Providers of children's homes and supported accommodation projects should identify children and young people who have an underlying health condition which may put them at greater risk, and advise the HSC Trust, HSC Board, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and—in the case of jointly commissioned supported accommodation projects—the NIHE Supporting People team of the measures that will be put in place to keep these children and young people safe.

- 1.6 For general advice on COVID-19, you should consult the PHA's website at: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public>. Each HSC Trust has a designated nurse for children and young people's settings. A list of Trust designated nurses is attached at **Annex A**. The Trust Designated Nurse (and/or other appointed individual(s)) and Trust Infection and Prevention Control Team (for Trust facilities) should be the first points of contact for advice and guidance for staff, where concerns/queries arise in relation to COVID-19 in a children's social care setting.

- 1.7 The PHA also has dedicated points of contact for children and young people's services as follows:

Deirdre Webb, Assistant Director of Public Health Nursing in the PHA (deirdre.webb@hscni.net or tel: 07920 186497);

Emily Roberts, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Young People in the PHA (emily.roberts@hscni.net or tel: 07810 527191)

- 1.8 It is important to check the PHA and NI Direct websites regularly for the latest advice and information:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus>
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

Other sources of helpful information are referenced throughout this guidance, and included in a list of useful resources at **Annex B**.

2. OVERVIEW

- 2.1 As COVID-19 becomes a virus that we learn to live with, there is now an imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's lives.

- 2.2 There is a presumption of face-to-face contact and visits for children and young people, in accordance with latest public health advice and subject to a COVID-19 risk assessment. Alternative methods of contact for children and young people should only be used to replace face-to-face where informed by a COVID-19 risk assessment.

3. SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19

- 3.1 Information on the symptoms of COVID-19 is available at:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public#what-are-the-main-symptoms-of-covid-19>

- 3.2 Individuals who have been previously identified as "clinically extremely vulnerable" or "vulnerable" should follow advice provided by the PHA and their own healthcare professionals. Further guidance is available at:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-and-vulnerable-people>.

- 3.3 If a child or young person has a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature and/or a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste, they should begin self-isolating, supported by their foster carers, host families, or staff. The child or young person should NOT visit their GP, pharmacy, minor injuries unit or a hospital. For medical advice, please ring the GP or GP out of hours. Call 999 if a child or young person is seriously ill or injured, or if their life is at risk, and ensure the emergency services are made aware that the person has symptoms of COVID-19. The child or young person's appointed social worker or support worker should be advised. A COVID-19 test should be arranged (see section 8).
- 3.4 A child with a positive Lateral Flow Device (LFD) or PCR test should self-isolate in line with public health advice: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating>.
- 3.5 If a member of staff in a children's home or supported accommodation project has a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature and/or a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste, they should not go into work (or should be sent home if they become unwell at work), arrange to be tested (see section 8) and follow the self-isolation requirements for HSC staff (see section 7).

4. VACCINATION

- 4.1 Anyone aged 12 years and over who is a resident of Northern Ireland is eligible to be vaccinated as part of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. In line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommendation, vaccinations are also available for children aged 5 to 11 years in a clinical risk group or children who are a household contact of someone who is immunosuppressed. More information on who can be vaccinated, and how to get a vaccine, is available at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/get-covid-19-vaccination-northern-ireland>.
- 4.2 Information materials on the COVID-19 vaccination programme—including information for children and young people—are available on the PHA's website at: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/northern-ireland-covid-19-vaccination-programme/covid-19-vaccination-0>.
- 4.3 **While vaccination may help protect you from Coronavirus, it is still important to follow any current social distancing guidance and other infection prevention and control measures to keep each other safe.**

5. INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- 5.1 The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. It can also be spread indirectly by contact with contaminated surfaces. It is essential to ensure regular handwashing and implement other hygiene measures, including cleaning of surfaces.
- 5.2 Everyone should practise good hygiene practices to minimise the risk of infection or to prevent further spread. If you cough or sneeze, use a tissue to cover your mouth and nose, dispose of it carefully after use, and wash your hands. Washing your hands regularly, for at least 20 seconds, can help to prevent the spread of

infection; guidance on hand hygiene is available at:

[https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Hand Hygiene Why How and When Brochure.pdf](https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Hand_Hygiene_Why_How_and_When_Brochure.pdf).

More information is also available on the PHA website at:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus>; and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>.

