## Sample letter to parents of a child in a childcare facility with pertussis

Dear Parent,

**Pertussis (whooping cough)**

**[A child/children]** from the **[name of the particular class at the particular facility]** **[has/ve]** been diagnosed with pertussis (whooping cough). I am writing to provide advice and to ask that you watch out for the symptoms of pertussis in your child, especially over the next 3 weeks.

What is pertussis?

Pertussis is an infection of the throat that can cause bouts of coughing, and sometimes breathing difficulties and vomiting. It can be a very serious infection in small children. The illness can last for many weeks. It usually starts with a snuffle or a cold.

What should people who develop pertussis symptoms do?

If your child develops symptoms (as described in the enclosed factsheet), please take them and this letter to your local doctor as soon as possible. Your doctor can advise whether pertussis is likely and arrange for early treatment if needed. Treating people who have pertussis with antibiotics can stop the infection spreading, but is more effective if started early.

To help prevent this infection spreading, people who have been diagnosed with pertussis should not attend childcare until they have completed the first 5 days of a course of the recommended antibiotics. If antibiotics cannot be taken, then they must stay away for 3 weeks after the start of the cough.

How is it prevented?

Vaccination is the most important way of reducing pertussis in our community. It is important to double check that your child is fully up to date with his or her immunisations against pertussis. If in doubt, please ask your doctor to check.

**[PHU staff to identify the appropriate option and remove others options from the letter].**

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*Option 1: If there is a sporadic (single) case in the same room at childcare that includes a child <6 months of age who has received fewer than 3 effective doses of pertussis vaccine (who is not the case), insert the following paragraph into the letter for parents of all under-vaccinated children and provide a generic information letter to parents of vaccinated children.*

NSW Health advises that since there is a child under 6 months of age in **[insert class, insert CCC],** children who have not received 3 doses of vaccine should stay away from childcare for 2 weeks from their first exposure to the infectious case unless they have already completed 5 days of a course of effective antibiotic treatment, in which case they may return. In this case, the first exposure of **[insert name of child]**, to the infectious case was **[insert date]**. Under-immunisation poses the greater risk to a child’s own health, but in addition it poses a public health risk to infant contacts, who are more susceptible to severe infection.

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*Option 2: If there is a sporadic (single) case in the same room at childcare where all children are >6 months of age, provide a generic letter to parents of all children.*

Antibiotics are not required and we do not recommend that children are excluded if they remain well.

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*Option 3: If the child care facility has 2 or more cases in the same room within a 20 day period and where there is a child <6 months of age who has received fewer than 3 effective doses of pertussis vaccine in the room (who is not the case), insert one of the following 2 paragraphs into the letter for parents of the children, as appropriate.*

*Option 3a. - insert this into the letter to parents of completely vaccinated children (i.e.>3 doses):*

As there has been more than one case of whooping cough in **[insert class, insert CCC]** within the last 3 weeks, NSW Health recommends that all children in the class receive antibiotics. As your child is fully vaccinated against pertussis he/she can return to CCC while on antibiotics, however, if your child does not receive antibiotics he/she should stay away from childcare for 2 weeks from their first exposure to the infectious cases. In this case, the first exposure of **[insert name of child],** to an infectious case at childcare was **[insert date].**

*Option 3b. – insert this into the letter for parents of unvaccinated children or children that have received fewer than 3 effective doses of pertussis vaccine:*

As there has been more than one case of whooping cough in **[insert class, insert CCC]** within the last 3 weeks, NSW Health recommends that all children in the class receive antibiotics. As your child has received fewer than 3 effective doses of pertussis vaccine, he/she can return to CCC once 5 days of a course of effective antibiotics has been completed. However, if your child does not receive antibiotics he/she should stay away from childcare for 2 weeks from their first exposure to the infectious cases. In this case, the first exposure of **[insert name of child],** to an infectious case at childcare was **[insert date].** Under-immunisation poses the greater risk to a child’s own health, but in addition it poses a public health risk to infant contacts who are more susceptible to severe infection.

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*Option 4: If the child care facility has 2 or more cases in the same room within a 20 day period where all children in the same room at childcare are >6 months of age, insert the following paragraph into the letter for parents of all under-vaccinated children (i.e. <3 doses) and provide a generic information letter to parents of completely vaccinated children (ie >3 doses).*

As there has been more than one case of whooping cough in **[insert class, insert CCC]** within the last 3 weeks, NSW Health states that your child should stay away from childcare for 2 weeks from their first exposure to the infectious cases, unless they have already completed 5 days of a course of effective antibiotic treatment, in which case they may return. In this case, the first exposure of **[insert name of child],** to an infectious case at childcare was **[insert date].** Under-immunisation poses the greater risk to a child’s own health, but in addition it poses a public health risk to other children.

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Need more information?

For more information, please see the attached Pertussis Fact sheet, or call <name> at the Public Health Unit on <phone>.

Yours sincerely

Director, Public Health Unit