This presentation is based on a report produced by the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre (WCEC)

Our reports are available from the WCEC Website: https://healthandcareresearchwales.org/about-research-community/wales-covid-19-evidence-centre

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The role played by children and educational settings in the community transmission of COVID-19 has been a constant concern throughout the pandemic.

A range of IPAC measures have been introduced in schools and education settings worldwide.

Investigating the effectiveness of these measures in order to determine which measures should remain in place as restrictions are eased is critical for informing Welsh Government infection control strategies.
To identify, appraise and synthesise the evidence from secondary research evaluating the effectiveness of IPAC measures applied in education and childcare settings.
Preliminary searches identified 2 rapid reviews and 8 ongoing reviews. Findings from one RR and one ongoing SR summarised:

**Living Rapid Review (NCCMT 2021)**
- Based on a strict selection criteria / Updated regularly
- Critically appraised and found to be of good quality

**Ongoing Rapid review (Krishnaratne et al. 2021)**
- Expected to follow robust and rigorous methodology
- Relevant outcomes
Aim: explore the specific role of daycare and school settings in Covid-19 transmission.

Population: children and adolescents (1-18 years)

Evidence: up to July 22, 2021

Included: 3 syntheses and 6 primary studies
(1 cluster RCT, 5 observational studies)

Overall certainty of evidence is low (GRADE)
“findings are likely to change as more evidence accumulates”
NCCMT Living Rapid Review: Findings

Reduced Risk Of transmission

- Adhered IPAC Measures in PS and DCS
- Multicomponent approaches
- Secondary Schools (SS)
- Outdoor Instructions
- Daily Symptoms Screening

Inconsistent Findings

- Primary Schools (PS)
- Class Size
- Improved Ventilation
Increased Risk of transmission

Hybrid/part-time in-person learning
- Greater likelihood of students engaging in extracurricular activities outside of school (more mixing)
- USA study
- Not peer-reviewed
Ongoing Cochrane Rapid review


Review Questions:
1. What are the implications of these measures for non-transmission-related outcomes (e.g. healthcare utilization, broader health outcomes, and economic, societal, and ecological outcomes)?

2. How are these measures implemented within the school setting?
Most of the available evidence from the USA – may limit generalisability of findings to Welsh context

Many of the emerging studies are pre-prints/not peer reviewed – caution when interpreting evidence

Unclear what effect the Covid vaccine and alert level zero changes will have on compliance with IPAC measures

No evidence on the effect of IPAC measures on other outcomes such as: children’s hospitalisation rates, school days lost, mental health and wellbeing, and pre-school child development, or outcomes relating to consistency in implementation

Limited evidence related to variants of concern or impacts on hard-to-reach populations and special education settings
Policy Implications

Strategies based on a multicomponent approach and in line with the local pandemic situation, should be considered when planning IPAC measures for schools and education settings.

Further well-designed higher quality studies, especially from the UK or other European countries, needed to better understand the effect of IPAC measures in schools and daycare settings.
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The WCEC and authors of this work declare that they have no conflict of interest.