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Ref: DK/JM/GK/KR
Date: 16 April 2021

Dear Colleagues

We hope that you have had a restful Easter break. Thanks as always for your ongoing leadership in these challenging times, it is much appreciated. Please see below updates on Covid-19 guidelines for schools, including changes on confirmatory testing, updates on self-isolation support and face coverings and waste guidance for secondary schools.

Please also find a copy of a letter for parents and carers and details of an upcoming webinar, which we kindly ask that you promote to the school community.

PCR and LFD testing

There is now wide access across the borough to both PCR and LFD testing for Covid-19.

PCR tests are used to identify people who have symptoms and it can detect even small amounts of the virus, for example early on in the infection. Results can take up to 3 days as they need to be sent to the lab.

LFD tests are used for people who may have large amounts of the virus but have no symptoms, as a spot check. LFDs are rapid tests and can give you a result in 30 minutes. It is important that everyone without symptoms has twice a week LFD testing. As children are most likely to catch Covid-19 from their parents and carers, so encouraging them to test regularly will be helpful to stop the virus from getting into schools.

Please take every opportunity to remind your staff and school community, that PCR tests should be used where an individual has symptoms of Covid-19, however mild. LFD tests should be used only where individuals are asymptomatic.

All positive results from an LFD test, whether taken at home or at a school, need to be confirmed with a follow-up PCR test within 48 hours of the positive LFD test.

The follow-up PCR test should be taken immediately through one of the walk-in [PRC test sites in the borough](#), or by booking with [NHS online](#) or by calling 119.

While waiting for the PCR result, pupils, students and staff and close contacts should continue to self-isolate for 10 days in line with NHS Test and Trace guidance.

If the PCR test is negative, provided it was taken within 48 hours of the positive LFD, pupils, students and staff can return to school or college, and close contacts and other household members can stop self-isolating.

Please continue to notify all initial reports of confirmed cases (whether LFD or PCR) to public.health@walthamforest.gov.uk using the previously provided notification form. If a confirmatory PCR test is negative and it has been taken within 48 hours meaning that self-isolation will be ending, please update public.health@walthamforest.gov.uk. Secondary pupils, as well as staff, should continue to test twice weekly at home. Willowfield School have done a ['how to' video guide](#) by the Ambassadors, Councillors and Youth Health Champions for pupils self-testing which you may find helpful.

Support for self-isolation for parents / carers (including Test and Trace support payment)

Parents or carers who live in the borough are now able to apply for a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500 if they need to take time off work to care for a child or young person who has been told to self-isolate.

The scheme ensures that parents/carers receive the financial support they need if they cannot work from home while undertaking caring responsibilities and will lose income as a result of the child's requirement to self-isolate.

Schools are required to provide a letter to all parents or carers of the children advised to self-isolate. Schools can use the usual close contact letter template which is available on the Hub and this has been updated with information on the self-isolation support payment - <https://thehub-beta.walthamforest.gov.uk/guidancesuspectedcases>

Please ensure each letter details the child's name and dates of self-isolation. Parents and carers will need the letter to support their application for the payment. The letter explains to parents and carers that the local authority will conduct a check with their child's setting if they apply for a payment. Once the application is received by the local authority, the Waltham Forest Revenues and Benefits team will contact the school or setting to confirm that the child attends your setting and is required to self-isolate. This will be via phone call initially, and then via email if they have been unable to make contact.

To apply, the child or young person must have been told to self-isolate on or after 8 March 2021. Applications can be backdated to this point and the parent or carer will be eligible for the payment if they meet all the other eligibility criteria (for the main scheme or the discretionary scheme).

Full details about the eligibility criteria, including the application process, is available on the [Council's website](#).

In addition to financial assistance for eligible residents, we also offer various types of support to those self-isolating, including help to access food for those who need it. Please visit our website for [our full offer](#) or call our helpline on 020 8496 3000 and choose the option for Housing Benefit.

Stay Safe Champions

The Borough is re-launching the Stay Safe Champions for school gate engagement, at school drop off and pick up. We will be contacting schools in the coming weeks, with an offer of support, which includes a risk assessment, information on Covid-19 regulations, and engagement with parents around vaccines and testing. Operatives will be handing out face masks and "your guide to the Covid-19 vaccine" booklets and providing information and guidance around testing.

For Secondary schools – On-site testing, evaluation form and face coverings

A number of our secondary schools were supported by the Council with the provision of clinical waste bins and collections via our third party provider May Harris. As you may well be aware, updated guidance was received from DEFRA which confirmed that where LFD tests are used and subsequently discarded in schools, they are classified as **municipal waste**. This is because the School's primary activity is **not** testing, therefore, as this is not a healthcare setting, the waste cannot be classed as healthcare waste.

We have continued to support clinical waste collections up until the Easter holidays, but as you return after the break and are running a smaller on-site testing site for key worker and vulnerable children, clinical waste collection will cease and you should use normal municipal waste instead.

Many secondary schools were supported by the council in the lead up to the Easter holidays to scale up testing for all students as they returned to school. It would be really helpful to us if all schools who were supported during this time complete a short evaluation form covering testing and support. The form can be found [here](#).

The Government has confirmed that face coverings should continue to be worn in secondary school and college classrooms, where social distancing is not possible. Those who are currently exempt from wearing face coverings will remain so, including pupils or staff who are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate.

Webinar Special: Staying Safe in Schools and Childcare Settings During Covid-19

Please join our next webinar which is a special focus on safety in schools and settings during Covid-19. The event will be held on Facebook Live on Wednesday 21 April, 5.30pm-6.30pm.

All parents and carers are invited to the webinar to hear updates from settings on the safety measures in place and the continued importance of testing. They will also have the opportunity to pre-submit questions as well as ask questions live.

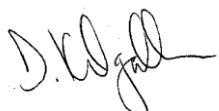
More details are in the separate letter attached – please inform all families in your setting about the event as soon as you can.

Letter to Parents and Carers

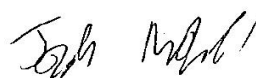
Attached is a letter for parents and carers including details about the webinar, the support payment, and other important information upon return to school for the summer term.

We would appreciate if you can share this with parents and carers in your setting when pupils return.

Yours sincerely



David Kilgallon
Director of Learning and System Leadership



Joe McDonnell
Director of Public Health