



# Northumberland County Council

**Our ref:** CMc-C/ar/160321

**Enquiries to:** NCC Customer Services

**Telephone:** 0345 600 6400

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Dear Parents/Legal Guardians,**

Whilst the number of positive Covid-19 cases being identified in our communities is reducing, those cases are only a small percentage of the people who potentially have the infection as many will not have any symptoms. It is likely that the number of cases remains high; the infection is still being spread; and we know that cases can escalate very quickly if the conditions are right and people mix unnecessarily, for instance by continuing to hold events such as children's birthday parties. With our schools now fully reopened, it is vital that we all continue to do everything we can to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The Government has outlined the roadmap out of lockdown, but the current 'stay at home' rules are not due to be relaxed until 29<sup>th</sup> March at the earliest. This means no indoor mixing of households, unless you are in a single person household support bubble, or a childcare bubble. For further details on household bubbles, please see [www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-a-support-bubble-with-another-household).

We have had increasing reports of secondary pupils gathering in groups outside of school hours, and we would like to remind you that this is still illegal and risks financial penalties being applied by the Police. While it may not sound risky for pupils to mix outside of school in groups, the level of risk is much higher than during the school day when they are socially distanced, wearing masks, and using hand sanitiser regularly.

We therefore ask that you ensure you, and your children are aware of the current rules and guidance, and that you know where they are at all times. You can only leave your home for essential shopping, or for exercise. You can exercise with your household or support bubble, or you can meet with one person from outside your household. Please continue to maintain social distancing at all times, including when exercising, and when dropping off and collecting your children from school.

If you or someone in your household develops symptoms, please arrange a Covid test for that person, and isolate your whole household immediately. If the result is positive, the household must isolate for 10 full days. If the result is negative, you can stop isolating.

From Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March, secondary school pupils (and middle schools from Year 7 upwards) will be offered Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing kits to be carried out twice a week at home. If your child gets a positive LFD test, you should inform the school

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immediately so they can identify close contacts. You should also isolate the whole household and arrange a confirmatory PCR test for your child. If the PCR test is negative, you can all stop isolating. If it is positive, you must all continue to isolate for 10 full days. Please also inform the school of the result of the confirmatory PCR test as soon as possible.

If you are struggling to test your secondary school child at home, schools will still have a small assisted testing site (ATS) within the school, where your child can be tested instead of at home.

#### Household testing

If you are a member of a household or a childcare bubble of a pupil, student or staff of a school, nursery or college, you are also eligible for twice-weekly testing. You can obtain your tests through your employer if they offer testing to employees, or at a local testing site. Please go to [www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rapid-lateral-flow-testing-for-households-and-bubbles-of-school-pupils-and-staff) for further details.

#### Financial support

You may be eligible for financial support during your isolation period, please go to [www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support/claiming-financial-support-under-the-test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme) for further advice and how to claim support.

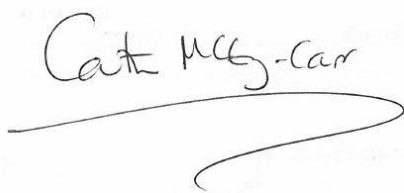
If we all play our part and adhere to the above guidance, then soon we should be able to look forward to a summer with less restrictions.

Thank you for all that you are doing.

Yours sincerely



**Liz Morgan**  
Director of Public Health



**Cath McEvoy-Carr**  
Director of Adult Social Care & Children's Services