



COVID-19 Infection and Educational Establishments in Lanarkshire

An agreement on joint working between NHS Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire Council and South Lanarkshire Education Departments

Version 1

17 August 2020

Introduction

The purpose of this agreement is to set out how NHS Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire Council and North Lanarkshire Council will work together should a suspected case of COVID-19 infection, a single confirmed case of COVID-19 infection or a cluster or outbreak of such cases arise in an educational establishment. Such cases could involve staff, pupil or employees of a contractor operating in a school. It is based on the contents of current national guidance for the health and education sectors.

1. Suspected Cases (see Flow Chart 1)

The whole school community should be vigilant for the symptoms of COVID-19, and understand what actions they should take if someone develops them, either onsite or offsite. The most common symptoms are:

- new continuous cough
- fever/high temperature
- loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste (anosmia).

The actions to be undertaken if a pupil or staff member should present with such symptoms in an educational establishment are set out in paragraphs 84 to 94 of Scottish Government's guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term¹. It covers:

- first response;
- isolation at school;
- advice on self-isolation;
- testing (all persons with symptoms, who are advised to self-isolate should seek testing. In a pupil, it is the responsibility of the adult or guardian to organise this);
- testing arrangements (NHSL HPT can provide support should testing require to be expedited);
- transport from school;
- cleaning and hygiene;
- maintaining a register of absences.

Should the observed numbers of pupils or staff presenting in the school with respiratory symptoms increase markedly within a short period, the Headteacher should inform NHSL of this occurrence. NHSL will gather and assess evidence to determine if there is a likelihood that COVID-19 is being transmitted in the educational establishment. It may call a Problem Assessment Group to undertake this action. If a definitive risk is identified (e.g. by consequent testing), an Incident Management team will be convened (see below).

2. A Single Case of Confirmed COVID-19 Infection (See Flow Chart 2)

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020/>

NHSL Test and Protect (T&P)

All persons testing positive for coronavirus infection are notified automatically to T&P. If they are deemed to be a definite case, the person will be contacted urgently. The service operates from 8am to 8pm (Monday to Sunday) and has out of hours cover.

T&P will interview the case to ensure that they are self-isolating for 10 days after symptom onset and to identify potential contacts who may have been exposed to the virus when the case was infective i.e. 48 hours prior to and 7 days after the case's symptom onset.

If the case has worked in or attended an educational establishment in that time-period, he or she (or when relevant, the case's parent or main teacher) will be asked to provide details of:

- His/her regular position and movements in a classroom;
- His/her regular position and movements in other workplace settings including breakout areas and toilets;
- Use of transport;
- Use of masks, gloves and other PPE in the above;
- Application of social distancing in the above.

T&P will then ask the case to identify potential contacts through ascertaining:

- Who was in one of the above areas at the same time as the case;
- If required, was relevant PPE used by case and potential contacts;
- Was social distancing applied by case and potential contacts;
- Are any of the potential contacts, at-risk children or staff;
- Were connectivity groups (i.e. bubbles) present and adhered to.

Based on the above information, T&P will then assess, the level of contact between the case and each contact or groups of contacts to determine if they are close contacts. A close contact is defined as having a person having evidence of the following, during the infective period:

1. Direct contact:

- face to face contact with a case within 1 metre for any length of time, including:
 - being coughed on
 - having a face-to-face conversation
 - having skin-to-skin physical contact
- any contact within 1 metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- a person who has travelled in a small vehicle with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) or in a large vehicle near someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19).

2. Proximity contact:

- A person who has been between 1 and 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), for more than 15 minutes cumulatively during period 48 hours prior to and 7 days after the case's symptom onset

Those meeting such criteria will be considered as close contacts, their details obtained, traced and communicated with and asked to self-isolate for 14 days since their last contact with the case.

Engagement of Educational Establishment by T&P

T&P will seek from the case (or when relevant, the case's parent) the contact details of the Head Teacher of the educational establishment where he or she works or studies. It will then notify the Headteacher of the occurrence of a case. The case will also be asked to personally notify his/her local manager about the situation. If the Headteacher is the case, the relevant local authority officer will be notified.

Close contacts will be asked to notify their situation to the Headteacher of the establishment they work in. T&P, however, will not normally notify the Headteacher about contacts.

