

Date 09/05/2025

Dear GP practice managers and safeguarding leads

Re: Requests for GP letters for school non-attendance/adjustments

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure their child has an appropriate education either by attendance at school or by other provision (section 7, Education Act 1996). It is known that regular attendance at an educational setting is good for children's long-term education, health, and socio-economic outcomes. Since the pandemic, schools have seen an increase in the number of children not attending due to illness, in particular mental health. We are aware that GPs are often being approached by parents and/or schools asking for a letter confirming the child is not well enough to attend school.

We are working to improve school attendance for children locally. Surrey County Council fully supports LMC guidance that GPs should **NOT** be signing children off school and should not be asked by schools or parents to do this.

You may be asked for more information regarding a child's health needs if it is impacting on their attendance, especially if the child is on a child protection plan, or where other safeguarding concerns have been identified. Where appropriate, this may allow the school and children's services to make any reasonable adaptations. However, much of this information can now be accessed via the NHS app and parents/guardians can share with schools directly.

Information over and above this should only be shared with consent (unless safeguarding concerns justify the sharing of information without consent) and limited to factual statements. It should not extend to opinion on how the health condition may affect schooling, or recommendations for specific interventions – it is not for GPs to advise on education provision. The LMC have a helpful letter that can be given in response to these requests. [Surrey & Sussex LMCs: Certificates for School Absences and Missing Exams](#)

Surrey County Council is supporting this message by informing schools and parents not to approach their GP requesting such letters and stressing the importance of keeping children in school.

When seeing children with poor school attendance or not in education please consider the safeguarding risks and refer to children's services if appropriate. Advice and support regarding safeguarding concerns is always available through the ICB safeguarding team via the generic team email syheartlandsicb.surrey.safeguarding@nhs.net

Thank you for your support in this area.

Dr Tara Jones

Surrey-wide designated GP for safeguarding