

Title URGENT 9.12.22: Letter from the Director of Public Health on Group A Streptococcus

Authoring Dear Colleagues,

Please find attached additional information on Group A Streptococcus (GAS) infection that has been provided by the South East UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). This information supplements my communication on the same topic which was sent earlier this week in response to an increasing number of requests for information from settings.

The UKHSA correspondence includes the following three attachments:

Letter to Headteachers

The UKHSA South East Region has written a letter to headteachers providing an overview on scarlet fever and invasive group A streptococcus (iGAS) infection. The letter provides a summary of the key actions for managing cases and outbreaks of scarlet fever, including advice on infection prevention and control measures. Though these letters are addressed to headteachers, they are relevant for managers of other educational settings and childcare settings.

South East Region Information Pack for Managing Outbreaks of Scarlet Fever in Education Settings

The UKHSA South East Region team have developed an information pack for managing cases and outbreaks of scarlet fever in education settings. The pack defines a scarlet fever outbreak and also explains that **single cases in different groups does not constitute an outbreak**. It presents different outbreak scenarios, contains an action card and flow chart on what settings should do in these scenarios, and provides relevant letters (and a fact sheet) to be sent out by settings.

Settings are asked to use the information pack and specifies that settings should contact the UKHSA **IF**:

- Any child or staff member is seriously unwell and admitted to hospital with GAS infection (or there is a death) because this is indicative of invasive disease.
- The scarlet fever outbreak continues for over 3 weeks, despite taking steps to control it **and** you are concerned that case numbers are still rising.
- You are a Special Education Needs (SEN) setting **and** are experiencing an outbreak of scarlet fever in a class that provides care or education to children who are clinically vulnerable.

Please note that the correct email address to contact the UKHSA HPT is SE.AcuteResponse@ukhsa.gov.uk

The HPT can also be reached on 0344 225 3861.

Letter to Parents/Carers

The attached UKHSA letter to parents/carers includes additional information specifically about Scarlet Fever. **The UKHSA is asking settings to send this letter on to parents and carers.** Note that earlier this week the Local Authority provided a draft letter that you can send out to parents/carers as an alternative, using your own letterhead.

We would also like to highlight the Wessex [Healthier Together: Strep A and scarlet fever](#) website which includes some useful information about GAS infections – please feel free to share this link with parents and carers. Further resources that you might find helpful are provided below.

Please can we also ask that you encourage parents/carers to ensure their child is up to date with their immunisations, especially the seasonal flu vaccine as we know that flu can predispose children to more serious illness with GAS infections.

Media Enquiries

We are aware that settings are being approached by local and national press to provide information about GAS infections in their settings. We would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the suggested media responses we provided previously:

If asked for a general comment,

Suggested response:

“We are continuing to share information, advice and guidance provided by the UKHSA with parents and carers.”

If asked to confirm the number of Group A Streptococcal infections in your setting

Suggested response:

“Children are often absent from school with various illnesses at this time of year. We are not able to provide ongoing updates about the numbers of children absent with specific illnesses.

We are continuing to share information, advice and guidance provided by the UKHSA with parents and carers.”

Schools may then wish to attach a copy of the latest guidance provided by UKHSA, to accompany either response.

If you require further assistance with any media enquiries, please do seek advice from the relevant corporate communications team:

- For schools in Hampshire email: corporate.communications@hants.gov.uk
- For schools on the Isle of Wight email: media@iow.gov.uk

I appreciate how challenging this situation has been and would like to thank you for your ongoing dedication and support.

Sincerely,

Simon Bryant, Director of Public Health, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Resources

- [NHS information about scarlet fever](#)
- [Scarlet fever: symptoms, diagnosis and treatment](#)
- [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education guidance](#)
- [Managing specific infectious diseases: A to Z – Scarlet Fever](#)
- [Hand hygiene resources for schools](#)

Attachments:

Letter to Headteachers IncreasedIncidenceOfScarletFever 08122022.pdf

Information Letter A IncreasedIncidenceOfScarletFever-LetterToParents 08122022.pdf

South East Region Managing Scarlet Fever Outbreaks in Education Settings v2 08122022 (002).docx

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