



Director of Public Health Office
Sheffield Town Hall, Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH
Web Site: www.sheffield.gov.uk
To: All Schools and Early Years/Child Care Settings

Thursday 16th July 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: The end of the academic year 2019-20

As the end of the academic year approaches, I wanted to take the opportunity to acknowledge just how difficult we may have found the last few months. Thank you for your patience, support and ability to respond so positively to the changes that COVID-19 has brought to us. Our lives have had to change quickly and I know it has been a very difficult time.

Lockdown will have had a huge impact on children and young people not being able to attend school and missing contact with friends and family. For many home schooling and remote learning has had to become a new way of life. Thank you for the time you've given and the changes you have made within your own families.

Over the summer I hope you, your children and families are able to enjoy the gradual easing of lockdown whilst still recognising how important it is that we continue to do all that we can to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

The Public Health team will continue to provide support to schools and settings, helping with planning ahead for the wider opening in September. You will be aware that as schools and settings re-open for the new academic year, things will continue to look different. Schools and settings are working hard to minimise risks, to help protect children, young people and staff. We will be asking for your help too, and to support our new ways of working in schools, for example:

- Staggered start times
- Continue and expanding the 'social protective bubble' model to help manage risk and reduce the contact that children and young people have
- New systems for dropping and collecting pupils at the start and end of the school day

As a city, there is still a long way to go and lots to consider, and this will be the case for some time. This means we have to live and function with the COVID-19 virus, whilst trying to keep a degree of normality especially at home around children and young people. At a local level we now have access to data to help us map the virus and this is important in helping us to manage local outbreaks. We also have the NHS test and trace system and strong links with Public Health England (PHE) where we are working together to manage any outbreaks. This means we have the systems in place which are working, but it is important to remember that it is our behaviour that helps control the virus and we must continue to follow the guidance.

Understandably, you may feel worried and anxious about your child returning back to their child care settings and schools in September. I know that parents with complex health needs and those who are vulnerable will be particularly concerned.

I am and will continue to review the situation regularly, and the Public Health Team will be busy making sure that all settings are supported to open safely. **The rate of virus transmission has reduced and we are now through the peak of the pandemic.** We have the careful balance of opening up our education and childcare settings to provide much

needed learning and education, alongside the benefits of children and young people spending time with their friends, whilst managing and reducing the risk of virus transmission.

As a city we can do this effectively and carefully. I would ask you to give some thought to your routines and plans in September. We want you to get back to school safely and it may be necessary to make some changes to your daily routines. I would ask where possible for you to make plans which include:

- Pupils walking and/or cycling to school wherever possible
- Travelling within a family unit or 'bubble' via car
- If public or school transport is used following the guidelines required which include for public transport wearing face coverings, unless your child may be exempt (see below).
- You may also want to allow extra time in the morning as we all ease back into the school routine. Lots of us have been out of routine (including children) for sometime and it will be a big shock to the system for us all.

Over the summer I would ask you to continue to follow the guidance to keep Sheffield open:

If you have symptoms, however mild you must

- Self-isolate and get a COVID-19 test immediately at [NHS.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) or call 119
- If the test is positive – to protect others, you must follow advice provided by NHS test & trace, household contacts should isolate for 14 days.

The COVID-19 virus likes confined and crowded places and close contact – so you can reduce your risks by

- **Keeping a safer 2 meter distance from people** outside your household or bubble, wherever possible.
- **Regularly washing your hands** - for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap and hot water or using hand sanitiser
- **Wearing face coverings** on public transport, in shops and when you cannot socially distance or come into contact with people you do not normally meet.
- Some people are exempt from wearing face coverings such as young children, people with disabilities. You can download or print face covering exemption cards from Travel South Yorkshire or collect from Transport Interchanges <https://www.travelsouthyorkshire.com/en-GB/LandingPage/Journey-Assistance-Cards> This may help you explain to people in official capacity why you are not wearing a face covering in mandatory settings.

I know most of us are well aware of the guidance, but it is now more important than ever that we follow the guidance and do not become a contact. Whilst schools and settings are closed over the summer the Sheffield Community Helpline is available to help provide information and support. The service can be contacted on 0114 2734567 and can help with arranging testing, providing information and helping individuals who may be isolating. You will also find useful resources to help with difficult emotions and mental health difficulties at

<https://www.sheffieldmentalhealth.co.uk/>

<https://www.sheffieldchildrens.nhs.uk/patients-and-parents/coronavirus-resources-for-children-and-families/>

Finally, I would like to wish you all a safe and enjoyable summer. Thank you for all that you continue to do in these challenging times. Keep up the good work to help keep Sheffield open, and we look forward to welcoming you back as we start the next academic year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AG Fell". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Greg Fell (Director of Public Health)