

# HEAD LICE INFESTATION GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Following a Serious Case Review within the County, "Severe and Persistent Infestations" (NICE, 2016) have been identified as an indicator of serious welfare concerns for children and young people.

This pathway provides professionals with guidance on management of head lice within schools and when to seek additional advice and support from the School Nursing Team. Think safeguarding.

## WHAT ARE HEAD LICE AND NITS?

Head lice are tiny insects that live in human hair and are particularly common in children.

They are whitish to grey-brown in colour, and smaller than the size of a pinhead when first hatched. When fully grown they're about the size of a sesame seed.

They can't fly, jump or swim and are spread by head-to-head contact, climbing from the hair of an infected person to the hair of someone else.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- **How to spot them** - To confirm an active head lice infestation, a louse must be found through a reliable, accurate method, such as detection combing. It involves using a special fine-toothed head lice comb with a tooth spacing of 0.2-0.3mm to comb through the hair.
- **Itching** - Head lice often cause a person's scalp to itch. Itching isn't caused by lice biting the scalp but by an allergy to the lice. Even if someone with head lice is allergic to them, itching can take up to three months to develop.

## IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD HAS HEAD LICE INFESTATION WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Provide basic guidance to parents about detection combing, and the need to repeat this every 3 days for 15 days
- Issue our school nurse top tips information guidance for parents
- Direct parents to NHS Choices Website ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) or issue information from NHS Choices website
- Children who are being treated for head lice can still attend school (NICE, 2016) and should therefore not be singled out or excluded from education
- Treatment should only be recommended in cases where live lice have been seen (Public Health England, 2014). All affected household members should also be treated on the same day (NICE, 2016)
- If treatment is unsuccessful, the same treatment should be repeated, or a different treatment tried (NICE, 2016).

If this advice has been given to parents and head lice infestation continues then further advice and support should be sought from the School Nursing team in terms of practical help in addressing the issue.