



Mr. Stephen Donnelly TD,
Minister for Health,
Department of Health,
Miesian Plaza,
50-58 Lower Baggot Street,
Dublin 2.

22nd September 2021

Via email to Private Secretary to the Minister for Health

Dear Minister,

I write in relation to the recommended changes to the public health management of cases and contacts in children aged 12 years and younger as set out in the NPHET letter of 16th September 2021. Based on an assessment of the epidemiological situation at our daily 'epi-call' meeting with the HPSC yesterday, Tuesday 21st September 2021, including an assessment of the return to education on the disease profile, I am satisfied to confirm that, subject to your agreement, the NPHET recommendation can be implemented from next Monday, 27th September 2021. For ease of reference, the following provisions would fall to be implemented;

- Automatic contact tracing of close contacts in childcare facilities and primary education to be discontinued (not including special education facilities);
- Testing of asymptomatic close contacts in childcare facilities and primary education to be discontinued (not including special education facilities), with a focus instead on clinically relevant disease rather than infection and a transition to testing for public health surveillance and, where indicated, on public health or clinical grounds;
- Children <13yrs who are identified as close contacts in childcare, educational settings, special education settings or other non-household settings and who are asymptomatic will no longer be required to restrict movements, unless indicated on public health grounds;
- Children <13yrs who are identified as household close contacts in household settings will still be required to restrict movements and get tested, regardless of symptomatic status;
- Public health advice remains that any child <13yrs with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should rapidly self-isolate and not attend school or to socialise until 48 hours after resolution of symptoms.

The NPHET, of course, remains available to provide any further advice and recommendations that may be of assistance to you and Government in relation to ongoing decision-making processes in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, I would be happy to discuss further, should you wish.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Tony Holohan
Chief Medical Officer

Chair of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team