- 5.3 Clean frequently touched surfaces often, such as door handles, handrails, table tops, play equipment, toys and electronic devices (such as phones). Towels used for hand-drying should be regularly changed. Personal waste (for example, used tissues) and disposable cleaning cloths can be stored securely within disposable rubbish bags.
- 5.4 If there is an outbreak in a children's home or supported accommodation setting, deeper cleaning may be required and this will be advised by the PHA.
- 5.5 Carers can help children understand why any of the measures put in place to minimise the spread of infection are necessary, and can remind and encourage children and young people to follow public health guidance including the wearing of face coverings as required or recommended. They may want to use age and developmentally appropriate ways to encourage children to follow social distancing, hand washing and other guidance, including through games, songs and stories, visual supports and videos. Further advice is available at:
<https://www.niinfectioncontrolmanual.net/nursery-guidance>.
- 5.6 The Northern Ireland Social Care Council has published a free online resource on infection control at:
<https://learningzone.niscc.info/storage/adapt/5e6b84387012f/index.html>.
Although developed to support social care workers, families and young people may also find it helpful.
- 5.7 Children and young people living in children's homes and supported accommodation projects should be offered the use of the fluid-resistant (Type IIR) surgical masks whilst inside the residential setting; this should be risk assessed to ensure there are no safety issues or risks for the young person.

6. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- 6.1 Detailed guidance on personal protective equipment (PPE) is available at:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/guidance-ppe>.

7. TRACING CLOSE CONTACTS AND ISOLATION

- 7.1 Children and young people, their carers, and staff working across children's social care settings are encouraged to download the StopCOVID-NI app from <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/stopcovid-ni-application-easy-explainer-guide>. A young person's version of the App is also available to 11-17 year olds.

- 7.2 When wearing the recommended PPE, according to PHA guidance, staff working in residential children's homes and jointly commissioned supported accommodation projects are advised to pause the contact tracing function or switch off the Bluetooth on the App to avoid the possibility of a false notification. Staff should ensure to remember to reactivate the contact tracing function and switch Bluetooth back on when they remove their PPE.
- 7.3 Guidance on self-isolation requirements is available at NI Direct at:
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating>

Health and Social Care Staff

- 7.4 On 21 January 2022, the Chief Medical Officer issued Circular HSS(MD)02/2022: Management of Health and Social Care Staff who are confirmed cases of COVID-19:
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-hss-md-022022-revised.pdf>
- 7.5 These arrangements will be kept under review and may be subject to change.

Car Sharing for Essential Practice

- 7.6 A Standard Operating Procedure has been developed to provide a number of key actions for all members of HSC staff who, for the purpose of work, are required to travel with a service user, student, another staff member or a patient. This Procedure is available on the PHA website at:
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/guidance-health-and>.

8. TESTING

All Settings

- 8.1 Information on arranging and administering a COVID-19 test—including instructions for parents and carers who need to swab a child—is available on the PHA website at:
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19>.

Asymptomatic HSC Staff

- 8.2 COVID-19 testing is available for asymptomatic HSC staff and staff working in the supported living sector using Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs). All staff are encouraged to avail of this testing.
- 8.3 LFDs can give a rapid result just 30 minutes after the test is self-administered, and staff are being asked to carry out the tests twice weekly. All test results whether negative or positive should be registered by using the following link – www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result.

- 8.4 Information on preparing and using the LFD test kit, and registering test results, is available on the PHA website at:
<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/lateral-flow-testing>.
- 8.5 Where a staff member receives a positive LFD test result, they need to isolate immediately, register the result and report the result to their line manager. A confirmatory PCR test is no longer required; the guidance on confirmatory PCR will be kept under review. For advice on when staff can end their isolation period visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating-and-close-contacts and refer to current guidance for HSC staff referenced at Paragraph 7.4.
- 8.6 If at any time a member of staff develops any of the symptoms of COVID-19, they should begin self-isolating and a PCR test should be booked immediately.
- 8.7 Staff must contact their manager as soon as they are symptomatic. If this occurs in work, staff should self-isolate and immediately telephone their manager before they go home. Staff will be advised of local testing arrangements by their line manager.

Group Living Settings

- 8.8 If the Registered Manager of a children's home or supported accommodation project considers that testing of a child, young person or staff member is necessary on the basis that they are displaying COVID-19 symptoms, the individual should begin self-isolating and the Registered Manager should follow PHA advice on booking a PCR test at: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19>. A staff member or young person should self-isolate after testing until the test results are known. In the case of children's homes, the Trust Designated Nurse can be contacted for advice/ assistance if required and a Trust Senior Manager should be advised that a request for testing has been made. Where a young person for whom a Trust holds statutory responsibility is living in a supported accommodation project, and tests positive or is symptomatic, the young person's named Support Worker should be notified and their support plan updated as appropriate.
- 8.9 If a child or staff member in a Trust managed home has a positive test, the Trust's Contact Tracing Team will contact the young person/staff member and all those who have been in close contact with the young person/staff member will be contacted and advice will be provided regarding the requirement to self-isolate in line with current requirements. Where a child or staff member in an independent home has a positive test, this contact and follow up will be made by the PHA Test, Track and Trace service. For supported accommodation projects, the PHA Track and Trace team will contact all the close contacts of the young person or staff member who is positive and if there are two or more positive cases, the PHA Track and Trace Team will inform the PHA Health Protection Team and the PHA will carry out a risk assessment and develop an action plan.
- 8.10 Parent/s should be informed of a young person's positive test result, where appropriate.

