

To: Headteachers and Chair of Governors of Schools

Date: Friday, 18 September 2020

Director of Public Health for North Yorkshire

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Dear colleague

COVID-19: ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS AND PARENTS/CARERS ON SYMPTOMS, ACCESSING TESTS ETC.

On behalf of GP practices, we wish to offer our thanks and support for your fantastic efforts to get children safely back into school this term during the pandemic response.

As you will be aware, there is a rising incidence of people testing positive for coronavirus across the country and this includes in our local area.

We are also aware that the start of the school term and the move into autumn heralds the arrival of the usual respiratory viral illnesses we experience every year. This year however we will all have to manage this in the context of the overlap of symptoms with covid-19.

Over the past week, local practices have all reported receiving calls from parents of children with acute upper respiratory symptoms who are requesting testing for coronavirus, or for letters from the GP confirming the illness is non-covid related. Some of the parents claim to have been told by the child's school they must obtain this confirmation before a child can return to lessons.

We therefore felt it important to reiterate a few principles so we can work together to support children and families in a clear and consistent way and keep all our services operating safely and efficiently under these pressures.

If a child has any of the following symptoms then they should be considered a possible covid-19 case:

- fever measuring 37.8C or above
- a new persistent cough
- a change or loss of sense of smell or taste

In such circumstances they should be advised to self-isolate (not attend school) for 10 days, or until a negative swab test result is received. Members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days.

Please note that these tests are provided through the NHS Test and Trace service and can be accessed either:

- online at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/
- or by calling 119.

Local testing capacity is being increased in recognition of the increase in possible cases locally and nationally.

Please note that GP practices have not been provided with any swab tests and are unable to access coronavirus testing other than by directing patients to the service described above. It is also not possible to clinically distinguish reliably or safely the symptoms of covid-19 from other viral respiratory illnesses. For these reasons, please do not direct parents or children to their GP to undertake tests or for letters stating if the illness is or is not covid-19. Children only need to be assessed by a GP if their clinical condition is severe enough to warrant it (eg shortness of breath, dehydration, altered level of consciousness).

It should be remembered that in the overwhelming majority of children, covid-19 is a mild self-limiting illness lasting only a few days (like most seasonal viral respiratory illnesses) which requires no treatment itself but actions are instead focussed on limiting the spread to the illness to people who may be a greater clinical risk.

We look forward to working with you over the coming months to keep our local children, families and wider community safe and well.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Carlton
Corporate Director - Children and
Young People's Service



Dr Lincoln Sargeant
Director of Public Health