

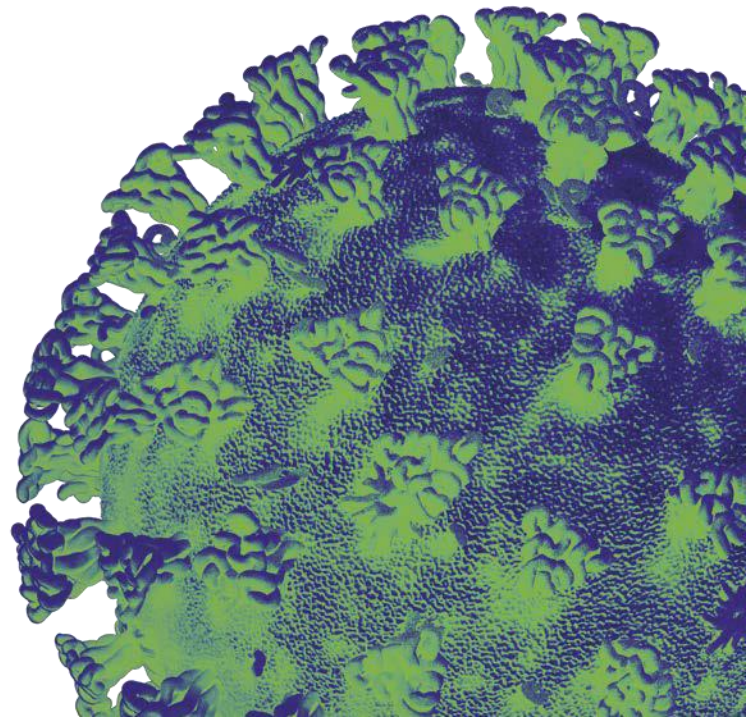
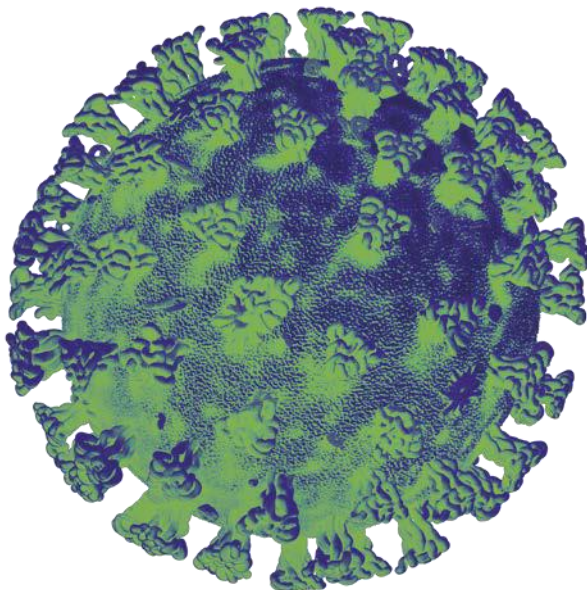
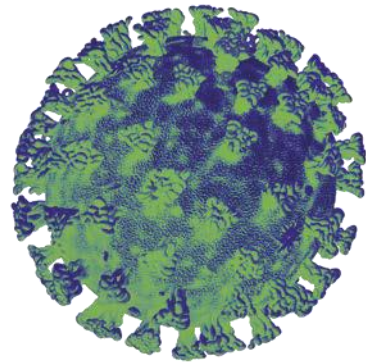


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Technical Advisory Group

Evidence review of data and monitoring
to support childcare, schools and FE
operations up to age 18, in light of raise
to Alert level 4

6th October 2020



Paper to Technical Advisory Group from Children and Schools subgroup

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Background

1. The World Health Organisation, UNICEF and UNESCO issued updated guidance¹ on 14 September 2020 on schools and education during Covid-19 (C-19), emphasising the important underlying principles that ensure continuity of safe, adequate and appropriate educational and social learning and development of children whilst minimizing the risk of C-19 transmission within school settings among children, young people and staff in education and childcare.
2. The UK national alert level was raised by the Joint Biosecurity Council from level 3² to Level 4 (transmission high or rising exponentially) on 21 September. This is likely to have implications for operation of care and education for children and young people up to age 18 including childcare, schools and Further Education (FE).
3. There is a wide range of C-19 positive rates across Wales Local Authorities (between 4 and 160 per 100,000 population on 23 Sept 2020, Wales average 46 per 100k; test positive rate 3.4-7.9%). Localised lockdowns were introduced during September and October 2020 in response to rising rates, consistent with the stated principles of overall reduction of the 4 harms, proportionality, and subsidiarity.
4. Previous TAC advice^{3,4,5} identified factors likely to contribute to safe reopening of childcare, schools and FE. This advised promoting C-19 security through the hierarchy of mechanical and administrative controls, limiting the number of face to face contacts, early warning through monitoring of infection and transmission rates, and effective contact tracing.