Testing for Asymptomatic Children and Young People

- 8.11 As above, a PCR test should be arranged for any child or young person who displays symptoms of COVID-19.
- 8.12 For asymptomatic children over 11 years of age, twice weekly LFD testing is recommended. Children who are still at school will be able to access LFDs through school distribution. Further information is available at:
- <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/information-schools-colleges-universities-and-parents/lateral-flow-device>.
- 8.13 Older children, or those who are no longer at school, can access LFDs through community mechanisms. These include ordering online or collecting packs using the LFD Collect system. Most pharmacies in NI are now signed up to this through 'Pharmacy Collect.' The links are:
- [Find a local site to collect LFDs to perform at home \(external link opens in a new window / tab\)](#)
- [Ordering LFDs for delivery to your home address](#)
- 8.14 It should be noted that if an asymptomatic child or young person is moving accommodation or placement e.g. into foster care or from one residential setting to another or are moving from school to short break care, they will not need to have a PCR test if they are having regular twice weekly LFD tests. Further advice can be obtained on a case by case basis as necessary from the Trust Designated Nurse (see **Annex A**).
- 8.15 Registered providers of children's homes are reminded of the requirement to notify the RQIA of a serious illness and outbreak of infectious disease in line with the Children's Homes Regulations (NI) 2005.

Foster Care and Supported Lodgings

- 8.16 If a child/young person in foster care or supported lodgings displays symptoms of COVID-19, they should start self-isolating in line with PHA guidance and a test should be arranged. The foster carers and young person/host families should contact their appointed social worker immediately to advise them. The Trust will advise, in consultation with PHA, whether it is appropriate for testing for the child's/young person's carers and household members to be carried out and will also advise on the arrangements to do so should this be necessary.
- 8.17 If a foster carer approaches an independent/not for profit fostering provider directly, they may obtain advice from the PHA on their behalf and should also advise the placing Trust of the situation.
- 8.18 If a child/young person, carer or household member has a positive test, the Trust's Contract Tracing Team or, in the case of an independent fostering placement, the Public Health Agency Track and Trace team, will contact the carer/household member, and all those who have been in close contact with the child, young person, carer or household member, and advice will be provided regarding any requirement to self-isolate in line with current guidance.

9. CONTACT AND VISITORS

- 9.1 As we move forward through the recovery phase, there is a presumption of face-to-face contact.

- 9.2 All face-to-face contact between family members living in different households should be in accordance with the latest public health advice in order to prevent the spread of infection. Latest advice is available online at:
<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-and-guidance-what-they-mean-you>. Specific arrangements may be required for children and families with particular individual needs and require more specialist advice from PHA.
- 9.3 Alternative methods of contact should only be used to replace face-to-face contact where informed by a COVID-19 risk assessment.
- 9.4 Where appropriate, and subject to completion of an appropriate risk assessment, a young person may still have overnight stays with their parents/family if their family are well and household members have no symptoms. The Social Worker should contact the young person to ensure all family members remain well (and to conduct an assessment as to whether the young person should be tested) before the young person returns to their foster carers or children's home.
- 9.5 When face-to-face contact cannot take place, it will be important to find ways of ensuring that children and young people can remain in contact with their families and friends, as appropriate, for example, meeting outside, through daily or regular phone calls, video chats, use of social media platforms or other means as permitted.
- 9.6 For children's homes, the name and contact details of all visitors to the home should be recorded for Contact Tracing. If further advice is required around the safe facilitation of visits to or by family members and others, the Children's Home Manager/staff should contact the Trust Designated Nurse (and/or other appointed individual) and the IPC Team (for Trust facilities) in the first instance, who may in turn seek advice from the PHA's dedicated point of contact for children and young people's services.
- 9.7 Good communication between social workers, the child or young person's family, and the child/young person themselves will be essential to ensure that contact is maintained as much as possible, that alternative arrangements are agreed by all parties and the child or young person can converse freely with their social worker, staff and family
- 9.8 Where meetings and visits take place indoors, this should be in accordance with current public health advice: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-and-guidance-what-they-mean-you#toc-4>.
- 9.9 Where incidents occur in a children's home or supported accommodation project which require a policing response, PSNI staff attending are required to wear PPE. If there is a positive case of COVID-19 within the setting, staff should notify the PSNI's Silver Command by email to: SCCTallaCommand@psni.police.uk.
- 10. SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**
- 10.1 It is recognised that this is a very uncertain and anxious time for everyone, and that children and young people may feel particularly worried and anxious.
- 10.2 HSC Trusts should ensure continued support from the child/young person's social worker and additional support, if appropriate, from Looked After Children Therapeutic Services and mental health services.

