

Monday 24 January 2022

NOTE FOR ALL CHILDCARE STAFF - IMPORTANT INFORMATION

An open invitation to all Early Learning and Childcare staff to attend vaccine clinics to receive their booster

I want to first of all thank everyone in the childcare workforce for your continued resilience and ongoing commitment to supporting children, young people and their families during the pandemic. I recognise how challenging the last two years have been and I want to express my appreciation to you all for supporting each other and working together as we continue to navigate through the pandemic.

The First Minister said in Parliament last week that “a combination of booster vaccinations, the willingness of the public to adapt their behaviour to help stem transmission, and the temporary protective measures introduced in December, has helped blunt the impact of the Omicron wave”. This shows that our actions do make a difference. **I am writing to highlight how and where you can access the booster**, as well as other measures that you can take to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19, and that will help us all return to normality as soon as possible.

The COVID-19 booster

COVID-19 vaccination has played a vital role in minimising the impact of the virus and the likelihood of severe illness and hospitalisation resulting from it. I know that a very high proportion of ELC staff have already had both doses, and many more have already received their booster.

Levels of protection provided by the vaccination diminish over time, it is therefore incredibly important that we all take up the offer of the booster as soon as we're eligible. The COVID-19 vaccine booster dose will help extend the protection gained from the first two doses and give longer term protection. You can now get the booster dose and this will help reduce the risk of you needing to go to hospital due to coronavirus this winter. **If you have not done so already, I encourage everyone to get your booster dose as soon as possible.**

Key things to point out about the booster are:

- People aged 18 and over can book boosters online. All adults aged 18 and over can book their appointment for a COVID-19 vaccine booster through the online portal on NHS inform: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinebooster>. If you are unable to access the online portal you can book an appointment through the National Helpline on 0800 030 8013.
- **Local Health Boards are offering additional drop-ins** (more details at: [Vaccine drop-in clinics | The coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine \(nhsinform.scot\)](#)) **including evening and weekend slots.**
- Even if you have an appointment booked for a booster vaccine in a few weeks' time, if you received your second dose more than 12 weeks ago, you can turn up to a walk-in booster

vaccination site to receive your vaccination - your pre-booked appointment will be cancelled automatically.

- As outlined above, you're eligible to receive your booster at least 12 weeks after a second dose. However, adults with a confirmed case of the virus since receiving a vaccine should wait four weeks from testing positive to receive their booster. Even if you have had COVID-19 it is still important you come forward and complete your vaccination course to maximise your protection. You can view a short video on how to use the booking portal at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GhByCCml5Y>

It's not just booster vaccinations that are available. It's not too late to get your first or second dose. Anyone in earlier groups who missed their vaccination can book an appointment by calling the National Helpline on 0800 030 8013 which is open from 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week, or [visit a drop-in clinic](#). For more information about the COVID-19 booster vaccine visit: www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccinebooster

LFD testing

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of regular LFD testing for individuals without symptoms. If an individual develops symptoms, they should self-isolate immediately and book a PCR test.

LFD testing is an effective way of identifying whether you have COVID-19 and of preventing transmission, particularly when case rates are high, as they are now. It will remain a vital tool in helping us to learn to live with the virus over the longer term.

We are therefore asking you to **do a lateral flow test (LFD) regularly (twice weekly) and on every occasion you intend to mix socially with people from other households**. Regular testing remains critical even when people are fully vaccinated, as people can still catch and spread COVID-19.

It is vitally important to report your LFD test results whether the result is positive, negative, or void. It only takes a couple of minutes to report a result through www.covidtest.scot. Reporting positive results means that people will receive the advice and support they need. Reporting negative and void results helps public health experts to understand the full picture of COVID in an area, the spread of COVID-19 and the impact of the virus on the childcare workforce.

For clarity, individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are now advised to resume regular LFD testing after the end of their isolation period. This is because of the risk of reinfection with Omicron.

I also wanted to reassure you that LFD tests are highly specific, which means that only a very small proportion of people who do not have coronavirus will receive a positive result (false positive). Analysis by NHS Test and Trace shows LFD tests to have an estimated specificity of at least 99.97% when used in the community. **This means that for every 10,000 lateral flow tests carried out, there are likely to be fewer than 3 false positive results.**

Staff whose settings are participating in the childcare testing programme can continue to access kits that way. For childminders or those whose settings are not participating in the programme, [testing kits can be accessed via the universal offer of free testing](#).

What we will continue to do to support you

We will continue to support you by working with our partners in Public Health Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and SSSC to keep you informed and updated on guidance in line with evidence and science, with involvement of sector representatives.

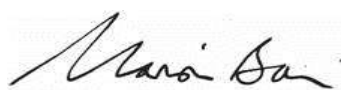
Information about the financial support currently available to individuals and businesses in Scotland is available at: [Support for people affected by COVID - mygov.scot](https://mygov.scot/gov/scotland/support-for-people-affected-by-covid-19).

[The Self-Isolation Support Grant](#) may be available for members of staff who meet the eligibility criteria and who test positive or for staff who are not yet fully vaccinated and are identified as a close contact by Test and Protect and therefore are asked to self-isolate for 10 days.

It is more important than ever that you take the time to look after yourself. For that reason we have developed a wellbeing resource specifically for childcare professionals.

The [TeamELCWellbeingHub](#) contains a wealth of practical hints and advice to help you manage your own wellbeing. A series of free online wellbeing events are being run over the coming weeks and months, which feature wellbeing practitioners who will also provide you with practical hints and tips on looking after yourself. I encourage you to visit the website and book yourself onto one of these events.

I would like once again to thank you for your inspirational dedication to providing the highest quality childcare for the children and families you work with every day.



Professor Marion Bain
Interim Deputy Chief Medical Officer