

To Parents and Guardians
Musselburgh Private Nursery
17-21 Bridge Street
Musselburgh
EH21 6AA

Date 25 August 2022
Our Ref HPT/ 24393
Enquiries to Health Protection
Direct Line 0300 790 6264
Email: Health.Protection@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Dear Parents & Guardians

E. COLI O157 INFORMATION – MUSSELBURGH PRIVATE NURSERY (BRIDGE STREET)

NHS Lothian Health Protection Team have been made aware of a number of cases of diarrhoea and vomiting in the past few weeks at the Musselburgh Private Nursery, Bridge Street. Thank you to all parents and carers who have submitted stool (poo) samples which has helped us to make a diagnosis.

From the samples submitted to the lab, we have identified some cases of norovirus (which is usually a mild and short illness) but also have identified some cases of E.coli O157 infection. E.coli O157 is rare but can cause infection which can sometimes lead to very serious illness in young children and for this reason we are taking public health action. Please be reassured that most people will however fully recover without any lasting damage. We are working with the nursery and the East Lothian Environmental Health Department to investigate the situation.

As part of our control measures we are requesting that **all children and staff at Musselburgh Private Nursery Bridge Street submit two different stool (poo) samples, collected at least 24 hours apart (ideally on alternate days), as soon as possible**, to ensure they are not carrying the infection. This includes children who have left the nursery since 8 August 2022. This is different from the previous samples submitted which were to help diagnose the infection. This process of submitting two, separate samples produced on different days, is part of a 'clearance process' to ensure people are not carrying the infection, or have 'cleared' the infection and are no longer infectious. **Therefore, even if you have previously submitted samples, you still need to submit two further stool samples for your child.**

How to submit a sample:

The special containers needed for this can be obtained from your local GP surgery. These two separate stool samples, collected at least 24 hours apart, must be marked “sample 1” and “sample 2”, with name, date of birth and date and time of collection written on the label. The samples can be left at your GP surgery for transporting to the laboratory for testing. The tests will take up to two weeks to process – please do not contact Health Protection to ask for your results - when we have the results we will contact you by telephone.

Public Health are also requesting all children and staff who have been at the nursery since 8 August 2022 to stay at home until both their sample results are negative. **This is called an exclusion order, is a legal requirement, and a separate letter will be sent out to you in the post.** A person subject to an exclusion order, or those who are required to care for someone subject to an order, may be eligible for reimbursement of loss and more details will be included in the exclusion letter you will receive.

If your child has any symptoms outlined below since 8 August 2022, even if they have resolved, it is important that you call the NHS Lothian Health Protection Team on the number at the end of this letter as soon as possible.

What to look out for:

E.coli O157 infection symptoms can range from:

- Mild diarrhoea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain
- Severe bloody diarrhoea
- Vomiting

While the complications of *E.coli* infection are rare, they include anaemia and kidney problems which can be serious in children and older adults over 65 years.

If you/ your child develop symptoms of diarrhoea with or without stomach cramps, vomiting or fever, you should contact your GP (or NHS 24 on 111). It is particularly important for **anyone who has bloody diarrhoea to seek immediate emergency medical attention**, particularly young children and adults over 65 years. Please take this letter with you if you need to visit either your GP or seek other medical attention.

Careful hand-washing before eating or preparing food and after going to the toilet is very important in order to limit the risk of spread of any diarrhoeal illness. In addition, any person who has symptoms should stay off work/school/nursery. Children should also stay

off any other pre-school care facilities and socialising (e.g. playdates, playgroups, soft play, children's parties etc). They should only return when they have had no symptoms for a period of at least 48 hours and, in the case of *E.coli* O157, **until they are shown to be free from infection.**

I attach an information leaflet on *E.coli* infection. If you require further information or your child have had symptoms of *E.coli* infection since 8 August 2022, the NHS Helpline can be contacted on 0800 22 44 88 during office hours. Outwith office hours, the NHS Lothian Health Protection Team can be contacted on 0300 790 6264.

I have also attached Frequently Asked Questions about *E. coli* infection.

Yours faithfully



Dr Graham Mackenzie
Consultant in Public Health Medicine

Escherichia.coli (E.coli) O157 and Toxin Producing E.coli Factsheet

What is *E.coli* O157?

E.coli are bacteria (germs) that we all carry in our gut, usually without any harm. However a few strains, including *E.coli* O157, can produce toxins (poisons) that can lead to serious illness.

The main source of *E.coli* O157 are animals (particularly cattle), and the bacteria can spread to humans via contaminated meat, and less frequently, dairy products.

E.coli O157 can cause diarrhoea ranging from mild diarrhoea of short duration to severe bloody diarrhoea with fever, abdominal pain and lack of energy. Serious complications can include anaemia and kidney problems including Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome, which may require hospital treatment.