- 10.3 Children's homes and supported accommodation projects should work closely with the HSC Board (and responsible HSC Trust as appropriate) to consider what additional support may be required to assist young people at this time, especially during any period of self-isolation.
- 10.4 Foster carers and host families should seek advice from their appointed social worker about what aids are available to help support children and young people throughout the pandemic. Carers and families should try to be as positive and honest as possible if asked questions, and also to offer assurance where required.
- 10.5 There is a wide range of online resources available to help support children and young people of all ages throughout the pandemic period. Some useful links are provided below¹. In addition, organisations like VOYPIC², Extern³, Fostering Network⁴, and Action for Children⁵ are regularly updating their social media channels with details of available resources and are using these channels to maintain communication with children, young people and carers, and to provide them with ongoing practical support such as self-care tips and suggested activities.
- 10.6 A range of action has been taken by the PHA and other HSC organisations to support mental and emotional health and wellbeing during the pandemic. The five HSC Trusts have linked with the PHA and the NI Ambulance Service to develop a Promoting Mental Wellbeing Action Pack. This is available at:
<https://view.pagetiger.com/cfvaiep/1>.
- 10.7 The Minding Your Head website at <https://www.mindingyourhead.info/> contains information to help people look after their mental health and to support others. This includes a directory of mental health services in Northern Ireland and links to online support, such as the HSC Apps Library, which provides a one stop shop for the public to access a range of safe and approved apps to help them look after their mental health and wellbeing.
- 10.8 The Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) website at <http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/> provides information about the resources available at area level across the 5 HSC Trusts, including all nature of services available to children and families: <http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/download/documents/LPG-Members-covid-19.pdf>. The CYPSP has also produced key resources for children and young people, specifically in relation to managing the impact of COVID-19; including a daily updates page and a free Resource Pack for Children and Young People (<http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/download/documents/CYPSP-Resource-Pack-2020.pdf>) and a Young Person's Mental Health Guide (<http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/dailyupdate-young-persons-mental-health-guide/>)

¹ <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/childrens-guide-to-coronavirus/>
https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus_ABookForChildren.pdf
<https://www.macsnri.org/helpful-hints-tips-during-covid-19/>
<https://hospicefoundation.ie/bereavement-2-2/covid19-care-and-inform/grieving-in-exceptional-times/>
<https://youngpeopleni.org/>

² <https://twitter.com/VOYPIC> <https://www.facebook.com/voiceofyoungpeopleincare>

³ <https://www.extern.org/Listing/Category/latest-advice>

⁴ <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/coronavirus-covid-19>

⁵ <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work-in-northern-ireland/>

- 10.9 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services have continued to operate throughout the pandemic and children and young people are urged to speak to a GP to seek help with their mental health if they need it.
- 10.10 Additional support will be made available where necessary to educate children and young people about the importance of acting in accordance with public health advice relating to COVID-19 for their own and others' safety. Where necessary, HSC Trusts will arrange additional support from the HSC Trust Therapeutic Teams for Looked After Children and will explore any additional support (including sufficient meaningful activities and therapeutic interactions) that may be required to help children and young people at this difficult time.
- 10.11 If a child or young person living in a children's home refuses to comply with the children's home COVID-19 Plan, the use of a home/facility designated by the HSC Trust for self-isolation purposes should be considered and used if necessary. Other potential options may include the transfer of a young person to a single accommodation unit with outreach support. The proposed intervention must always be considered to be in the young person's best interests with the aim of preventing harm, and proportionate to the likelihood and seriousness of that harm.
- 10.12 Where a HSC Trust considers that a child or young person who is refusing to self-isolate poses a risk of significant harm to themselves or others, they may consider an application to the multi-agency panel for secure care. However, such a step should only be considered when all other alternatives have been exhausted.

11. SHORT BREAKS

- 11.1 Short break services are recognised as an important aspect of support to families and foster carers caring for children and young people, including those with disabilities, and should continue to be provided, subject to public health advice and local risk assessment.

12. EDUCATION

- 12.1 The vast majority of pupils in Northern Ireland have now returned to school. School attendance is vitally important for children and young people. Multiple sources of evidence show that a lack of schooling increases inequalities, reduces the life chances of children and can exacerbate physical and mental health issues. School improves health, learning, socialisation and opportunities throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.
- 12.2 Children and young people who were previously shielding were identified on a precautionary basis at a stage when there was less data on the effects of COVID-19 in children. Based on better understanding of COVID-19 the great majority have now been advised they do not need to do so again, and that they should return to school. A small number of children under paediatric care (such as recent transplant or very immunosuppressed children) have been or will be given individual advice about any ongoing need to avoid infection. Further guidance for "clinically extremely vulnerable" and "vulnerable" people, including children and young people, is available at:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-clinically-extremely-vulnerable-and-vulnerable-people>.