Risk Assessment of the Educational Establishment

If the case has either been exposed to the virus in an educational establishment, or may have exposed others in such a setting and there is only one case linked to the educational establishment, T&P will support the Headteacher and other local authority partners in discharging his/her responsibility for undertaking a risk assessment as set out in national guidance and local procedures.

NHSL and its council partners will determine if it's best to manage the risk assessment and consequent management and communications, through a Problem Assessment Group (PAG), led by NHSL.

T&P will share the information gained from the case and contacts and if further details are needed, organise their re-interview. Additional close contacts identified by the educational establishment will also be interviewed.

The risk assessment of the educational establishment should cover:

- Contacts between individuals and groups in relevant settings in and nearby the educational establishment;
- Pupils and staff whose health is at greater risk from COVID-19 infection;
- Out of school activities;
- Transport including drop off/pick up arrangements;
- PPE and other protective barrier measures;
- Hygiene facilities;
- Environmental cleaning;
- Ventilation;
- Any recent reported breaches in social distancing, use of PPE, hygiene etc.;
- Evidence of recent sickness absence in the school;

Risk Management of the Educational Establishment

Risk management will be determined by the findings of the assessment.

If there is no evidence of an on-going risk of transmission, T&P will agree with the educational establishment to continue monitoring the situation.

If there is evidence of an actual or potential increased risk of transmission of COVID-19 infection over and above the background rate, one or more of the following will be considered:

- extending the definition of close contacts and a consequent augmentation in the numbers self-isolating;
- carrying out an intensive disinfection (deep clean) of affected areas;

- offering testing to one or more groupings involved in the school;
- modifying social connectivity arrangements (e.g. bubbles) in the school;
- monitoring the implementation of the above;
- forming an Incident Management Team.

From a public health perspective, closing all or part of an educational establishment based purely on the detection of a single confirmed case is rarely warranted. The risk assessment may occasionally reveal significant findings to change that position. It may however be appropriate in the broader context, for the Education Department to consider school closure to allay staff and parental anxiety. Care will be taken to ensure a consistent approach throughout Lanarkshire which is aligned with the rest of Scotland.

Risk Communication

The finding of even a single case of COVID-19 infection in an educational establishment could cause anxiety among those working in and using the establishment. Discussion will take place about the appropriate level and nature of communications while honouring the confidentiality of the case and their known close contacts.

There will be liaison with the local educational authority (ies) and the Head Teacher/Head of Educational Setting which will be important in helping keep parents/carers, staff and the community informed.

3. A Cluster or Outbreak of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 Infection (See Flow Chart 3)

NHSL Health Protection Team- Incident Management Team

The management of outbreaks and clusters of infectious disease in schools and other settings is led by NHSL health protection teams (HPTs). To manage such occurrences, an HPT convenes its partners to form an Incident Management Team (IMT).

A cluster is defined as:

- two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 occur within 14 days in an educational establishment;
- there is an increase in the background rate of absence due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.

An outbreak is defined as:

- Two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 among students or staff who are direct close contacts, proximity contacts or in the same cohort in the school within 14 days.

A cohort can be a class, year group or other defined group within the school. This definition will help distinguish between transmission occurring in the community and that occurring within the school setting.

Risk Assessment

The Incident Management Team (IMT) led by NHSL will oversee and support the risk assessment undertaken in the school and determine if there is any risk to the wider community.

With regard to the topics assessed, these will be similar to those outlined for a single case. The layout of buildings on site, the overall numbers and types of staff working in them, arrangements for organising pupils and related staff in cohorts and the presence of visitors and contractors will also be considered. Results from background surveillance of COVID-19 in the locality where the establishment is sited, will be reviewed.

Factors taken into account when determining the level of risk, will be: the impact on health of those affected, the speed and extent of spread of the infection, the level of compliance with recommended controls e.g. social distancing and PPE and the actual or potential level of anxiety in the affected population.

Educational establishments should maintain appropriate records to support such an assessment e.g. children, young people and staff attendance, details of pupil groups, visitors to schools, and clinically vulnerable or previously shielded children and young people who are attending school.

Risk Management

The risk management options would include:

- extending the definition of close contacts and a consequent augmentation in the numbers self-isolating;
- carrying out an intensive disinfection (deep clean) of affected areas;
- offering testing to one or more groupings involved in the school;
- modifying social connectivity arrangements (e.g. bubbles) in the school;
- closing an affected area e.g. floor of a school, or the whole school until certain criteria related to the reduction of the risk of transmission have been met.
- monitoring the implementation of the above.

