

*The person dealing with this matter is* Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health  
Bexley

20 November 2020

Dear Parent/ Carer/ Member of Staff

Re: Letter from Public Health Bexley

You will probably be aware from the media that Bexley has reached a crucial and worrying stage in the Covid-19 pandemic. Sadly, we are currently seeing around 700 new positive cases a week and have the second highest 7-day case rate in London.

It is only by working together that we are going to reduce the number of cases as we wait for the roll out of the vaccine.

Our Headteachers have done a phenomenal job in keeping all our schools open since March, many through the holidays. This has helped to reduce in-school transmissions and attributed to Bexley experiencing exceptionally low rates until recently.

We work very closely with schools and analyse transmission data and we can now see that cases in pupils are rising across all sectors. Headteachers discuss all cases with us, the DfE and/ or the London Corona Response Cell (depending on the size of the situation). All schools have risk assessments and action plans which have been ratified by their Boards. It is a result of this excellent practice and tremendous hard work that we have achieved so much so far.

We have started publishing a daily public facing data dashboard which can be found at:  
<https://www.bexley.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19>

Our data analysis suggests that community transmission of Covid-19 is now widespread, with majority of infections entering schools via external transmission. I am now writing to you to ask that every family pulls together to do their part in ensuring that all guidance is followed.

There is no magic recipe. We will only reduce transmission by wearing a face covering, social distancing (2m or more as much as possible), good hygiene (handwashing, sanitising, high quality cleaning) and by self-isolating when asked to do so by the school or test and trace. Self-isolating means that you must not go to work or school, or visit public spaces e.g. shops, gardens etc.

If there is a reported case in school, your child may be asked to self-isolate for fourteen days at home. It means that your child **must** stay at home, with no exceptions. Self-isolating children may not take other siblings to schools, for example, and may not be taken shopping. If your child goes on to develop symptoms, your family must then self-isolate for fourteen days and your child for ten days from that point.

You can also stop the spread of transmission, now that we are in lockdown, by following the lockdown guidance. This means that bubbles of children should not be mixing at weekends or after school under any circumstances e.g. birthday parties, sleepovers etc.

*There can be no exceptions to self-isolating and following lockdown guidance. We do understand the hardship this may cause but, in the longer term, rapid action now will prevent further hardship.*

I understand that this is a very difficult time for many of you and that as this Pandemic enters its 10th month in December, people are tired of following the rules and of constantly being told what to do. There is light at the end of this tunnel, but we have to pull together and tough this last phase out. This is especially important since this phase is likely to be the most difficult, with the escalation in cases, winter coming and with it flu, the expected end of lockdown and the approach of Christmas.

The temptation will be to relax and try to gain a semblance of normality. But the cost of that is too high. We have to keep doing the right thing through winter.

Please keep safe, protect the NHS and help save lives.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anjan Ghosh', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Dr Anjan Ghosh

Director of Public Health  
London Borough of Bexley

## Appendix 1: Relevant guidance with links

The 'Stay and Home' Government guidance can be found [here](#)

Guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection who do not live with the person can be found [here](#)

### In summary:

- You must stay at home if you have symptoms and self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of any symptom. Your family bubble must self isolate for fourteen days. If you receive a negative test result, you may stop self isolating and your family can too. If you receive a positive result, you must self isolate for 10 days or longer if you still feel unwell and your family must complete their 14-day self isolation period. If a bubble member falls unwell during that 14 days, their self isolation period of ten days starts again. We appreciate that will be almost a month for some.
- You must stay at home if you are waiting for a test result, including from test and trace
- You must wear a face mask when visiting school and your child should wear a face mask as advised. You should (and your child should) wear a face mask on public transport.
- Parents are asked to avoid congregating outside school buildings after children have been dropped off.
- Children must not attend school if a member of their household is displaying symptoms.
- Older children should be encouraged to return home promptly at the end of the school day, avoiding meeting in crowds in busy locations.
- **All** positive cases should be reported to the child's school so that they can respond rapidly to prevent further potential transmission within bubbles.

### Symptoms

The most important symptoms of COVID-19 are recent onset of any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature
- a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)

For most people, COVID-19 will be a mild illness. However, if you have any of the symptoms above, stay at home and arrange to have a test.

The above are the main symptoms, but there are others. If you think you may have Covid-19, stay at home.

You could be [fined](#) if you do not stay at home and self-isolate following a positive test result for COVID-19 and you are notified by NHS Test and Trace that you need to self-isolate.

You could be [fined](#) if you are identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 and you are notified by NHS Test and Trace that you need to self-isolate and do not to stay at home and self-isolate.

### Reduce the spread of Covid-19 in your home

Everyone in your household should take the following steps to reduce the risk of catching COVID-19 or passing it on to others:

- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use hand sanitiser.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze, bin it promptly and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow. Avoid touching your face.
- Regularly clean frequently touched surfaces and shared areas such as kitchens and bathrooms and keep indoor areas well-ventilated by opening windows where possible.
- If you have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 or a positive test result, use a face covering when spending time in shared areas inside your home

### **What is meant by a contact**

A 'contact' is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 anytime from 2 days before the person was symptomatic up to 10 days from onset of symptoms (this is when they are infectious to others). For example, a contact can be:

- people who spend significant time in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19
- sexual partners
- a person who has had face-to-face contact (within one metre), with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, including:
  - being coughed on
  - having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
  - having skin-to-skin physical contact, or
  - contact within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- a person who has been within 2 metres of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes
- a person who has travelled in a small vehicle with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or in a large vehicle or plane near someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

Where an interaction between 2 people has taken place through a Perspex (or equivalent) screen, this would not be considered sufficient contact, provided that there has been no other contact such as any of those indicated above.

Contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 need to self-isolate at home because they are at risk of developing symptoms themselves in the next 14 days and could spread the virus to others before the symptoms begin.

If you are a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, then you will be notified by the NHS Test and Trace service via text message, email or phone. If you are notified, please follow the guidance in this document closely.

If you have not been notified that you are a contact, this means you do not need to self-isolate and should follow the general guidance, for example, social distancing, hand-washing, and covering coughs and sneezes.