

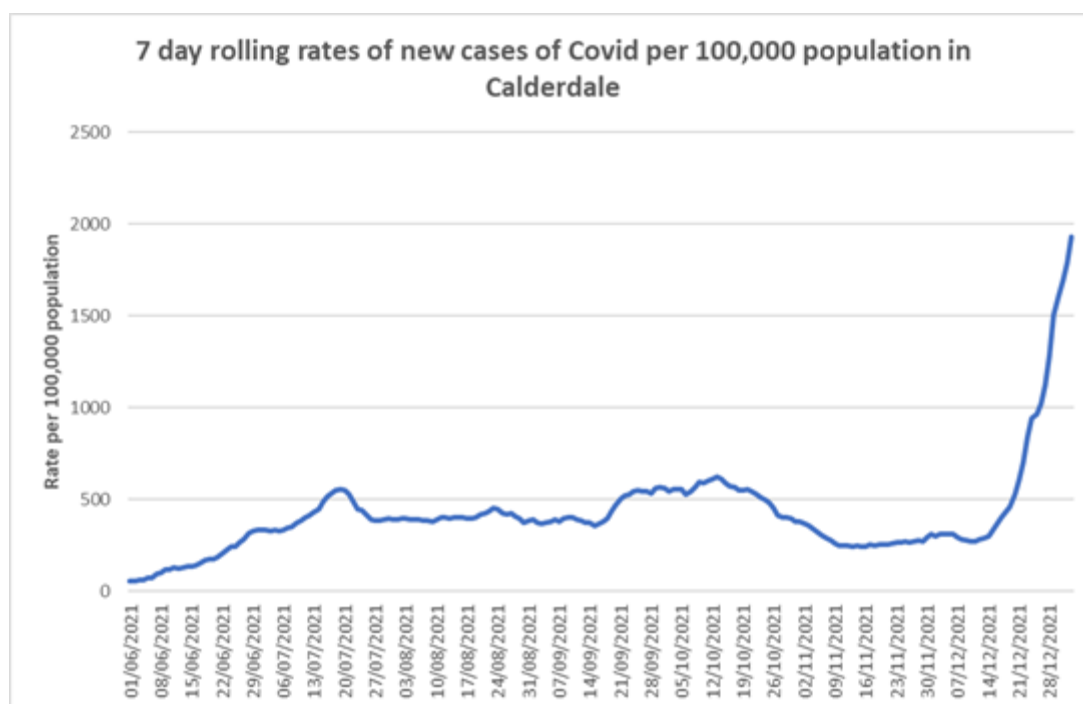
7th January 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

Re: COVID-19 measures in schools

You will probably have heard in the news that the number of people testing positive for COVID-19 is exceptionally high at the moment. Our COVID-19 rate in Calderdale has increased from 458 per 100,000 before the festive period to 1,791 per 100,000 this week.

We are still learning about the Omicron variant and the good news is that it does appear to cause less severe illness than previous variants in many people, especially those that are vaccinated. Unfortunately, it also spreads from person to person much more easily, and at the end of last week, 1 in 15 people in England had the virus. As cases in Calderdale are similar to the national average, it is likely to be the same here. The graph below shows how stark the increase in cases has been.



With so many people testing positive at the same time, there is immense pressure on local NHS and social care services, affecting their ability to care for people with COVID-19 and other illnesses. This isn't just because of the number of people in hospital, but because staff are testing positive too. We're also seeing an impact on all other services from supermarket deliveries to bin collections.

Already, our early years settings, schools and post-16 settings are struggling with staff shortages. This is a situation that is likely to worsen over coming weeks, and without enough staff in school, it is inevitable that some children will have to make a temporary return to home-learning.

Fortunately, there are some simple things we can all do to slow the spread of Omicron and to limit the impact that this wave of COVID-19 has on our day-to-day lives. These small things really can make a big difference.

Over the page, we outline current local advice and national guidance, and provide an update on the vaccination programme for 12–15-year-olds.

If you or your child have any concerns about COVID-19, contact the Healthy Futures Calderdale school nursing team by phone on **0303 330 9974** or by text on **07480 635297 (young people)** or **07507 332157 (parents/carers)**.

Once again, we thank you for your continued patience and support as we work through another incredibly challenging period in our fight against COVID-19.

