

SHPN Health protection in children and young people settings (including education) guidance

14 March 2024

Key information about this guidance update

The Scottish Health Protection Network (SHPN) [health protection guidance for children and young people settings, including education](#) is the first combined national health protection guidance produced in Scotland that covers all children and young people settings including schools and early learning and childcare services. The consolidation and standardisation of health protection guidance across Scotland is intended to make it easier to use.

The advice provided in this new guidance aligns with standard health protection practices. Many staff in schools and childcare services will have experience already of working with NHS health protection teams, particularly during outbreaks. There are no significant changes based on previous guidance or standard practices that they would have experienced then.

If you have any queries about specific health protection issues then please contact your local Health Protection Team (HPT). Contact details are available here: [Health protection team contacts](#).

If you have any feedback on the presentation or content of the guidance then please contact PHS using phs.shpn-admin@phs.scot.

Alignment with UK guidance

This will be the first time we have aligned the national guidance for schools and childcare services in Scotland with the guidance England. This will simplify things for parents, carers and staff who have fed back previously that differences between the two countries caused confusion.

The main area of alignment is on how long to stay off school or childcare if you have an infectious disease such as chickenpox, or if you have diarrhoea and vomiting.

Replacing existing guidance

The publication of this new guidance means the Scottish Government COVID-19 guidance for schools; early learning settings; and further education that were produced during the COVID-19 pandemic can now be stood down, and we can return to these standard health protection practices.

This guidance also incorporates and replaces the previous SHPN infection prevention and control guidance for early learning and day care of children services.

There are some minor differences in this new general health protection guidance compared to the current Scottish Government COVID-19 specific guidance. However, providers should know there are no new COVID-19 specific measures included in this updated guidance.

Below are areas where advice in the new guidance has remained the same as the COVID-19 guidance or where advice has been changed or removed.

Areas where advice is the same

- **Vaccines:** The guidance continues to recommend that all staff and children should be vaccinated in line with the national vaccination schedule. This includes COVID-19 vaccination where people are eligible.

- **Face coverings:** The guidance continues to recommend that there is no recommendation to use face coverings in children or young people settings in Scotland; however, anyone who wishes to continue to wear a face covering should be supported to do so.
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** The guidance continues to recommend that PPE be used following a workplace risk assessment, as set out by the Health and Safety Executive.
- **Identification and management of outbreaks:** The guidance continues to recommend that all staff know how to contact their NHS health protection team (HPT) and when to do so.

Areas where advice has been changed or has been removed

- The 'COVID-19 highest risk list' is no longer mentioned in the updated guidance as this programme ended in May 2022. The guidance instead talks about all vulnerable people and provides additional advice for those with vulnerability to infection.
- The importance of good ventilation is recommended as an element of infection prevention and control, however the 'cut-off' points for action during COVID-19 (e.g. CO2 levels of 800ppm, 1000ppm and 1500ppm) have been removed. The new guidance recommends maximising ventilation without set cut-off points, in line with ventilation advice from the Health and Safety Executive.
- Physical distancing is no longer mentioned in the updated guidance. The COVID-19 guidance only mentioned physical distancing to advise that it was no longer required. As the guidance did not recommend physical distancing was still applied, there is no change to advice.
- Similarly, COVID-19 testing is no longer mentioned in the guidance, except in alignment with the national advice that testing is not recommended for most people. Advice on COVID-19 testing is kept up to date on [NHS Inform](#).

Areas where there is now more detailed information

The new guidance also includes some more detailed advice and has resources that staff can refer to for further information. This includes:

- How to plan for vaccination in schools.
- When children should stay off from school or childcare and when staff should stay off work, now covering a wide range of infections and diseases
- New posters and updated posters.
- Links to additional resources for outdoor learning, forest schools and educational visits, dental guidance, and travel guidance.