Public Health
Northamptonshire

25th March 2021

Dear Parent

Easter break is now almost upon us, and with it the further easing of restrictions on 29 March, life suddenly feels as if it may soon be a little more 'normal'.

I know that you are by now starting to feel bombarded by COVID-19 messages for the last year, however, I'm sure I'm not alone in wanting to avoid tighter restrictions for Northamptonshire so please bear with me a little longer.

Sadly, rates in certain areas of the county remain stubbornly high. Just as throughout most of the pandemic, we can see that locally in Northamptonshire the virus is mainly passed on within and between households. When households mix, the virus spreads.

Unfortunately, the main variant in Northamptonshire is now the Kent variant which is much more easily passed on than the COVID-19 variants seen for the majority of last year.

That's why I am writing to you with a plea to follow the new rules when they are implemented on 29 March, especially making sure your youngsters know what the rules are and keep to them.

Meeting outdoors

Evidence shows that it is safer for people to meet outdoors rather than indoors.

This means outdoor gatherings (including in private gardens) of either six people (the rule of six) or two households will be allowed, making it easier for friends and families to meet outside. Those who are already in a support bubble will count as one household. However, people from different households will need to socially distance from each other - keeping two metres apart.

This may be hard for youngsters to understand, particularly if they are in the same bubble at school, however this is because a school operates within strict guidelines as a COVID-19 secure setting, unlike a park or a garden which aren't set up to be COVID-19 secure.

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Most restrictions, however, will remain in place and people still cannot meet indoors, unless in a support bubble, including staying overnight away from home.

Last year we saw an increase in cases in school aged children and contact tracing data showed that sleepovers between friends played a part in rising cases in youngsters. I am sure, once again I will be called a party pooper or gloomster, but please do follow the rules by not having sleepovers over the Easter break to protect your children and their friends, as well as yourselves, from COVID-19.

Another great way of stopping the spread of this particularly infectious COVID-19 variant is testing for those without symptoms. These tests are called Lateral Flow Test (LFT) or Lateral Flow Device tests and is just for adults (secondary school aged children are already part of a testing regime). This is particularly good for caregivers as it means cases are identified quickly without the need to double test younger children with both LFT and then confirm with the traditional PCR test.

Any adults in a household or childcare bubble of an early years child, a pupil, student or staff of a school, nursery or college, can now get access to twice-weekly LFTs.

If you're not already getting tested regularly at work you can access these tests via a number of routes:

Take a test at a community rapid test site

You can take a rapid lateral flow test at a local site. Testing at these sites is assisted, which means you will swab yourself under the supervision of a trained operator. You may need to book an appointment.

The sites are:-

Corby - Lodge Sports Centre

Corby East - Hazelwood Neighbourhood Centre

Daventry - Daventry Leisure Centre

Northampton - Danes Camp Leisure Centre

South Northamptonshire - Brackley Leisure Centre

Wellingborough - Redwell Leisure Centre

Visit here to book an appointment at one of the Northamptonshire sites

Collect home-test kits

You can collect 2 packs of home test kits at a local collection point. Each pack contains 7 tests. Anyone 18 or over can collect.

Find your nearest home test kit collection point

Order home test kits online

You can order 1 pack of home test kits containing 7 tests for home delivery. Your tests should arrive within 2 days.

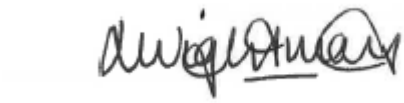
Order rapid lateral flow home test kits

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter - it is quite long but I hope fulfils its purpose in making it as easy as possible to know the new rules.

It also should have shown how easily testing can be accessed for those without symptoms – something which I know has real potential to see Northamptonshire progress further in bringing case numbers down.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely,



Lucy Wightman
Director of Public Health