

Prime Minister's announcement on the Living with COVID-19 plan

Today the Prime Minister has set out the next phase of the government's COVID-19 response '[Living with COVID-19](#)'. COVID-19 continues to be a virus that we learn to live with and the imperative to reduce the disruption to children and young people's education remains.

Further information on what this means for education and childcare settings and children's social care services is below.

Changes to testing in education and childcare settings and children's social care services

From today, Monday 21 February, the Government is removing the guidance for staff and students in most education and childcare settings to undertake twice-weekly asymptomatic testing.

Given we now know that the risks of severe illness from COVID-19 in most children and most fully vaccinated adults are very low, and our successful vaccination programme has achieved a high rate of take-up, we can remove this advice, bringing education into line with wider society.

Changes to self-isolation and daily testing of close contacts

From Thursday 24 February, the Government will remove the legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test. Adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for at least 5 full days, and then continue to follow the guidance until they have received 2 negative test results on consecutive days. In addition, the Government will:

- No longer, ask fully vaccinated close contacts and those aged under 18 to test daily for 7 days, and remove the legal requirement for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.
- End self-isolation support payments, national funding for practical support and the medicine delivery service will no longer be available.
- End routine contact tracing. Contacts will no longer be required to self-isolate or advised to take daily tests. Staff, children and young people should attend their education settings as usual. This includes staff who have been in close contact within their household, unless they are able to work from home.
- End the legal obligation for individuals to tell their employers when they are required to self-isolate.

More detail can be found in the [Living with COVID-19](#) plan published today.

Further detail will be published by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) on Thursday 24 February and a link to this will be provided in the schools COVID-19 operational guidance on the same day.

From Thursday 24 March, the Government will:

Remove the COVID-19 provisions within the Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance regulations.

From Friday 1 April, the Government will:

- Remove the current guidance on voluntary COVID-status certification in domestic settings and no longer recommend that certain venues use the NHS COVID Pass.
- Update guidance setting out the ongoing steps that people with COVID-19 should take to minimise contact with other people. This will align with the changes to testing.
- No longer, provide free to order universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the general public in England.
- Consolidate guidance to the public and businesses, in line with public health advice.

Closure of the UKHSA advice service

Following the Prime Minister's announcement confirming that self-isolation is no longer a legal requirement following a positive test and the publication of the [Living with COVID-19](#) plan, the UKHSA advice service will be decommissioned from 31 March 2022.

The UKHSA advice service, accessed through option 1 of the DfE COVID-19 helpline, was introduced by UKHSA's predecessor, Public Health England (PHE), in September 2020. This was to provide advice to education and childcare settings on the action they should take to respond to positive cases of COVID-19 in their setting.

The DfE COVID-19 helpline will still be available to answer your questions relating to COVID-19 in education and childcare settings, once the UKHSA advice service is switched off

Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on COVID-19 vaccination for healthy 5 to 11 year olds

The [NHS is currently offering](#) vaccines to at-risk children and those who live with immunosuppressed people in this age group. Parents and guardians of at risk 5 to 11 year olds should wait for the NHS to contact them, with local NHS teams already contacting those who are eligible.

On Wednesday 16 February, the government accepted [the advice](#) from the independent JCVI to make a non-urgent offer of COVID-19 vaccines to all children aged 5 to 11 in England.

The JCVI advice follows a thorough review by the UK's independent medicines regulator, the MHRA, which approved Pfizer's paediatric vaccine, as safe and effective for children aged 5 to 11.

Children without underlying health conditions are at low risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and the priority remains for the NHS to offer vaccines and boosters to older age groups and vulnerable children, as well as to catch-up with other childhood immunisation programmes.

The NHS will prepare to extend this non-urgent offer to all children during April so parents can, if they want, take up the offer to increase protection against potential future waves of COVID-19, as we learn to live with this virus.

The [updated JCVI advice for vaccinating 5 to 11 year olds](#), which was published on Friday 18 February by the NHS, confirms that community pharmacy-led local vaccination services and vaccination centres should be the primary delivery models for this cohort.

Update for schools on recording attendance

School attendance is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age. It continues to be a priority to ensure that as many children as possible are regularly attending school.

The position on recording school attendance in the register has not changed. Where a pupil is following advice to self-isolate prior to a confirmed case of COVID-19 they should be recorded as code X (not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus). Where a pupil has a confirmed case of COVID-19 they should be recorded as code I (illness).