School closure will not generally be necessary, but may be considered in the case of widespread transmission in a school setting, high numbers of cases in multiple cohorts, significant issues in implementing control measures, or when safe operation of the school is not possible. Closing part or all of a school has implications for the physical and mental health of the children affected with a significant knock-on effect on their parents. These factors will also be taken into consideration. Care will be taken to ensure a consistent approach throughout Lanarkshire which is aligned with the rest of Scotland.

Risk Communication

Bespoke, co-ordinated communications will be made through appropriate media to those known to be directly affected by the infection (cases and contacts); those with an increased potential of exposure (groupings within the establishment); the wider school; the local community; national media.

The lead spokesperson for such communications, especially those concerning the risk to health, will be the NHSL public health consultant leading the Incident Management Team.

There will be liaison with the local educational authority (ies) and the Head Teacher/Head of Educational Setting which will be important in helping keep parents/carers, staff and the community informed.

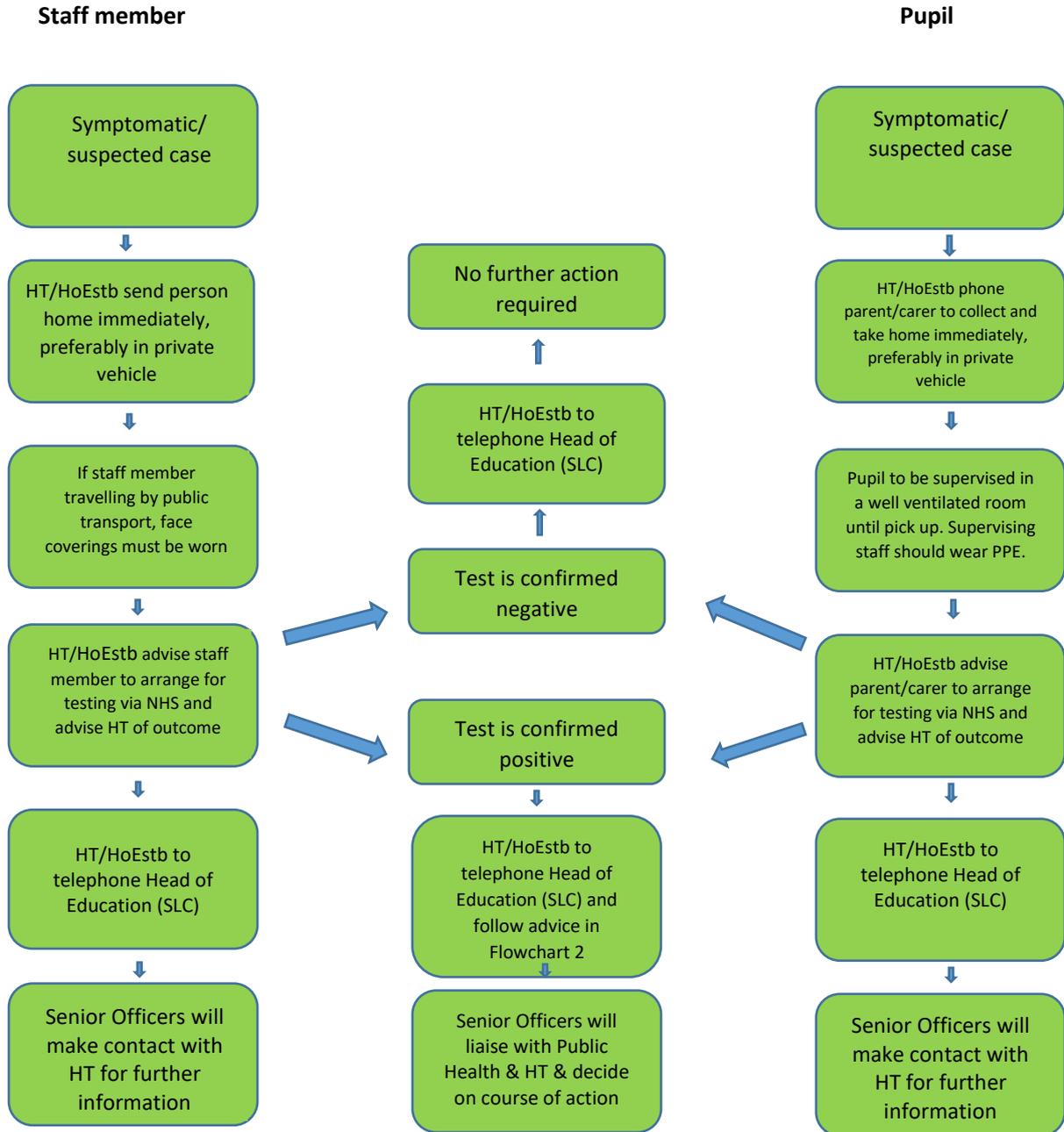
Conclusion

This agreement is based on guidance which is the subject of ongoing modification. As such, it will be subject to review and updating.