- 12.3 If a young person is suspected or confirmed COVID positive they should not attend school until completion of their isolation period. Any identified close contacts should follow advice regarding any requirement to self-isolate.
- 12.4 As part of its Children Looked After Education Project, the Education Authority has an established universal helpline to provide support to the Team around Children Looked After who are of statutory school age. The helpline number is 028 7051 1086 and it will be operational from 8.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 8.00am to 4.00pm Fridays. Alternatively, email queries can be addressed to: Lookedafterchildren@eani.org.uk.
- 12.5 Playboard NI in cooperation with the Department of Education's Play Matters Programme have produced guidance to assist teachers, playworkers, parents and those offering care to children in these challenging times to consider how they may provide quality play opportunities and experiences. This is available at: <https://www.playboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-Play-Matters-More-Than-It-Ever-Did.pdf>.
- 12.6 Latest advice and guidance for parents and carers in relation to schools and educational settings is available at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-schools-colleges-and-universities>.
- 12.7 Updates on schools and the latest information released by the Department of Education in relation to COVID-19 and its impact on education services can found on the Department's website at: <http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/departments-education-releases-covid-19-coronavirus>.

ANNEX A: KEY CONTACTS

PHA

Name	Position	Contact Details
Deirdre Webb	Assistant Director of Public Health Nursing in the PHA	deirdre.webb@hscni.net Tel: 07920 186497
Emily Roberts	Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Young People in the PHA	emily.roberts@hscni.net Tel: 07810 527191

HSC Trust Designated Nurses for Residential Children's Homes

SEHSCT		
Name of Home	Contact Nurse	Contact details
Flaxfield, Lisburn	Marion Davidson	07536114905
Glenmore, Lisburn	Marion Davidson	07536114905
Lakewood Secure (3 homes)	Winifred Herron	07720337940
William Street, Ards	Winifred Herron	07720337940
Ashgrove, Ards	Winifred Herron	07720337940
Marmion, Holywood	Karen Delahoz	07872048339
Oaklands, Bangor	Karen Delahoz	07872048339
Cuan Court, Downpatrick	Sinead Stevenson	07730618656

There is a message facility on all mobiles. Advice and support is available from 8.30 - 4.30pm daily, Monday to Friday

If a call back has not been returned within 3 hours, please contact Deirdre Ward, (Lead Nurse for Public Health Nursing) on 07971333768 or Karen Elwood (Head of Service for Public Health Nursing) on 07779454942.

SEHSCT's Lead Infection Prevention and Control Nurse, Colin Clarke, can be contacted on 07790607289 or by calling the Infection Prevention and Control Team via the SEHSCT switchboard.

BHSCT		
Name of Home	Contact Nurse	Contact details
Antrim Rd	Joan Anderson	02895042160
Somerton/Willow	Joan Anderson	02895042160
Osbourne Pk	Joan Anderson	02895042160
Fortwilliam Pk	Denise Campbell	02895042160
Glandore	Denise Campbell	02895042160
North Rd	Denise Campbell	02895042160
Donard/Aran	Marie Canavan	02895042160
Slemish	Marie Canavan	02895042160
Aisling	Marie Canavan	02895042160
Infection Prevention Control Nurse Adviser – Moya McGloin – 07516110522		
Nurse Manager – Eileen Woods – 07747441607		
Divisional Nurse/COVID Lead for Children's – Nuala Toner – 07715992804		

There is a message facility on all mobiles. Advice and support is available from 8.30 - 4.30pm daily, Monday to Friday.

Nurse contact details for Residential Homes - Single point of contact telephone number – contact 02895042160 (Mon – Fri 9-5). The school nurses will be available for advice regarding the general health and wellbeing of the young person and can advise regarding signposting to other services if needed from 7th April 2020. Any medical concerns should be referred to the GP as per normal procedures.

Infection Control Advice

Moya McGloin (Band 5 Staff Nurse Forest Lodge) will be the Infection Prevention Control Nurse (IPC) for all Residential Children's homes within BHSCT.

Moya can be contacted on **07516110522**, email: Moya.McGloin@belfasttrust.hscni.net. Working hours will be Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Moya will be happy to provide information/ assistance regarding Covid related issues. If there are questions that she is unable to answer, she will liaise with the IPC team and get back to you.

