

Memorandum

The management of Close Contact records during the Auckland August outbreak 2021

Date due to MO:	17 September 2021	Action required by:	N/A
Security level:	IN CONFIDENCE	Health Report number:	20212024
To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Associate Minister of Health		

Contact for telephone discussion

Name	Position	Telephone
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Action for Private Secretaries

N/A

Date dispatched to MO:

The management of Close Contact records during the Auckland August 2021 outbreak

Purpose

1. This memo provides you with information on the management protocol for Close Contact records during the Auckland August 2021 outbreak. This includes:
 - a. the referral of contacts overdue for testing and/or lost to follow up to Public Health Units (PHUs); and
 - b. the criteria for both PHUs and the National Investigation and Tracing Centre (NITC) to apply when 'closing' individuals contacts records in the National Contact Tracing Solution (NCTS).

Context

2. In previous outbreaks, all Close Plus and Close Contacts were referred to their PHU of domicile if the NITC could not reach them, if their test results were overdue, or if they had indicated that they were not following public health advice.
3. Due to the large volume of Close Contacts associated with the Auckland August 2021 outbreak, the management of Close Contacts for people residing in the Auckland region has been revised.
4. There are a large number of Close Contacts who reside in the Auckland region who are overdue for a Day 12 test result. Under normal circumstances, these contacts would have been delegated back to the Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS) for further follow-up and outreach.
5. The Focused Control Strategy implemented by ARPHS for this outbreak will continue to be used as guidance for managing contacts who reside in the Auckland region.
6. This removes the option for NITC to delegate contacts back to ARPHS unless they meet specific criteria as defined by ARPHS.

Approach being used to escalate and/or 'close' contact records.

7. The following management pathways have been informed by discussion with the Ministry of Health's Office of the Director of Public Health (ODPH) and approved by the Director-General of Health on 7 September 2021.

Escalation to PHUs

Contacts residing outside of Auckland

8. The NITC will refer Close Plus and Close Contacts who are residing outside of Auckland to their PHU of domicile (where the location is known) when:

- they are overdue for a scheduled test e.g., when a Day 12 test result is not visible in the NCTS by Day 15 since exposure. This takes into account a possible 48 hours for laboratory processing times; or
- the NITC has been unable to make contact with the individual; or
- the individual is not complying with public health advice.

Contacts residing in Auckland

9. In line with the Focused Control Strategy, the NITC and PHUs will refer Close Plus and Close Contacts who are residing in Auckland (according to the address recorded in NCTS) to ARPHS only if they are:
 - either uncontactable or have overdue test results, and they are
 - associated with a Mangere church cluster; or
 - associated with an aged residential care or health care facility where exposure was in the workplace; or
 - a managed isolation facility worker where exposure was in the workplace; or
 - part of any other groups specifically identified by ARPHS in the future.
10. All other contacts will continue be followed up daily by the NITC or another PHU for up to 18 days from the date of exposure.

Protocol for closing records

11. Based on the public health risk and the possible prolonged infectious period for Delta cases, Close Plus and Close Contacts will be followed up for 18 days from their date of exposure. This is in line with advice from the ODPH.
12. Attempts to contact individuals will utilise all available channels of communication and engagement, including email, text messages, phone calls and/or home visits by PHUs where appropriate.
13. After Day 18 from date of exposure, the contact record in the NCTS will be 'closed' and no further follow up will take place.
14. After records have been closed, individuals will be subject to general public health advice encouraging people to get tested if they develop COVID-19 symptoms.

Next steps

15. Contacts who cannot be reached or are not tested by Day 18 (from date of exposure) will be closed with no further follow up (excluding contacts managed by ARPHS).
16. Officials can provide further information about this topic at your request



Bridget White
Deputy Chief Executive

COVID-19 Health System Response

Date:

PROACTIVELY RELEASED