

Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy
Director of Population Health
Tameside MBC
Market Place, Ashton Under Lyne, Tameside, OL6 6BH

www.tameside.gov.uk
e-mail : Jeanelle.degruchy@tameside.gov.uk
Ask for Jeanelle de Gruchy
Direct Line **0161 342 5615**
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Dear Parents and Carers,

Step 4 of the COVID-19 Roadmap in England

COVID-19 cases continue to rise rapidly in Tameside, two weeks ago, our rate was 350 cases per 100,000 people. It is now at over 470 cases per 100,000 of the population, the highest we have seen for months. We have seen an increase in infections in older people and an increase in cases of COVID-19 patients in hospital and in intensive care in Tameside.

Apart from this concerning situation, we know that we are seeing a large number of outbreaks of COVID-19 in schools and other workplaces, with many children missing school and businesses struggling with outbreaks and staff absence. What we know is that the Delta variant is so much faster in its spread, with an infected person being able to infect many more than previously. This shows that the pandemic is far from over and that everyone needs to remain vigilant and do everything we can to stop its spread.

As you will have heard in the media, on 19 July 2021, the Government is moving to Step 4 of the COVID-19 Roadmap. This means that further restrictions are to be lifted and members of the public are expected to take personal responsibility for their actions. As many children in Tameside will still be in school on this date, we are writing to you to give you important Public Health advice.

Due to the current high levels of COVID-19 in Tameside, we are advising schools not to relax restrictions on 19 July, but instead to introduce these new measures at the start of the new term in September, in line with a number of other Greater Manchester Local Authorities. We recommend that schools continue to follow their current risk assessments, COVID-safe processes, and the procedures for contact tracing reporting via the Tameside Public Health Team until the end of term. As Tameside is a Government enhanced response area, this will facilitate and support the focus on reducing infection and transmission in schools before the summer break. We are expecting further Government guidance on contact tracing in schools to be issued in the coming days.

This means, for example, that children will still be taught in designated bubbles, social distancing rules will be maintained, and schools may still ask children to wear face coverings where required. Schools will also be supporting children with regular handwashing and other hygiene requirements that help prevent the spread of the virus.

We will continue to support schools with COVID-19 testing for staff, either on site or at home and work with them to identify children who need to isolate as a result of either having COVID-19, or who are a contact of another child or adult who has tested positive which is still required by law until mid-August.

We hope that you will support us in our Public Health work to help keep everyone safe. By far the best form of protection against COVID-19 is for those 18 years and over, and those 16-17 years who are carers or have a health condition, to be fully vaccinated. If you have not yet done this, you should book an appointment as soon as possible via this NHS portal. There are also a number of walk-in vaccination clinics across Tameside where you do not need to book. The good news is that vaccines are significantly reducing the link between infections and severe disease and death – and will also reduce the amount that COVID-19 is spreading.

If your child is unwell, they should stay at home as there are a number of other viruses also circulating.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'de Gruchy', written in a light grey or blue ink.

Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy
Director of Population Health