Liaison with PHA

Nuala Toner, Divisional Nurse will be the single point of contact between children's services and Deirdre Webb, PHA

NHSCT		
Name	Position	Contact Details
Susan Gault	All Looked After Children who require testing- this is via Staff Testing:	susan.gault@northerntrust.hscni.net
Barbara Barklie	General Covid-19 related queries	Tel: 028 9083 1432 Mob: 07771336448 barbara.barklie@northerntrust.hscni.net

SHSCT		
Name	Position	Contact Details
Mairead Donnelly	Point of contact for TESTING for children in children's homes	Mairead.donnelly@southerntrust.hscni.net
Jacqueline Toner	Specialist Nurse LAC - General Covid-19 related queries	Jacqueline.Toner2@southerntrust.hscni.net Tel: 02830832252 Mob: 07823443085
Denise McDonagh	Infection Prevention Control Nurse	Mob: 07799038108
Kate Kelly	Infection Prevention Control Nurse	Mob: 07803832542
Annette O'Hara	Infection Prevention Control Nurse	Mob: 07823320739

WHSCT		
Name	Position	Contact Details
Susan Rodgers	Specialist Nurse LAC Designated Link for COVID 19, and point	Tel: 028 6632 7730 Mob: 07867155040

	of contact for Testing	
Catherine McKevitt	All other queries – (A) Head of Service for Residential Childcare:	Mob: 07824331498

Jointly Commissioned Supported Accommodation Aged 16-21 Years/ Adoption Services

Specialist Nurses for Looked After Children and Young People			
Name	Trust	Contact Details	Office Address
Catherine Gorman	BHSCT	Tel: 028 95 045042 catherine.gorman@belfasttrust.hscni.net	Whiterock Health Centre 1st Floor 6 Whiterock Grove Belfast BT12 6RQ
Barbara Barklie	NHSCT	Tel: 028 9083 1432 Mob: 07771336448 barbara.barklie@northerntrust.hscni.net	Glengormley Community Services, Carnmoney Road, Newtownabbey
Sonya McDowell	SEHSCT	Mobile: 07912046338 Sonya.McDowell2@setrust.hscni.net	Trust Wide Ards Hospital Newtownards Co Down BT23 4AS
Jacqueline Toner	SHSCT	Tel no: 028 30 832252 Mobile no: 07823 443085 Jacqueline.Toner2@southerntrust.hscni.net	Canal House St Mary Street, Newry BT34 2AA
Susan Rogers	WHSCT	Tel: 028 6632 7730 Ext: 255179 Mob: 07867 155040 Susan.Rogers@westerntrust.hscni.net	South West Acute Hospital 124 Irvinestown Road Enniskillen Co Fermanagh BT47 6DN
Emily Roberts	PHA	Mob: 07810527191 Emily.roberts@hscni.net	Towerhill Armagh

Fostering /Supported Lodgings

For **detailed advice** on health issues and infection prevention and control, the PHA's dedicated point of contact for children and young people's services is Deirdre Webb, Assistant Director of Public Health Nursing (deirdre.webb@hscni.net Tel: 07920 186497), and she may be contacted by the relevant Trust Assistant Director or nominated lead within the independent/not for profit fostering providers. Each HSC Trust Family Placement Services will establish a link with their health/nursing colleagues to enable prompt access to advice and guidance where concerns/queries arise regarding COVID-19.

ANNEX B: USEFUL RESOURCES

General Advice and Guidance

PHA website: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus>

NI Direct website: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>

Infection Prevention and Control

COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control>.

Guidance for Health and Social Care staff car sharing for essential practice:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/guidance-health-and>

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council free online resource on infection control:

<https://learningzone.niscc.info/storage/adapt/5e6b84387012f/index.html>.

World Health Organisation – Hand Hygiene Brochure:

https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Hand_Hygiene_Why_How_and_When_Brochure.pdf.

PHA best practice advice for nurseries and childcare settings:

<https://www.niinfectioncontrolmanual.net/nursery-guidance>.

PHA guidance on PPE for HSC staff:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/guidance-ppe>

Vaccines

NI Direct information on who can be vaccinated, and how to get a vaccine:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/get-covid-19-vaccination-northern-ireland>

PHA information materials on the COVID-19 vaccination programme (including information for children aged 12 to 15):

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/northern-ireland-covid-19-vaccination-programme/covid-19-vaccination-0>

Tracing close contacts and isolation

NI Direct guidance on self-isolation requirements:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating>

Management of Health and Social Care Staff who are confirmed cases of COVID-19:
<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-hss-md-02-2022-revised.pdf>

StopCOVID-NI app:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/stopcovid-ni-application-easy-explainer-guide>

Testing

Arranging and administering a COVID-19 test:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19>

Preparing and using LFD test kit:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/lateral-flow-testing>

Where to get LFD test:

<https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

Sources of support

Action for Children in Northern Ireland

Telephone: 028 9046 0500 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: nioffice@actionforchildren.org.uk

Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP)

<http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/>

EXTERN

Telephone: 028 9084 0555

Fostering Network and Information Service for Northern Ireland

NI Advice Line Telephone: 028 9070 5056 / 07918748415

Email: ni@fostering.net

The helpline is operational Monday to Thursday from 9.30am to 2pm, and on Friday 9.30am to 11.30am. For urgent queries outside these hours, email ni@fostering.net or call 028 9070 5056.

