Early years and education settings advice about Strep A and scarlet fever

You may have seen reports in the national media about a rise in cases of scarlet fever. Though national figures are higher than expected, there are processes in place in Dorset to help the spread should cases appear in your setting.

Scarlet fever is a caused by a bacteria called *group A streptococci*, or "group A strep". It is very contagious for people who are in close contact with one another through infected droplets in coughs, sneezes, mucus and saliva. Typically, it causes a mild illness for most people however treatment with antibiotics is important to avoid complications.

Some symptoms of scarlet fever include:

- sore throat
- headache
- fever
- a fine, pinkish or red body rash that feels like sandpaper

You can read more about the symptoms of scarlet fever on the gov.uk website & see clinical photographs on the NHS website.

We would encourage parents to keep their children off school and nursery if poorly and to contact their GP or NHS 111. Children with scarlet fever should stay home for at least 24 hours after starting antibiotics to avoid spreading infection to others.

If you know of a case/s of scarlet fever in your setting, you will need to notify the South West Health Protection Team at UKHSA (formerly Public Health England) who will be in contact and support you. Their contact details are swhpt@ukhsa.gov.uk or 0300 303 8162.

You can find more information about scarlet fever in The Spotty Book which has now been updated and taken on as national guidance. It is now incorporated into Health protection in children and young people settings, including education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Winter is a time where viruses do spread and therefore we encourage good infection prevention control measures such as regular hand washing, covering your mouth when you cough and sneeze and to through tissues in the bin when used.

For more information see: UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)