South Gloucestershire Council

Delivering for you

Department for Children, Adults and Health

Date: 23 June 2021

Covid-19 update for parents and carers with children in education

Dear parents/carers,

You will be aware that Step 4 of the government's roadmap out of lockdown has been delayed and England remains in Step 3 restrictions. This is because of rising numbers of Covid-19 cases, including in schools in South Gloucestershire, and concern about how quickly the now dominant Delta variant is spreading. We are expected to move to Step 4 from 19 July, with a review due two weeks before.

We believe this delay is sensible, to give the NHS more time to vaccinate most of the adult population and are pleased that anyone over the age of 18 is now invited to book their first dose of the vaccine.

The delay means we must all continue to follow the Step 3 restrictions, which includes the rule of six indoors and a limit of 30 people meeting outside. There are also practical things we can all do to help us reach Step 4 as soon as it is safe to do so and we are writing to you now to remind you of the simple but vital actions we all need to continue to take.

1. **Hands, Face, Space, Fresh Air**

- Wash your hands regularly, encourage your child to wash theirs especially before and after school.
- Wear face coverings (unless exempt) in all public indoor settings and at school pick up and drop off. If necessary and approved by the director of public health, secondary schools experiencing an outbreak may reinstate the wearing of face coverings by students at secondary school or college in communal areas. When this is the case please encourage and support your child to do so.
- Keep making space for other people in shops, venues and public places as well as when taking your child to or from school.
- Meet others outside when possible. Covid particles disperse in fresh air making it harder for the virus to spread.

2. Regular rapid (lateral flow) testing

- **Regular rapid tests for parents and carers:** Everyone over the age of 16 without symptoms is asked to continue taking two rapid Covid-19 tests a week. This is especially important for parents and carers with children at school. Tests are free and show results in 30 minutes. There are many ways to get test kits – collect them from most libraries in South Gloucestershire, many pharmacies, our mobile test van or our test site. Visit www.southglos.gov.uk/testing for all the details. You can also order them to be sent to your home via www.gov.uk/coronavirus
- **Regular rapid tests for secondary and college students:** If your child is at secondary school or college they will be given home test kits by their school or college. It is vital they continue testing regularly and report all results, whether positive or negative, to help public health experts get a clear picture of cases and any potential outbreaks. Please help by encouraging your child to take their tests twice a week.
- **Pre-school children and primary aged pupils:** Children at primary or a nursery setting should not be tested with rapid tests. Children of this age should only be tested for Covid-19 if they have symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case using a standard (PCR) test.

3. **Standard (PCR) testing**

- **If your child has symptoms:** Even if a rapid test is negative, your child should remain at home isolating and take a standard test that is laboratory tested (not a home test). This is the type of test you need to book via www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test or by calling 119.
- **If your child is identified as a close contact:** Through NHS Test and Trace and our own local Contact Tracing team, we will identify close contacts of people who test positive for Covid-19. This is so we can find more cases, including of people without any symptoms and prompt them to isolate and book a standard (PCR) test.

PLEASE NOTE:

- **If my child takes a test as a close contact and is negative, can they go back to school?** No, a negative test result carried out in a period of isolation does not release a close contact from isolation and they must complete their isolation period. This is because the test is only valid at that moment in time and the virus could still be infectious.
- **What is a close contact?** See our guide to when someone will be identified as a close contact www.southglos.gov.uk/who-is-a-close-contact

4. **Vaccination**

The vaccination programme is our best route out of the pandemic and offers the best way to protect yourself and others. Anyone who gets Covid-19 can become seriously ill or suffer long-term effects but research shows vaccines significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or death, reduce your risk of getting symptoms and will help to reduce your risk of catching and spreading the virus. Vaccines are now available to anyone aged 18 and over in England, please book yours if you haven't already and encourage anyone eligible in your household, including teenagers aged 18 and over, to do the same. It is also important to have both doses as you will be better protected. Book now at www.nhs.uk

There is a chance you might still get or spread Covid-19 even if you have had a vaccine, so it's important to continue to follow all social distancing guidance.

Please be assured that your child's setting has been advised and updated with all the latest government guidance for educational settings and will continue to work hard to keep your child safe. Our education and public health teams are providing support and guidance and where required outbreak control team meetings are held to ensure a timely and proportionate response in line with national guidance for any outbreaks or spikes in cases within settings.

Finally, we would like to say thank you for your continued support and all your efforts to keep your child and family safe, your child's school and your wider community. We know this remains a challenging time but **we are on the right track – let's keep going**.

Yours sincerely,

Sara Blackmore,
Director of Public Health

Chris Sivers,
Director for Children, Adults and Health