

Dear parents and carers,

Keeping residents safe and well is Islington Council's top priority. The latest Public Health evidence shows that the rate of infection is growing rapidly in the capital, including Islington, which is why we are putting immediate plans in place to keep our schools and communities safe in the coming weeks.

We have asked all schools in Islington to move to online learning for the remainder of the term from the end of Tuesday, 15 December 2020 and to return to school on Monday 11 January 2021. Schools will remain open for children of key workers and vulnerable children during term time. We will continue to provide free school meals for eligible children during term-time and throughout the holiday period.

We are also recommending that Islington Council's early years and children's centre provision follow the same advice, in which case childcare fees will not be charged for children who do not attend after Tuesday, 15 December. We are also advising other nurseries and childminders of the Public Health guidance in order that they can decide on their course of action.

We appreciate that this is likely to cause disruption and we know that you and your children will be disappointed to miss out on the traditional end of term activities as we head toward the festive break, but the current situation means that we must urgently prioritise the health and safety of Islington's residents.

Many families will be thinking carefully about plans for Christmas, including forming a [Christmas bubble](#) with grandparents and other potentially vulnerable loved ones. No matter how much we want to get back to normality, this festive season cannot be normal while we are still tackling coronavirus.

We would strongly encourage people to get a coronavirus test if they have symptoms, so that we can ensure those people that have the virus are identified and we do reduce the risk of further spreading. Testing is quick, easy and free. Islington has two testing sites - at Sobell Leisure Centre and Finsbury Leisure Centre. Getting a test is free and simple: visit nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119.

It's now more important than ever that we stay at home as much as possible to help stop the virus spreading. Avoid crowded spaces, including buses and trains, if you can, as the virus spreads more easily when people mix. Travel or shop at less busy times and follow public health advice:

- **Make space** – stay 2 metres apart from people who aren't in your family or bubble - this helps stop the virus spreading between people
- **Wash your hands** - regularly and for at least 20 seconds, especially when you get home – this washes any virus off your hands and helps stop it spreading
- **Cover your nose and mouth** to stop the virus spreading - in public places, including in shops, on public transport and at the school gates

Know the symptoms of coronavirus - a **high temperature**, or a **new continuous cough**, or a **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** and get tested if you have any of the three symptoms.

If you would like to be kept up-to-date with the most recent updates and resources on what's happening locally, including new testing sites, self-isolation payments and translated materials, then you may want to become a Covid-19 Health Champion. It's a really easy way to help family, friends and other parents get the information they need. You can also come along to a weekly virtual drop-in session with any questions or concerns you have about Covid-19. [Complete a registration form](#).

And now young people can get involved too with the youth version of the programme being launched this week. [Anyone aged 16-18 can sign-up](#).

Throughout the pandemic our top priority has been to keep our residents safe and supported. If you need help or advice, we are here to help, please call us on 020 7527 8222 to find out how we can help with emergency food deliveries, shopping, financial support and benefits.

These are incredibly difficult times, but we know that, by following the public health advice and continuing to support one another, we will get through this together.

Best wishes,

Carmel Littleton

Corporate Director
People Directorate

Mark Taylor

Director of Learning and Schools

If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape, Easy Read or in another language, please telephone 020 7527 2000.