

Friday 11th September 2020

Over the coming weeks we will continue to adapt and change the way that we work to allow us to prioritise support for schools, other educational settings, youth organisations and directly with children and young people, to operate safely and successfully at this time.

Across the sector staff have been stepping up to support schools with Education Restart and we will continue to work to ensure can best support front line services to schools at this time.

Important information and updates issued this week are detailed below.

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## Northern Ireland Executive Update

Yesterday Stormont Ministers met to consider a request from Health Minister, Robin Swann for new restrictions after a rise in Covid-19 cases here.

The Executive has decided to introduce a series of localised restrictions to stem the increase in Covid-19 cases and keep people safe. The areas covered are; Belfast City Council area, postcode area BT28, postcode area BT29 and the town of Ballymena and postcode area BT43.

The restrictions are:

- No mixing of households in private dwellings, with exemptions for: bubbling with one other household; caring responsibilities including childcare; essential maintenance, supported living arrangements; visits required for legal or medical purposes; or marriage or civil partnerships where one partner is terminally ill;
- No more than six people to gather in a private garden from no more than two households;
- Anyone living in these areas is asked to avoid unnecessary travel outside the restricted areas;
- Care homes and hospitals in these areas will be advised to significantly curtail visits as soon as practicable. One member of a family will be permitted a visit once a week while these localised restrictions apply. More frequent visits may be permitted in exceptional circumstances, including palliative care facilities and those receiving end of life care.
- Medically vulnerable and older people living in these areas are asked to be particularly careful in following the advice on limiting household contacts, social distancing, hand washing and wearing a face covering, given the local levels of Covid-19.

You can read full details [here](#).

## Important to follow Public Health Advice

The health and safety of staff continues to be our priority. We all have a personal responsibility to ensure we follow the public health advice to help stay safe and work safe. It is important that all staff continue to:

- Follow the advice and guidance set out by the Northern Ireland Executive.
- Wash our hands regularly and in line with the best practice guidance.
- Have good respiratory hygiene in terms of coughing or sneezing into a tissue or the crook of elbow.
- Follow the social distancing guidelines.
- Abide by the need to self-isolate either because you have symptoms or because you have been in touch with someone who has symptoms or has tested positive for Coronavirus.

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## Chief Medical Officer issues letter to parents and carers

The Chief Medical Officer, Michael McBride, this week sent to parents and carers of school children.

The letter outlines actions which should be taken by parents and carers if children develop Covid-19 symptoms. You can find a copy of the letter [here](#).

It was issued alongside a leaflet for parents/carers produced by the Department of Education, with advice on the steps to take if a child, or anyone they live with, develops symptoms. You can find a copy of the leaflet [here](#).

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## Education Restart - Public Health Agency Phone Line for Schools

The Public Health Agency has established a dedicated phone line to assist schools when there has been a positive (confirmed) test for coronavirus (COVID-19) in an educational setting.

This phone line is operational from today and will be available from 8am to 5pm, 7 days a week. The phone number is 028 9536 0484.

The phone line will be staffed by specialist public health staff who will support you through the risk assessment process and provide guidance on next steps when a case of Covid-19 is confirmed in the school.

It is not a general helpline and principals' first port of call for general advice where there has been no confirmed case continues to be the New School Day guidance available on the DE website [here](#).