



**Public Health Service
Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall, Pegs Lane
Hertford SG13 8DE**

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

3 December 2020

Dear Parents and Carers

We're writing to update you following the Prime Minister's announcement of the COVID-19 Winter Plan last week.

Hertfordshire is currently in Tier 2 – High Transmission

The Government has confirmed that from 2 December, Hertfordshire will be placed into Tier 2 or 'High Alert' and must adhere to certain restrictions. Sadly, we continue to be an area with a higher level of infections circulating in our communities. Our numbers of cases have shown signs of falling, but the number of people being admitted to hospital has increased substantially in the last three weeks.

As you will know, the Government has been very clear that they want schools to remain open so as not to disrupt children and young people's education any more than is necessary. We want to set out some additional reasoning behind this decision and to assure you that we will continue to provide support to enable schools to manage positive case(s) of coronavirus.

The Government has also been clear that attendance at school for statutory school aged children is compulsory. School attendance is critical to support children and young people's learning and mental health and it is very important that children should attend school until the end of term, unless your child has been asked to self-isolate.

Keeping schools, childcare and education settings safe

Hertfordshire's schools, colleges and early years settings have been extremely diligent in following [national guidance](#) and implementing robust infection control measures. Visits to schools undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive, our own health and safety team and Infection Prevention Control nurses have confirmed this. These visits will continue as long as we need them.

Our dedicated health protection team remain in place and will continue to support schools and colleges to follow Government guidance and provide support when

a positive case(s) is identified. All education settings in Hertfordshire are working collaboratively with the Hertfordshire Public Health team and this fits into wider work with Public Health England and the Department for Education.

Our schools, childcare and education settings have also been very effective in tracing close contacts of any positive cases, deciding who is at risk of infection and asking children and staff to self-isolate for the required 14 days quickly - ultimately helping to effectively reduce the spread of the virus not just in school, but in the wider community.

Whilst we expect that there will be further positive cases among those asked to self-isolate because they have been exposed to the infection, if they are self-isolating correctly, they are not spreading the virus further so this will halt further spread.

Working to suppress the virus in the community

Higher numbers of cases in the community, mean that there is an increased risk of positive cases and outbreaks within schools, colleges and early years settings.

Like shops, supermarkets, gyms and restaurants, schools can only mitigate the risk of COVID-19, they cannot eliminate the risk entirely. Many infections are happening outside school settings, because we want to make sure these operate safely, we have, in the last week, written to all retailers and out of school clubs and activities urging them to play their part in the fight against coronavirus. We will be increasing patrols of police, environmental health and security across the county to keep shoppers and retail and hospitality staff as safe as possible. Most recently, Police have increased enforcement of people who refuse to follow safety guidance in shops or other activities.

We will also be undertaking further work on transport services and will be making COVID-19 safety kits available for all taxis and hire cars, including those who transport children and young people to school.

We've included our simple infographic on steps to take to make shopping safer, protect you and retail staff at the bottom of this letter.

Attending out of school clubs and activities safely

We have written to local clubs and out of school activity leaders to outline how they can run their activity as safely as possible.

We understand that out of school clubs and activities are vital to the health and wellbeing of our communities, particularly young people, but they are also places where the risk of passing on COVID-19 can be high if the proper precautions are not put in place.

If your child(ren) attend a club or activity that is not provided by their nursery, school or college feel free to ask them what measures they have put in place to operate as COVID-19 secure as possible. Guidance and tools have also been provided for clubs and these can be found at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/news-archive/guidance-on-running-out-of-school-clubs-safely>

Protecting yourself remains crucial

There are important things that you can do to help protect yourself, your child(ren) and others against coronavirus, these are;

- wash or sanitise your hands regularly
- don't touch your face
- maintain social distancing, this also means explaining to children and young people that they shouldn't touch or hug friends
- wear a face covering when required (unless exempt) if you're aged 11 plus, i.e. on public transport, or home to school transport, in corridors and smaller spaces at school, or when in a shop
- limit your social contacts outside of school and home
- ask children not to share drinks or food with friends
- self-isolate when asked to, this means staying at home and not leaving even to go to the shops or out for exercise

Self-isolation

Self-isolating is one of the most important things we can all do to help stop the spread of the virus and protect our loved ones and the vulnerable. You can read our helpful self-isolating guide at: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/selfisolatingguide

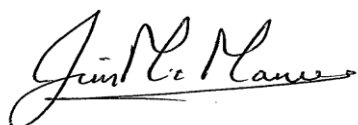
This guide also provides information on how to get support and how to access the COVID-19 self-isolation payment if you are eligible.

We know these are really difficult times, and you may have concerns about your children attending nursery, school or college and what this might mean for the festive season. Please be assured our education settings are well prepared, mitigating the risk of infection wherever possible and all this means that chances of infection in children and young people remain low.

Thank You!

Thank you for continuing to play your part in your community by sticking to the guidance provided by Government and Public Health. Your nurseries, schools and colleges are working so hard to keep your child(ren) safe and infection rates low in the county and we thank them, and you for continuing to support them. By working together, we will save more lives in Hertfordshire this winter.

Yours sincerely



Jim McManus
Director of Public Health



Simon Newland
Operations Director, Education

You can SHOP safely this Christmas, and keep our retail staff safe too.



What can individuals do to shop safely?

You can **SHOP** safely if you just remember and follow some simple rules:

S – Set yourself up to meet the virus on your trip

- Treat everybody you meet in shopping settings as if they could have the virus. The virus is now circulating in Hertfordshire at rates of over 150 per 100,000 people so, for every 1,000 people you pass in a day's shopping, you will likely have encountered at least one with the virus who doesn't know it.
- Carry hand sanitiser and face-coverings.
- **VISORS** will not provide the same level of protection as a cloth face-covering unless they are fully down over your face and cleaned **BEFORE** and **AFTER** use.
- Cloth face-coverings should be more than one layer and **MUST** cover your nose.

H – Hands can pass the virus

- **Sanitise** your hands before you put on and remove your face- covering.
- **Handle** as few things as possible – only touch what you intend to buy.
- **DON'T** touch your face – we touch our face on average every 20 seconds without knowing. Keeping your hands below your shoulders will dramatically reduce this and therefore the risk of transmission.
- **DON'T** fiddle with or adjust your face-covering in store unless your hands are clean.

O - Stay Outside the transmission zone

- If a shop is crowded and **stuffy**, come back later.
- Wear a face-covering.
- Stay **2 metres** from others as much as possible, and avoid getting any closer than 1 metre from someone else, even if the shop is busy.
- **Avoid** crowded aisles.

P - Protect yourself from infection via objects

- **Sanitise** your hands when you **leave...**
- **THEN** remove your face covering.
- **Sanitise** your hands after using fuel pumps.
- **ONLY** touch your purse, wallet or payment card with clean hands.

Each of these actions might not be full-proof in isolation but put them together and you have a defence drill against the virus.