Relevant contact details are provided in the appendix.

Test and Protect Flowchart 1 – Suspected Case

(HT = Head Teacher, HOC = Head of Centre; NLC = North Lanarkshire Council)



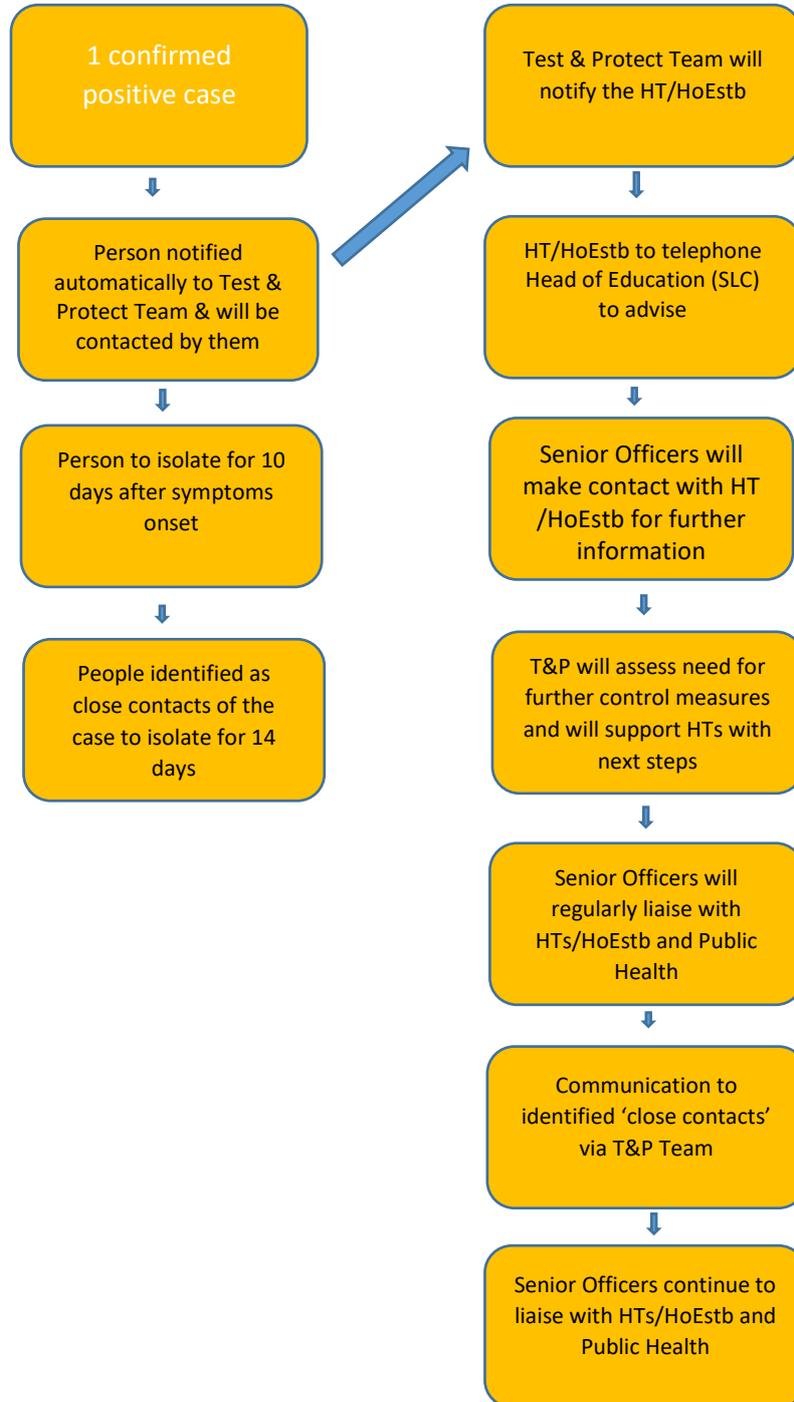
In all suspected cases of Covid-19, the person concerned and anyone they live with must stay at home and self-isolate until the results of the test are known.