¹ <https://www.unicef.org/media/82736/file/Considerations-for-school-related-public-health%20measures-in-COVID-19-2020.pdf>

² JBC identifies five levels of alert:

- Level five (red) - "material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed" - extremely strict social distancing
- Level four - high or rising level of transmission - enforced social distancing
- Level three - the virus is in general circulation - social distancing relaxed
- Level two - the number of cases and transmission are low - minimal social distancing
- Level one (green) - Covid-19 is no longer present in the UK - no social distancing

³ <https://gov.wales/technical-advisory-group-advice-return-school>

⁴ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-08/technical-advisory-group-children-and-education-subgroup-advice-on-school-transport.pdf>

⁵ <https://gov.wales/technical-advisory-group-face-coverings-children-and-young-people-education-settings>

5. This paper reviews the effective use of available data on C-19 security measures and any implications for operations of childcare, schools and FE for those up to age 18 in Wales. It makes recommendations for additional data and reporting that can support the maintenance and continuity of care and education for children and young people, and staff safety, during a period of raised community transmission of C-19.
6. Routinely collected data sets vary across childcare, schools and FE. Data on Local Authority governed schools is collected in the PLASC system on staff and students, and is the most comprehensive data set, covering the largest proportion of the under age 18 population. Independent bodies including FE colleges and childcare providers do not collect the same routine data sets, so data availability must be considered for each sector when determining ongoing reporting. C-19 testing, case positive and contact data is collected on school and college students and staff, and published by Public Health Wales.

Purpose of additional data and reporting:

7. Additional routine collation and reporting of data can offer an improved understanding of the frequency and distribution of C-19 cases associated with childcare, schools and FE in Wales and the likely sources of those infections. This can help focus interventions effectively and minimise avoidable isolation episodes for children, students and staff.
8. SAGE evidence⁶ suggests that incursions of infection into schools are primarily a function of spill-over of infection from their local communities. Continued monitoring of data to either support or refute this, or indicate a changing situation, would provide reassurance to maximise operations of childcare, schools and FE for under 18s despite raised community transmission rates.
9. Any new or emerging evidence on the definition of a contact in the childcare, school or FE context for self-isolation purposes will be addressed in a future paper.

TAC advice on data collection and reporting to support safe operation of childcare, schools and FE for under 18s- principles and purpose of reporting:

10. Key existing data sources should be coordinated and shared across Public Health Wales, Local Authorities (LA) , Local resilience bodies and Welsh Government so that available data can be linked, analysed and made available to anticipate and manage pandemic response, to promote safety and wellbeing of children, students and staff, and maximise childcare, school and FE attendance.

⁶ SAGE paper 3 Sept 2020 [S0729 Principles for Managing SARS-CoV-2 Transmission Associated with Further Education.pdf](#)

11. Reports of cases in childcare, schools and FE should include numbers and weekly trends in children, students and staff of the following:
 - 11.1 Denominator data for childcare, school and FE student populations, as totals by LA area of the site of the setting, for children and young people by age cohorts 0-4, 5-10, 11-15, 16-17, and totals of childcare, school and FE staff in direct contact with under 18s in each setting.
 - 11.2 Case numerator data for the same denominator cohorts, (children in age cohorts, and staff) including numbers of tests; numbers of positive tests; numbers of contacts self-isolating, so that test rates, test positive rates, and contact isolation rates can be calculated for each setting.
 - 11.3 Collection and analysis of TTP data on children up to age 18, and staff, indicating the exposure setting the contact relates to, childcare, school or FE
 - 11.4 Rates in school students of school attendance, authorised illness absence (any illness including C-19 related), authorised absences due to self-isolation required as a C-19 contact, and unauthorised absence
 - 11.5 Childcare and FE service user, staff and student C-19 test positive numbers, and rates where possible
 - 11.6 Outbreaks or significant clusters in children or staff, where transmission within childcare, school or FE setting is identified
 - 11.7 Analysis and collation of vulnerability characteristics including BAME, Looked After Children, Additional Learning Needs and Safeguarding metrics, on a frequency appropriate to their prevalence in the under 18 population
 - 11.8 The context of general threshold measures that are currently being used locally for comparison, such as 50/100,000 C-19 rate on 7 day average, test positivity rate and trajectory of local increase or decrease.

Conclusions and recommendations

- These weekly reports and measures can be used by Local Authorities, Welsh Government and Resilience fora to understand local risks and needs, and to adjust advice on Non Pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs e.g. face coverings, contact groups, school, childcare or FE operations) during local lockdowns.
- This serves the overall aim of keeping as many children, students and staff safely in childcare, school or FE as much of the time as possible, and avoiding unnecessary absences.