Minding Your Head:

<https://www.mindingyourhead.info/>

Playboard NI:

<https://www.playboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus-Play-Matters-More-Than-It-Ever-Did.pdf>.

Promoting Mental Wellbeing Action Pack:

<https://view.pagetiger.com/cfvaiep/1>

VOYPIC:
<https://www.voypic.org>

Belfast Office	Telephone: 028 9024 4888
Ballymena Office	Telephone: 028 2563 2641
Derry/Londonderry Office	Telephone: 028 7137 8986
Lurgan Office	Telephone: 028 3831 3380

ANNEX C: COVID-19 INFECTION PREVENTION AIDE MEMOIR FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S RESIDENTIAL HOMES NI

Covid-19 Infection Prevention Aide Memoir for Children and Young People's Residential Homes NI

Everyone must adhere to public health advice relating to COVID-19 in particular, advice relating to good infection prevention and control practice. For detailed advice on COVID-19, you should consult the PHA's website at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public>

- All children and young people (11 to 17yrs) should be encouraged to download the StopCOVID NI App.
- All staff should be encouraged to download StopCOVIDNI App (When wearing the recommended PPE, staff should pause the contact tracing function or switch off the Bluetooth on the App to avoid the possibility of a false notification)
- All children and staff should try to maintain a safe distance from each other to prevent the spread of infection (at least 2 metres apart)
- Staff must use recommended personal protective equipment (PPE) in accordance with current national IPC Advice.
- Staff must use fluid resistant disposable masks in all scenarios within the home where they are unable to physically distance 2 metres from either the young person they are caring for or from their work colleagues.
- Young people should be encouraged to wear face coverings
- If a member of staff develops any symptoms or if they live with someone showing symptoms they should not go into work (or should be sent home if they become unwell at work), arrange to be tested and follow self-isolation requirements at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating>.
- Anyone with a positive PCR test should continue to self-isolate and follow the current guidance on self-isolation requirements, available at NI Direct at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating>
- Vaccines are now available for anyone over 12 years of age. Getting vaccinated reduces your likelihood of getting COVID-19 and of passing it on to other people. Most importantly, it reduces the likelihood of becoming seriously ill. More information on who can be vaccinated, and how to get a vaccine, is available at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/get-covid-19-vaccination-northern-ireland>.
- Remember while vaccination may help protect you from coronavirus, it's still important to follow any current social distancing guidance and other infection prevention and control measures to keep each other safe.
- Everyone in Northern Ireland with symptoms of COVID-19 is eligible for a free PCR test. Information on arranging and administering a COVID-19 test—is available on the PHA website at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/testing-and-tracing-covid-19/testing-covid-19>
- All HSC staff and staff working in the supported living sector are encouraged to avail of Lateral Flow asymptomatic testing. Information on preparing and using the LFD test kit, and

registering test results, is available on the PHA website at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/lateral-flow-testing>

- For asymptomatic children, twice weekly LFD testing is recommended. Children who are still at school will be able to access LFDs through school distribution. Further information is available at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/information-schools-colleges-universities-and-parents/lateral-flow-device>.
- Older children, or those who are no longer at school, can access LFDs through community mechanisms.

Remember potential 'hotspots' for cross-contamination:

- no sharing of stationery (such as pens, pencils, erasers, etc) amongst children, staff or visitors;
- specific arrangements for signing the visitors' book;
- phones and computers should not be shared and where this is not possible, ensure appropriate cleaning between uses;
- shared study and/or space should be avoided and always cleaned between uses;
- clothes, jewellery or other accessories should not be shared between young people. If there is no alternative to sharing then the item/s must be cleaned/washed between uses;
- staff should limit wearing of jewellery to that of wedding bands only
- staff should wear short sleeves (or rolled above the elbows to ensure proper washing of wrists etc).
- staff should keep fingernails short. Nail varnish or gel overlays should not be used
- stagger meal times so as to minimise duration spent with higher numbers of staff and children.
- Remote platforms should be used for staff meetings. However if face to face meetings are considered essential then the venue / room must be risk assessed and maximum capacity not breached. During face to face meetings staff must wear facemasks at all times and food or drink should not be consumed.
- Ensure good ventilation by opening windows for short periods throughout the day
- Car sharing should be avoided, but if essential; staff should wear recommended PPE, encourage young person to wear face covering; sit as far away as possible; ensure car is cleaned before and after use; handwashing before and after use; keep windows open to allow air flow and limit to 1 staff member if possible
- Do not wear the same personal clothing at work on consecutive days without laundering items each day at the highest temperature compatible for the fabric using laundry detergent
- Ensure an individual children's home plan is available in the event that a child develops COVID-19 symptoms, or in the event that there is a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak at the home
- Ensure that children's home plans include details for all staff, including their GP contact details and Health Care Numbers to facilitate timely provision of information to Trusts' Occupational Health and the Contact Tracing Service in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the home.

