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Your ref:  
Our ref: DPH/ltrs/Dec2020  
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Dear Parent/Carer

## Rise in coronavirus cases among children aged 11-18

The festive break is fast approaching, which will hopefully bring some seasonal cheer to what has been a very challenging time. I want to say a heartfelt thank you for all that you have been doing to keep your family safe, especially during periods when your children have been unable to attend school. Your efforts have really helped control the spread of coronavirus.

You will be aware that COVID-19 restrictions are being eased between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> December. The opportunity to spend time with our loved ones is very welcome, but it is really important to remember that the virus has not gone away. In fact, we are seeing a significant increase in cases locally following lifting of the national lockdown, particularly among children aged 11-18.

Given the increase of cases in our children, I am urging you to be cautious over the festive period, and we have made arrangements for all children aged 11-18, their households and the staff of their school or college to get a test for coronavirus.

## Home testing for staff, children aged 11-18 and their household members

As many as 1 in 3 people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and could be spreading it without realising it. We want to identify as many people who are positive for COVID-19 as possible, and so we have made arrangements over the festive period for all staff, students and their household members with no symptoms to get a test.

You can request home testing kits for your family online at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> **Please follow the instructions for requesting home testing kits that are provided at the end of this letter.** The test will be delivered to your home, you can administer the test yourself and return it following the instructions that come with the test.

You should get your results by text or email 2 days after your home test is returned. If you receive a positive result, your household will need to isolate. Advice and details of support available are given below. If you are negative you can continue to follow the rules of your tier, and Christmas bubble arrangements.

It is important to remember that a negative test means that you are negative on the day of the test only – it does not guarantee that you will be negative for the whole of the festive period.

Vicky Head, Director of Public Health  
Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP



## Staying as safe as possible over the festive period

The temporary easing of restrictions from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> December allows us to form a single Christmas bubble of up to three households for five days. If you do decide to form a Christmas bubble, I would encourage you to make it as small as possible and think carefully about the risks, particularly if you are considering forming a Christmas bubble with older or more vulnerable people.

During this period it is important that you continue to:

- Stay home as much as possible.
- Spend time outside for exercise and fresh air – it's a good way to meet others more safely.
- If you do meet with your Christmas bubble indoors, try to limit the time you spent together and keep the windows open for ventilation.
- Try to maintain social distancing when you meet your Christmas bubble and whenever you go out.
- Wear a face covering if you can't socially distance.
- Regularly wash your hands.

It is vitally important that young people limit their social contact with others, because whilst most young people experience mild symptoms they can pass the virus on to others who may be more likely to become very ill.

In school, bubbles are formed so that the virus can be contained if someone tests positive. If your child is no longer attending school, they can no longer mix with students who were in their school bubble. They must only have close contact with people they live with or who are in their support bubble.

Anyone who has coronavirus symptoms (a continuous cough, temperature or a loss/change of taste or sense of smell) should isolate immediately and book a test at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>

Vaccinations have begun and there is hope that 2021 will see us all return to some normality but for now, we have to keep up with the efforts to control the virus so that we can protect everyone in our community, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Yours sincerely

**Vicky Head**  
Director of Public Health

## **Ordering COVID Home Testing Kits for staff, students and their families in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes**

### **How can I access order a home testing kit through the national testing web portal?**

On the website, when prompted you should select:

- “no” to being an essential worker,
- “no” to having symptoms, and
- “no” to being part of a trial or pilot.
- Then select “My local council or health protection team has asked me (or someone I live with) to get a test, even though I do not have symptoms”

Selecting these options will allow you to request a home testing kit for COVID-19. More detailed instructions with screenshots are provided at the end of this guide.

### **When should I order the test?**

Please try to order the test as soon as possible to ensure that we can identify any people who are positive but asymptomatic. This is to try and prevent the spread of infection and ensure that anyone who is positive takes the appropriate action. Details of this can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

### **The website says “You cannot use this service to get a test if: your employer or school has asked you to get a test but you have no symptoms.” Can I still get a test?**

Yes. We have made special arrangements with NHS Test & Trace in light of the high number of infections locally. Please use the instructions above to book a test.

### **The website says “There is a problem. We cannot process your request for a home test kit.”**

Please try again later. The service is experiencing a high level of demand but if you keep trying you will be able to place your order.

