

Department for Children, Adults and Health

Date: 16 July 2021

Covid-19 update for parents and carers with children in education

Dear parents/carers,

You will be aware that the government has provided details of the final stage of its roadmap out of lockdown, Step 4, to go ahead from Monday 19 July.

Step 4 will see the relaxation of most remaining restrictions. Limits on meeting others and the legal requirement to wear face coverings and check into venues will be removed. Large events can also take place. But the message remains clear - people need to manage the risks to themselves and others as the country learns to live with the virus.

In South Gloucestershire, our community infection rates continue to rise and there has been an increase in the number of hospitalisations from Covid-19. We are therefore urging extreme caution and advising residents to continue protecting yourself and others.

- Meet outdoors or in well ventilated areas
- Wear a face covering where you come into contact with people you don't normally meet in enclosed and crowded spaces
- Wash your hands regularly
- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Stay at home if you feel unwell
- Consider staying apart from people who are vulnerable and consider whether you or others have had one or both of your Covid-19 vaccines
- Have both doses of the vaccine

Be considerate and respectful of those around you. Think about not only your own risks but also of others, particularly those with clinical vulnerabilities.

Changes for schools from 19 July:

From 19 July, schools will not be required to keep classes in bubbles alongside measures such as staggered start times. However, many schools will continue to operate within the existing systems they have in place until the end of the term. Each school will make its own decisions on how and when to implement changes and your child's school will inform you of any new arrangements for taking and collecting your child. Schools will continue to take the necessary steps to manage the risks for their staff and students.

Face coverings will no longer be advised for pupils, staff or visitors in either the classroom or communal areas. The government has recommended that face coverings are worn on dedicated transport to school or college when case numbers are high. From September, public health officials may advise masks are worn again in the case of local outbreaks.

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Changes from 16 August:

From 16 August, anyone under the age of 18 years and four months or who has had both doses of the vaccine will be exempt from having to isolate if they are identified as a close contact. The change in self-isolation rules will allow schools, when they open again in September, to continue operating and prevent large numbers of children and staff having to isolate if a member of the school community tests positive. We know face-to-face learning is vital for children's education and social development and this change will reduce ongoing remote learning for large numbers of children across South Gloucestershire, following the recent rise in case numbers.

Everyone must still isolate if they have symptoms or test positive or are told to by NHS Test and Trace.

Testing:

Regular rapid asymptomatic testing will be paused in schools and colleges over the summer except for those that remain open, such as summer schools and those that do not operate on a term-time basis. In these cases, we ask that those attending continue to test regularly and we will provide support to those schools and colleges for this regular testing. For summer schools, NHS Test and Trace will provide support with contact tracing.

Regular testing protects you and others. Testing is still widely available and kits can be collected either from your local pharmacy, most libraries in South Gloucestershire or from one of our mobile testing vans. For full details visit our website www.southglos.gov.uk/testing You can also order home testing kits from www.gov.uk

Contact Tracing and reporting a positive case:

From 19 July, schools will no longer have to trace contacts of a positive case themselves and instead close contacts will be identified via NHS Test and Trace. Tracers will work with the positive cases to identify close contacts.

The change means parents and carers will no longer be asked to inform South Gloucestershire Council if your child tests positive. However, we can still offer help and support, including grants if you are financially impacted by having to self-isolate. Please visit www.southglos.gov.uk/coronavirus

Vaccination:

The vaccination programme is our best route out of the pandemic and offers the best way to protect yourself and others. Vaccines are now available to anyone aged 18 and over in England. Please book yours if you haven't already and encourage anyone eligible in your household, including teenagers aged 18 and over, to do the same. It is important to have both doses as you will be better protected. Book now at www.nhs.uk Walk-in clinics are being held across the area, visit www.grabajab.net for the latest details.

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Delivering for you

The government is taking advice on vaccinating children and will provide an update soon.

Please be assured that your child's setting has been updated with all the latest government guidance and will keep on working hard to keep your child safe. Our education and public health teams will continue to provide support and guidance to all settings and we will still communicate any changes or updates as we move forward to Step 4.

Thank you:

Finally, we would like to say thank you for your continued support and all your efforts to keep your child and family, your child's school and your wider community safe. We hope you enjoy the summer.

Yours sincerely,



Sara Blackmore,
Director of Public Health



Chris Sivers,
Director for Children, Adults and Health

www.southglos.gov.uk/coronavirus