Kind regards,



Deborah Harkins
Director of Public Health



Julie Jenkins
Director of Children and Young People's Services

Keeping Calderdale safe during COVID-19

The information below is correct on 7th January 2022. See also www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

If you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19

- You are legally required to self-isolate for 10 days unless you are fully vaccinated, or you are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- If you are not required to isolate, you should take a Lateral Flow test **every day for 7 days**, or until 10 days since your last contact with the person who tested positive for COVID-19 if this is earlier. Children under the age of 5 are not advised to take part in daily Lateral Flow testing.
- Take a single **PCR test as soon as possible** while you are self-isolating. However, if you have previously received a positive COVID-19 PCR test result within the last 90 days you should not take another PCR test unless you develop symptoms. When there is a surge in COVID-19 cases it may be difficult for people without symptoms to book a PCR test slot locally. If you aren't able to book a PCR test, it's important to keep doing daily Lateral Flow tests
- Remain vigilant to COVID-19 symptoms (see below)
- Limit close contact with other people outside the household, especially in crowded, enclosed or poorly ventilated spaces
- Limit contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with COVID-19
- Wear a face covering in enclosed spaces and where you are unable to maintain social distancing if you are 11 or over
- Stay away from people who are clinically vulnerable as much as possible
- Remember that vaccination reduces, but does not eliminate, the risk of acquiring and transmitting infection.

If anyone in your household develops COVID-19 symptoms

- The person must stay at home and self-isolate and seek a PCR test. Do not rely on a negative Lateral Flow test as these tests are not as accurate in picking up COVID-19 in people with symptoms.
- The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:
 - a new continuous cough
 - a high temperature
 - a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

If anyone in your household tests positive for COVID-19

- Anyone who tests positive on a PCR is required to stay at home and self-isolate in line with national guidance.
- From 11th January, as a temporary measure, anyone who tests positive on a Lateral Flow test will be required to self-isolate immediately and does not need to take a confirmatory PCR test.
- Everyone else in the household should follow the above guidance for people who have been in contact with a case.
- Locally, we advise that where someone in the household has tested positive, school-aged children should undertake daily Lateral Flow testing for 7 days (in line with national guidance) but that they should stay off school until after they have taken their Day 3 Lateral Flow test, returning on Day 3 only if tests on Day 1-3 are negative.

Understanding your self-isolation period following a positive COVID-19 test

- Your isolation period includes the day your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you do not have symptoms), and the next 10 full days.
- You may be able to end your self-isolation period before the end of the 10 full days. You can take daily Lateral Flow tests from Day 6 of your isolation period. If you receive two negative Lateral Flow test results 24 hours apart, you can end your isolation if you do not have a high temperature and do not feel unwell. You can end your isolation as soon as you have your second negative test result. This means that some people will be able to return to work or school on Day 7. A cough or loss or change to your sense of taste or smell can persist for several weeks, and on their own do not require you to continue isolating.

Support to self-isolate

- If anyone in your household tests positive for COVID-19 or is told to isolate as a contact of a case, support is available.
- Support with practical tasks like shopping and collecting medications is available if you are unable to leave the house and don't have any family or friends that can help. For more information visit <https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/coronavirus/help/advice> or ring **01422 392890** if you don't have access to the internet.
- You may be eligible for financial assistance of £500 if you are unable to go to work because you are isolating and will lose income as a result. For more information visit <https://www.calderdale.gov.uk/v2/coronavirus-covid-19/help-people-and-communities/test-and-trace-support-payment> or ring **01422 288003** if you don't have access to the internet.

An update on the COVID-19 vaccination programme for 12–15-year-olds

If your child received a COVID-19 vaccine in school, they will soon be eligible to receive their second dose. The School Immunisation team will be visiting Calderdale schools from the end of January to offer a second dose of the vaccination and are currently making plans with your school for this clinic to take place. If your child has not received a first dose of the vaccine, they may have an opportunity to be vaccinated at this clinic. Further details will follow.

If your child is unable to get their vaccine in school, or you would like them to be vaccinated before the end of January, you can book an appointment at a vaccination clinic out of school using this link:

www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination or by calling 119 free of charge, 7am to 11pm, 7 days a week. Using this service, you can request an interpreter. You can also use text phone 18001 119 or the NHS British Sign Language interpreter service at <https://signvideo.co.uk/nhs119>.

You may also be able to get your child vaccinated at a walk-in site without an appointment via this link www.nhs.uk/vaccine-walk-in. This site will tell you which are offering the vaccine for 12–15-year-olds. GP Practices in Calderdale will also soon be inviting 12–15-year-olds for a vaccine.

Parents and guardians are asked to attend out-of-school vaccination clinics with their child and consent will be sought on the day.

Information about the COVID-19 vaccination, including answers to questions you may have can be found on the NHS Calderdale CCG website www.calderdaleccg.nhs.uk/

If you or your child have any concerns about vaccination, you can contact the Healthy Futures Calderdale school nursing team by text on 07480 635297 (young people) or 07507 332157 (parents/carers) or by phone on 0303 330 9974.