The incubation period (time taken from swallowing the bacteria until illness starts) is usually 3 – 4 days but can be 2 – 10 days.

The infectious period (the period when the infection can be passed from person to person) for *E.coli* O157 is not clear, but it is known to be longer in young children (at least 3 weeks).

Who can it affect?

ANYONE – but it is most common in children under 5 years old and they are at greatest risk of developing kidney problems. The elderly are also at particular risk of serious infection.

How is *E.coli* O157 caught?

By eating raw and undercooked food (particularly beef, minced beef and venison), or by eating foods that have been in contact with these.

By eating foods that have been contaminated with animal faeces (particularly farm animals). e.g. unwashed vegetables.

By drinking un-pasteurised contaminated milk. Also drinking untreated water.

By not washing hands after touching infected animals (particularly farm animals). This can be a particular problem when children have direct contact with farm animals e.g. at farm visitor centres.

Person to person spread can occur particularly in families, nurseries or day care centres. This happens by swallowing *E.coli* O157 germs which have been passed from the bowel

of the person who is carrying *E.coli* O157. It can be passed on unwashed hands and by touching surfaces they have contaminated such as toilet flush handles, door handles, taps, etc. *E.coli* O157 is very infectious and only a small number of bacteria are needed to cause illness.

Do you need to stay off work or school if you get *E.coli* O157?

Risk Groups

Young children (pre school and infants), and people in certain high-risk occupations such as food-handlers, health care workers and persons who are unable to be responsible for their own hand hygiene may be excluded from going to work and class by the local health protection team.

Contacts of a person who has *E.coli* O157 may also be excluded from work and class if they fall into the categories above.

If you are excluded by the health protection team you can only return to work when they tell you.

Non Risk Groups

You must stay off work until you have been completely free from any symptoms for 48 hours.

Children should not play with other children or attend school until they are fully recovered and have been symptom free for 48 hours.

How do you avoid catching it?

By thoroughly cooking all foods, especially meat, until piping hot. Take extra care with burgers and sausages that the juices run clear. Always check barbeque meat!

Always use separate utensils for raw and cooked meat.

Keep raw meat away from cooked foods and other ready to eat foods (foods that won't be cooked) e.g. salad, bread, cheese.

Wash fruit and vegetables well especially if they are to be eaten raw.

Clean work surfaces, dishes and utensils thoroughly in hot water and detergent after they have been used with raw meat.

Only drink pasteurised milk and avoid drinking untreated water.

Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm water and dry with a clean towel;

- after going to the toilet
- after changing a baby's nappy
- after contact with pets and animals
- before preparing and eating food
- after handling raw food

If on picnics with no water available to wash hands, use disposable travel wipes.

Keep pets away from food, dishes and worktops.

Take precautions during farm visits by children, particularly:

- Handwashing after touching animals and before eating
- Avoiding eating and drinking whilst visiting animals
- Keeping their faces away from animals
- Not touching animal droppings
- cleaning shoes after the visit

If you or a member of your household has *E.coli* O157:

Ensure you and all household members wash their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap;

- After using or cleaning the toilet
- After attending to another person who has diarrhoea / vomiting
- After changing a baby's nappy
- After handling or washing soiled clothes and bedding
- Before eating or preparing food

Ensure each person affected has their own towel for drying hands.

Ensure young children are supervised when washing hands, or have their hands washed for them.

Wash soiled clothes, bedding and towels on a hot cycle of the washing machine.

Keep soiled washing separate from the rest of the washing.

Clean toilet seats, flush handles and taps frequently with hot soapy water. The toilet bowl should be cleaned with a toilet brush and disinfectant. Wear rubber gloves to clean the toilet and keep them for this use only.

Where possible stay away from other people until your symptoms have stopped, especially vulnerable people like the elderly and very young. Where possible, do not prepare food for your family or anyone else.

Do not go swimming until 2 weeks after your symptoms have ceased. If you have been excluded then do not go swimming until able to return to work or school/nursery.

If you have any further queries you can contact the Health Protection Team, Directorate of Public Health, Lothian NHS Board on 0300 790 6264 between 8am and 6.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Further information on handwashing can be found at:

<http://www.washyourhandsofthem.com/home.aspx>

A leaflet is also available on Simple precautions for reducing the risk of *E.coli* O157 infection in rural families and visitors. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.documents.hps.scot.nhs.uk/qiz/ecoli/simple-precautions-O157.pdf>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We have set up a general information line on 0800 22 44 88 through NHS24 to help families answer many of the questions they may be facing.