*South Lanarkshire Council Head Teachers and Heads of Centre should contact the Authority's Senior Management Team directly by phone and **not by email**.

Test and Protect Flowchart 2 – Single Confirmed Case

(*South Lanarkshire Council Head Teachers and Heads of Centre should contact the Authority's Senior Management Team directly by phone and **not by email**)

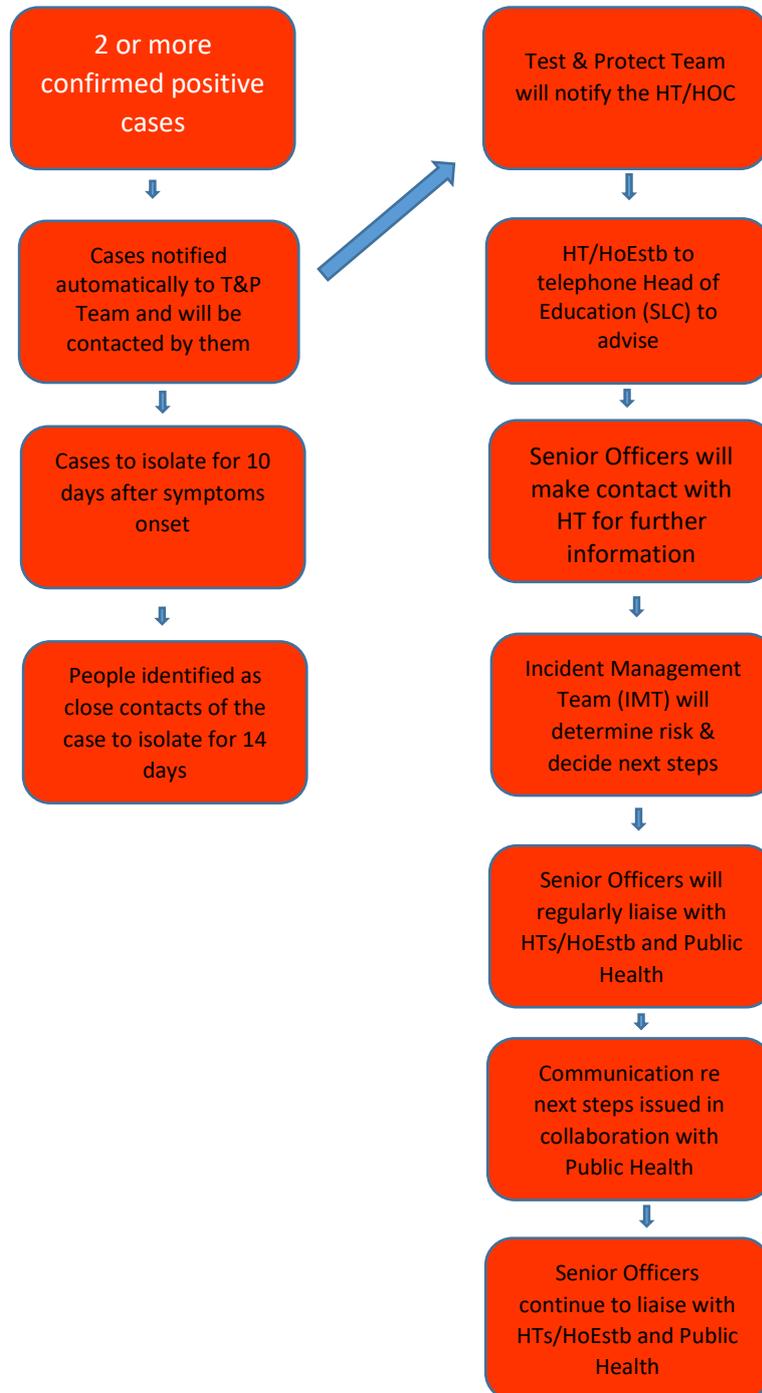
Staff or Pupil



Test and Protect Flowchart 3 – Two or More Confirmed Cases

(*South Lanarkshire Council Head Teachers and Heads of Centre should contact the Authority's Senior Management Team directly by phone and **not by email**)

Staff or Pupil



Appendix

Contact Details:

NHS Lanarkshire

- 01698 85 82 28
- Publichealthcovid.enquiries@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk