

8 January 2021

## **Open letter to all parents/carers of children & young people**

Dear Parent/Carer,

The National Lockdown announced by the Prime minister on the 4 January will have not been the start to the New Year we all would have hoped for. We acknowledge how extremely stressful and challenging 2020 has been for you and your family and hope that despite this, you and your family are keeping safe and well.

We reiterate the national direction to us all, ***You must stay at home. The single most important action we can all take is to stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives. You should follow this guidance immediately. This is the law.***

In the spirit of this guidance we wish to remind you that **your child should stay at home and access remote learning if it is safe to do so**. This will lower the number of households mixing and reduce transmission of the virus.

We want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the immediate challenge that the National Lockdown provides for our Early Years settings, schools and colleges to ensure that your children can access their learning.

You will be aware that the [government has announced](#) that vulnerable children and children of Critical Workers can return to school and that a place will be available for them. Where a child cannot be safely cared for at home, Critical Workers should request a place for their child directly with their school and be prepared to provide evidence of their employment. Please be assured of the commitment of all our education leaders to welcome some children back this term, where it has been determined by the school and local authority, that this is essential for their safety or if their parents work is critical to the COVID-19 or the EU transition response.

Many of our settings are currently experiencing challenges to facilitate the delivery of high-quality remote learning alongside safe on-site learning when the workforce is reduced through illness and self-isolating. This situation will require school leaders, as a last resort, to prioritise the return of children based of their need and safety. We ask that you continue to show the same patience and compassion to leaders and staff in our settings that you have demonstrated throughout this national emergency whilst arrangements are put in place over the coming days.

Whether or not your child's education setting is putting in place the rapid testing programme right away, it is very important that we reassure you that all settings will be continuing to regularly review and put in place all the protective measures recommended by Public Health England and the Department for Education to reduce the risk of transmission these include social distancing, hand washing, good ventilation, face coverings as appropriate and ensuring people with symptoms do not attend. These remain the most effective ways to reduce the spread of the virus, even with rapid testing in place.

With transmission of the virus continuing to rise across the country, remember that if your child or a member of your household is unwell, has symptoms or tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), you must follow the [national stay at home guidance](#) to reduce further transmission of the virus. Follow this guidance also if advised to do so by NHS Test and Trace or your education setting.

Finally, may we take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support to staff and leaders in our education settings; through your commitment to work in partnership we can together ensure that all our children can access their learning and the support they need to secure their wellbeing and a successful future.

Yours sincerely



**Ruth Hutchinson**  
**Surrey County Council**  
**Director of Public Health**



**Rachael Wardell**  
**Surrey County Council**  
**Executive Director of Children, Families**  
**and Lifelong Learning.**