### **Should students and staff return to their place of education before they get their test result?**

Yes, if you have the test before term ends. As long as they have no symptoms, students and staff who have been tested should continue to attend their place of education while awaiting the result of their test. This is different to the advice for those who have had a test because they have symptoms – they should isolate until they receive their test result.

### **What if I test negative?**

Anyone who tests negative does not need to self-isolate but remember that the test means that you are negative on the day of the test only – it does not guarantee that you will be negative for the whole of the festive period.

**What should I do if I test positive?**

If you have received a positive test result you, and your household must self-isolate, this is the only way to guarantee you won't pass COVID-19 to others.

If you are told to isolate, you should go home and start self-isolating straight away.

Self-isolation is one of the most important things we can do to help stop the spread of the virus and protect our friends and family, our community and the NHS.

For help and support to self-isolate please visit <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/covid19>

You will also be contacted by NHS Test & Trace – please provide them with the information requested so that we identify your contacts and contain the virus.

Don't forget to let school/college know that you have tested positive including the date you took the test. If a student or staff member tests positive it is important to notify the school so that close contacts in the school/college can be identified and asked to self-isolate.

**Why aren't you offering this to the families of younger children?**

The rate infection is much lower among younger children and evidence suggests that they are also much less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others. There are a limited number of home testing kits available and we are targeting them where they will make the most difference.

## A guide to ordering home testing kits

The screen shots below help illustrate the process but do not include all the pages you will need to complete.

**Is the person who needs a test an essential worker?**

Essential workers include NHS staff, teachers and transport staff. Check the [full list of essential workers on GOV.UK](#).

Yes

No

I don't know

[Continue](#)

**Does the person who needs a test have coronavirus symptoms?**

The main symptoms of coronavirus are:

- a high temperature
- new, continuous cough
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

Most people with coronavirus have at least one of these symptoms.

Yes, at least one of these symptoms

No, none of these symptoms

[Continue](#)

**Is the person who needs a test part of a trial or government pilot project?**

For example, they:

- are taking part in community testing
- have been invited to take part in the Contact Testing Study
- were told to get a test by the COVID Symptom Study app (by ZOE)

Yes

No

[Continue](#)

## Why are you asking for a test?

- I've been told to get another coronavirus test
- I'm ordering for someone I live with who has coronavirus symptoms
- My local council or health protection team has asked me (or someone I live with) to get a test, even though I do not have symptoms
- I'm part of the National Tactical Response Group (NTRG), or someone I live with is
- None of the above

Continue

## Do you or someone you live with have a car, small van or motorbike?

We are asking this so we can include a drive-through test as one of your options.

You can still choose a walk-through test or a home test if you prefer.

It's safe to visit a drive-through test site if you're self-isolating.

- Yes
- No

Continue

This will ensure that you get the home testing kit option.

## How do you want to get the coronavirus test?

Based on your answers, these testing services are available to you.

**!** If no tests are available online, do not call helplines to get a test. You will not be able to get a test through the helplines.

At a walk-through test site

There are currently no appointments available. Please try again in a few hours.

**Home testing**

- you can get a test kit for yourself and up to 3 other people you live with
- it is posted to your home and should arrive the day after you order it
- it's important that you return your test as soon as possible after doing it

Continue

## Order a home test kit: what you need to know

### About the test

- the home test kit is free
- it contains a swab test and instructions
- it's posted to your home and should arrive the day after you order it
- it's important that you return your test as soon as possible after doing it

### Who can have it

You can get a test kit for yourself and up to 3 other people you live with who have coronavirus symptoms.

Some people may be asked to get a test even if they do not have symptoms.

In England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, a child can have a test whatever their age.

[Continue](#)

## Confirm people for testing

You can add up to 3 people you live with for testing.

A maximum of 2 people can arrive on the same motorbike. If you plan to travel by motorbike, you can only get a test for you and one other person you live with.

Once you've confirmed who needs testing, you can continue.

**!** People you live with who do not have symptoms are not eligible for this test. Do not order tests for them, unless you've been asked to. Ordering unnecessary tests is wasting NHS resources.

[Save and continue](#)

[Add person you live with](#)

It is at this point you can add additional household members. If your household has more than 4 people, please complete the process separately for each adult.

You will be sent a code via your email address which you need to use to complete the order.

16 December 2020