- Where possible, staff should not work across more than one children's home on a regular basis. Exceptions would include maintaining a safe staffing level within a home at all times. Where possible staff bubbles should be used
- Check the PHA website Trust update bulletins regularly for the latest information and advice on meeting with others, in particular on forming a 'bubble'; on shielding; or on restrictions that may be in place for particular geographical areas.

ANNEX D: INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION CHECKLIST

Introduction

This COVID19 checklist has been developed to strengthen Covid-19 infection prevention in residential accommodation/ children's homes in Northern Ireland. The checklist is a toolkit for local action by identifying areas that may need additional supports during this pandemic. This checklist should be read in conjunction with the appropriate IPC guidance. A safe pragmatic risk assessed approach should be taken at all times.

Methodology

This checklist was developed following a review of similar risk assessments and checklists and on current PHA Infection Prevention advice and guidelines. Five key areas have been identified to evaluate the preparedness level of residential accommodation and the ability of services to respond:

- Awareness inc Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Hand hygiene,
- Physical distancing measures,
- Cleaning & disinfection,
- Management of symptomatic young person/staff member.

The checklist should be used to identify areas where there is a need for further intervention to strengthen prevention and response. This checklist is designed to identify the most appropriate responses for management of public health issues within congregated settings and does not reflect any broader issue on the quality of that accommodation outside of a COVID19 context.

Process

- Residential Managers should complete the attached checklist to assess if there are adequate infection control measures in place.
- Gaps identified and recommendations made, should be reviewed by the managers and actioned by the HSCT. A report of identified gaps and actions taken should be forwarded to the HSCT Clinical Lead for the Covid-19 Response.
- In addressing the gaps in infection control measures the Clinical lead will contact the local Infection Prevention Team and/or Public Health Agency for advice / support.
- The local IP Team can be contacted to provide advice. The need for an onsite visit will be assessed.

Name and Address of Unit		
HSCT		
Completed By	Name:	Designation
Date Completed		

Background:

Awareness			
	Yes	No	Comment
Is there an outbreak management plan which includes COVID-19?			
Does the plan consider the footfall in the Unit?			
Is there a Visiting Policy?			
Is there a nominated COVID-19 lead in the unit?			
Is there an established system for young people to inform staff confidentially if they develop any of the symptoms suggestive of COVID-19?			
Is there an established pathway for service users/staff to follow if they develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19?			
Are young people provided with written information on COVID-19?			
Are family/carers advised regarding the management of Covid in the unit?			
Is there evidence of promotion of good hand and respiratory hygiene with display of posters and information leaflets throughout the facility?			
Is there sufficient availability of PPE			
Is there PHE donning and doffing posters available in the residential home for staff to refer to?			
Has a risk assessment been conducted to ascertain if the unit has extreme medically at risk or moderately medically at risk persons in their care?			

Is there an up to date list of staff member's DOB, GP and contact telephone numbers in the event of an outbreak?			
--	--	--	--

Hand Hygiene			
	Yes	No	Comment
Is there an ample supply of tissues and hand sanitisers / hand gel outside dining rooms/communal bathrooms/ at entrances to the building/ at main reception area/ in communal areas or other areas where people gather, as per facility risk assessment?			
Are hand-washing facilities, including soap and disposable towels well maintained?			
Are foot-operated bins available?			
Physical distancing measures			
	Yes	No	Comment
Are there correct 2 metre distance markings in place in areas such as meeting rooms?			
Is there evidence of restricted or staggered use of the dining room or other communal facilities?			
Are there display notices/signs of what is meant by 2 metre distance throughout the units?			

Are furniture fixtures such as tables/chairs in the dining room or other communal facilities reduced to limit number of people per table and preserve physical distancing?			
Cleaning and Disinfection			
	Yes	No	Comment
Is there a daily cleaning and disinfection schedule of shared areas, check records?			
Is there increased cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces e.g. especially all hard surfaces in high-contact areas such as door handles, grab rails/hand rails in corridors/stairwells, plastic-coated or laminated worktops, access touchpads, telephones/keyboards in offices, and toilets/taps/sanitary fittings?			
Are staff familiar with cleaning and disinfection products and procedure for cleaning,?			
Is the environment, furniture fittings and fixtures amenable to cleaning and disinfection?			
Management of symptomatic service user/staff member			
	Yes	No	Comments
Is there a protocol for management of a symptomatic young person/staff member in the unit?			

Is there an en-suite room or dedicated toilet shower facility available whereby a young person can self-isolate in the event of an illness suggestive of COVID-19?			
Is there a contingency plan for transporting a symptomatic young person to a test centre for screening? Or alternative testing arrangements in place?			
Is there a process for alerting local Infection Prevention Teams / PHA in the event of a suspect case in either a service user or staff member?			
Are staff able to adhere to the standard operating procedure in relation to car sharing and transporting young people?			