

Dear Parent/Guardian,

URGENT UPDATE ON COVID-19 ACTIONS IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

Now life is opening back up thankfully we can do so much than before, but as parents and guardians we really need your help to keep it that way, particularly as rates are high and across Northamptonshire and we are seeing a worrying increase in hospital admissions.

During Half Term

It's important to be cautious this half term, especially when your children might well be mixing with those who they don't usually mix with at organised activities or sports clubs.

Vaccination is clearly a key component to containing the virus and we would strongly advise all eligible children to have the vaccine when offered and for parents and guardians who may not have yet been immunised to do so too - it is not too late to book using the national portal: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/ or by calling 119

As in term time it's also really important that children who are unwell stay at home over half term. Those with COVID-19 symptoms should book a PCR test as soon as they become ill by going to <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119 and remain at home, away from other family members where possible, until they receive their result.

Please also keep up asymptomatic testing, also known as Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) at least twice a week. These are the test for people with no symptoms and are the test that your secondary school aged children carry out twice weekly. They are also used by healthcare staff, by those visiting care home residents and lots of companies to identify cases early and avoid outbreaks.

We'd also highly recommend that parents and guardians do the tests too. This is particularly good for early years or primary aged caregivers as it means cases are identified quickly without the need to regularly test younger children. If a parent, guardian, or older sibling does test positive with a LFT then all family members should isolate and get a PCR test as soon as possible.

There are a variety of ways in which you can access LFT testing:

Through the Community Collect service, often a local pharmacy where you can pick up packs for home use, you can find your nearest by visiting <https://maps.test-and-trace.nhs.uk/findatestcenter.html>

If you can't easily access the Community Collect service, you can order test kits for home delivery at <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>.

Finally, it's important to remember that regular and thorough hand washing remains an essential part of good hygiene and prevents the spread of many viruses. As well as COVID-19 it can also reduce the spread of colds, flu and stomach bugs.

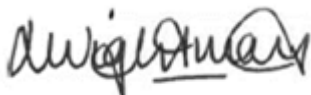
On Return to School After Half Term

As many of you will have seen in the national press, there is widespread concern about the current COVID-19 case rates and mounting pressure on the NHS. In order to ensure that there is as little disruption to education and care services as possible, especially as we head into winter and see other seasonal illnesses also increase, we are asking that:

- All secondary school aged children continue to do a LFT at least twice a week
- If a child tests positive using a LFT, that a PCR test is sought as soon as possible and that the child remains at home until the result of the PCR is known
- On receipt of a positive PCR test, that any school age siblings of the case also seek an urgent PCR test and remain at home until the result is known - and if negative, take a daily LFT for 10 days thereafter to ensure no transmission into other school years/other school settings occurs
- That pupils adhere to any requests made by Head Teachers for the use of face coverings where infection risks are identified and/or outbreaks occur

Although it is recognised that these requests may cause some short term inconvenience for a small number of families, we believe that by requesting these simple additional measures we will see less wide scale disruption to education this winter and can play our part in trying to keep pressure of local health and care services as low as possible.

Yours Sincerely,



Lucy Wightman
Joint Director of Public Health - North and West Northamptonshire Councils