Q. *My child is due to start or has started Primary School but attended the Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery*

A. All children who have attended this nursery from the 8th August 2022 will be formally excluded under the Public Health Act. This is because cases of E.coli have now been confirmed linked to this nursery.

All children are required to submit 2 stool samples at least 24 hours apart to their GP. The Health Protection Team will check that those samples are clear of E.coli infection. Once the laboratories have reported the negative results, the Health Protection Team will contact you directly and lift the Public Health exclusion allowing your child to return to school.

Q. *Why are two samples needed for clearance?*

A Two consecutive negative samples are required to lift a Public Health Exclusion for E.coli, this is in line with national guidance. The stool samples should be taken a minimum of 24 hours apart (ideally on alternate days) to ensure the results are robust.

Q. *Where do I take the samples?*

A Sample pots should be obtained from your GP surgery.

Samples should be handed into your GP, not taken direct to the laboratory. Please ensure that samples are collected at least 24 hours apart and that the label is completed with all the relevant information. Your GP should let you know the best times to drop off the samples as occasionally they are unable to store them overnight and they are unlikely to accept them at weekends.

Until you have been notified directly by the Health Protection Team about the results of the samples, your child must not attend any pre-school groups such as crèches, playgroups, toddler groups, sports groups or other nurseries.

Q. *How do I store a poo sample before I take it to the GP?*

A. Once the sample has been taken it can be double bagged and stored at room temperature for several days if required. Please do not store in the refrigerator.

Q. *When will the screening test results be available?*

A We expect both sample results to be available within 2 weeks. This is to account for the time taken for collection of samples, transport of the samples to GP then the lab, the processing of the samples and reporting of the result and any potential delays which may happen at any point in this process. The majority of samples have to be processed at the E coli reference lab in Edinburgh. The labs are extremely busy due to the current outbreaks and our labs are using extra capacity but the samples have to be carefully processed and unforeseen delays can occur.

Please do not call the Health Protection Team for results.

The Health Protection Team will contact you as soon as both results are available.

The Laboratories are processing in excess of 500 tests so there may be delays in getting results to staff and parents.

Your child must not attend any pre-school groups such as crèches, playgroups, toddler groups, sports groups or other nurseries until you are contacted directly by the Health Protection Team to advise that they can do so. This precaution is needed to prevent any chance that the infection could be spread any further.

Q. *My child attends the Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery as well as another nursery or playgroup, can they attend the other nursery?*

A Your child must now not attend any pre-school group such as crèches, playgroups, toddler groups, sports groups or other nurseries until the Health Protection Team have advised you they are able to do so.

This is to ensure that there is no further spread of the infection.

Q. *My child attends the Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery, can they go to a birthday party, children's sports, swimming or soft play area?*

A All children who have attended this nursery from the 8th August 2022 are being formally excluded under the Public Health Act. This is because cases of E.coli have now been confirmed linked to this nursery.

Your child has been formally excluded and they must not mix with other children until the Health Protection Team have advised you they are able to do so.

This is to ensure that there is no further spread of the infection.

Q. *My child attends the Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery but has had no diarrhoea can they go to another nursery?*

A No. All children must not attend any other pre-school group such as crèches, playgroups, toddler groups, sports groups or other nurseries until they are advised by the Health Protection Team that they can do so.

This is because occasionally people can carry the infection without having symptoms and it is essential that we minimise any chance of further spread.

Q. *My child attends the Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery and has diarrhoea, what should I do?*

A You should attend your GP for assessment and submit a stool sample.

Q. *My child attends the Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery and has bloody diarrhoea, what should I do?*

A You should seek immediate medical attention via your GP and submit a stool sample. Over night and at weekends you should call NHS 24. If you child is very unwell you should attend the Emergency Department at Royal Hospital for Children and Young People.

Q. *I am a staff member from Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery, can I work at another nursery?*

A No, you must not work in any pre-school establishment, caring for children, or handling food until you have been notified directly by the Health Protection Team that you are clear to do so.

This is to ensure that any chance of further spread is minimised as occasionally people can carry the infection without having symptoms.

You may be eligible for compensation for loss of earnings, from the Health Protection Team if you have been formally excluded under the Public Health Act. A compensation form will be attached to your exclusion letter.

Q. *I visited the Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery since 8th August 2022, do I need to be checked for infection?*

A If this was a short visit where you did not eat food or use the toilet facilities within the nursery, the risk of infection is low. However, please be vigilant for any signs of infection such as those listed at the beginning of this document and contact your GP if symptoms do present.

Q. *I have worked in the Musselburgh Bridge Street Private Nursery since 8th August 2022 or my child has attended this nursery since 8th August 2022 and have not received any letters from public health. Should I have?*

A Yes, the Health Protection Team have sent inform and advise information out to all the staff and parents via the Nursery Management Team. The Health Protection Team have sent out or are in the process of sending out formal exclusion letters to all staff and children whose details have been supplied by the Nursery Management Team.

For cases who have confirmed E coli infection

Q. *My child has confirmed E coli infection. Will they get better and when?*

A. Before your child can go back to a nursery or a pre-school establishment they need to be completely free of infection. In some cases, this can be several weeks after the initial illness, and repeat stool samples are needed. It is extremely important that your child does not attend any pre-school establishments until they are notified directly by the Health Protection Team that they are free of infection.

Family members may also need tests and may be excluded from some types of work such as food handling or health care professions.

In a small percentage of cases, complications arise including Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome which can cause renal failure. These children will be monitored extremely carefully in hospital.

Q. *What is Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome?*

A This develops in a small percentage of people with E.coli infection. It affects blood cells and can cause kidney failure, therefore it is a serious complication.

Q. *My child has confirmed E.coli and I have been excluded from my own work. When can I go back?*

A You have been formally excluded from your work because you are a contact of a case of E.coli and work in a risk group, you will need two negative specimens taken at least 24-hours apart before you can return to work. The Health Protection Team will advise you further on this.

It is extremely important that you do not go back to work until you receive direct communication from the Health Protection Team indicating that you can do so. This is to reduce the risk of any further spread. You may be eligible for compensation for loss of earnings, a compensation form should be included with your exclusion letter.

Q. *My child has confirmed E.coli infection but is well and we are due to go on holiday. What should we do?*

A It is not recommended that you go on holiday until all required tests have returned negative, and this has been directly communicated to you by the Health Protection Team. This is to avoid the possibility of further infections occurring or members of other families needing to be excluded from work or school.

Q. *My child has been invited to a party. Should they attend?*

A. No, Your child must not attend any parties, pre-school groups such as crèches, play-groups, toddler groups, sports groups or other nurseries until you are contacted direct-

ly by the Health Protection Team to advise that they can do so. This precaution is needed to prevent any chance that the bug could be spread any further.

Q. Can my child socialise with any other people or families?

A. No, Your child should not be socialising with other children or families outwith those who normally live in your household until you are contacted directly by the Health Protection Team to advise that they can do so. This precaution is needed to prevent any chance that the bug could be spread any further.

What does Exclusion Under the Public Health etc (Scotland) Act 2008 mean?

Q. Why is a person excluded?

A. Exclusion or restriction from work, school or nursery under the Public Health etc (Scotland) Act 2008 is applied when an individual(s) has an infectious disease or has been in close contact with someone with an infectious disease and when there is considered to be a risk that this disease could be passed on to other people.
Exclusion under the Public Health Act is used to reduce the risk of spread of infectious diseases from person to person via the 'faecal oral route': when you put something in your mouth, which has been contaminated by the stools/faeces of someone with the bug.

Q. Who can be excluded?

A. Children under the age of 10 are excluded under the Public Health Act when they have been diagnosed with an infectious disease that could be spread to others. If a child under the age of 10 is in close contact (e.g. a sibling) of someone who has an infectious disease, they may also be excluded.
Other reasons for exclusion include people whose work involves preparing or serving unwrapped foods not subject to further heating, and clinical and social care staff who have direct contact with highly susceptible patients.

Q. Where/what is a person excluded from?

A. Children who are excluded under the Public Health Act should not attend nursery, school or childcare facilities for the duration of the exclusion. Your child's nursery/school/childminder will receive a letter to inform them of the exclusion; this will not include specific details of your child's diagnosis.

In addition to exclusion for nursery/school, there are other activities that may be linked to possible spread of infection to vulnerable groups of people and should therefore be avoided.

Examples of activities and places to avoid during exclusion are:

- Swimming

- Soft play facilities
- Children's parties /crèches / playgroups / toddler groups / nurseries / after school clubs
- Sports clubs
- Other gatherings of children
- Contact with children under the age of 10 years who are not part of your household

Q. What happens next?

A. You may have initially been told about your child's infectious disease by your GP, an Environmental Health Officer or a doctor at the hospital. Exclusion under the Public Health Act is the responsibility of a Consultant in Public Health. Should you need further advice or information please contact the Health Protection Team.

Your child's exclusion can be lifted when they have been formally cleared of infection. Clearance requires testing of stool samples, which you give to your GP surgery. Your child's first sample can be submitted 48 hours after their last episode of symptoms. Samples should be collected at least 24 hours apart, and 2 consecutive negative samples are required to show that your child is free from infection.

Once the Health Protection Team has received the results of samples and confirmed that your child's exclusion can be lifted, we will inform you by telephone and in writing. Your child's nursery/school will also be informed.