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Dear Parents and Carers

Message to residents from Dr Muna Abdel Aziz, Director of Public Health

We are in a national lockdown and the whole of the country has been asked to stay at home unless there is a specific reason to go out.

It is absolutely vital that we all follow the lockdown, however tired and frustrated we get. We understand this is hard but the consequences for our health services do affect us all and potentially have severe consequences for our loved ones, friends and colleagues.

Coronavirus rates dropped in November during the national restrictions and then rose in December. Rates should now be reducing as we are in a further national lockdown but they are reducing much slower in Salford than the rest of Greater Manchester.

The rate is now 330.3 per 100,000 in the week ending 24 January. Salford has the highest rate in Greater Manchester and is not in a strong position to relax restrictions in the future. It also means that further increases are very likely in some of our communities as a result of the high rates of transmission of the new variant, and will continue to put a severe strain on our hospitals and other health services which are already close to capacity.

The stark reality is that these very high rates are affecting our loved ones of all ages and putting many more at risk of critical illness; not just those who are elderly or with health conditions.

We're asking everyone to understand they have a critical role to play – stay at home unless carrying out essential activities, to keep rates as low as possible.

Please do not 'bend' the rules thinking it will not matter. If you feel isolated please connect with others in your existing exclusive bubble or pick the phone or digital device and speak with your social contacts. You should not be tempted to visit other people's homes. You could be putting lives at risk.

As the new more virulent form of the virus now accounts for three in every four cases in the city, we are also now taking the step of asking people to wear cloth face coverings with three layers which are more protective than just a single layer or two layers. Don't worry if your existing reusable coverings are one or two layers, you can wear them over the top of each other, or sew on a third layer.

The area of current concern in Salford is the higher rate of infection amongst those in their 20s and 30s who are likely to have milder symptoms and can transmit to others.

We are offering rapid tests to people who cannot work from home and are going out to work. We're asking these people who do not have symptoms to commit to twice a week rapid testing at one of our local sites. It is quick and easy and identifies people who might otherwise spread the virus without knowing.



To ensure we are finding and isolating all cases, we continue to ask people who feel unwell in any way to get tested at one of the national sites in the city – there are plenty of appointments available. We are seeing people test positive with other symptoms not just the fever, cough or loss of taste or smell. If you think you may have the virus or you are unwell in any way, you must book a test. This will help to find positive cases sooner and reduce the length of time that someone with symptoms can pass on the virus.

If you get a test because you have symptoms, you must self-isolate until you receive the result from the lab.

Please contact your GP to let them know if you test positive for people with pre-existing health conditions or you are over 50 years old. This is life-saving even when you could be feeling quite well because we have seen people can get much worse very quickly. Your GP can arrange to loan you a small device over your finger (called a pulse oximeter) to monitor your blood oxygen levels at home. The oxygen level in your blood can become very low without you feeling anything. So it is an early warning to call 999 and this small device can save your life.

Positively, so far we have vaccinated over 32,000 people in Salford across the health and social care workforce and over 70s. As phone lines are busy we ask you not to contact your GP as you will be contacted directly to book your vaccine appointment.

When contacted, people can book at the regional centre or a local centre. After vaccination, it will take up to three weeks for the person to start to develop immunity. **Having the vaccination should not change your behaviour with hands, face and space because you can still get infected and pass it on.** Vaccination will prevent the severe complications and you may not even know that you are carrying the virus, so you must continue to protect other people. A good way to think about the vaccine is that it is like wearing a seatbelt – it protects you from the serious consequence of a crash but does not stop the crash and it does not stop you from crashing into others and hurting them.

Your second dose will be given by the centre where you had the first dose, so please do not take up any other offer and we are asking people to check that their loved ones only attend for one vaccination now – their second dose to give them full protection will be in 12 weeks' time. Our NHS colleagues have started to vaccinate people who can't leave their homes and they will be given their second dose after 12 weeks; also at home.

Salford's Health Protection Board is closely monitoring the spread of the virus. It is the personal responsibility of each of us to follow the lockdown and get the virus back under control. The message is to behave as though you have the virus and be vigilant not to spread to others. Stay at home, wear a face covering when doing essential shopping or in other crowded environments and indoor public spaces, wash your hands frequently and get tested if you are unwell.

The Spirit of Salford helpline have continued to support people who need advice or help to self-isolate. Call 0800 952 1000 or contact us online and someone will call you back the next working day.

Every small change we make can have a huge impact.

Children's Mental Health week

As you are aware, this week was Children's Mental Health Week (1-7 Feb 2021) and this year's theme was 'Express Yourself'. Now, during this period of lockdown, it is so important that we discuss how we can have positive Mental Health as much as possible with our children. Two wonderful charities, **Place2Be** and the **Anna Freud Centre**, have updated their resources for children and parents and provide easy to use tools for parents to discuss positive Mental Health with their children. To access Place2Be click here : [Resources](#) and **Anna Freud Centre** click here: [toolkit](#)



Half term – School closed

School will close for half term on Friday 12th February and will reopen on Monday 22nd February. Both remote learning and provision for critical workers and vulnerable children will not take place for the duration of this week. We can all have a well-deserved break from our laptops and computers!

Children in receipt of benefit related free school meals will receive a voucher for this period. More information to follow next week.

Supporting your children's remote education during coronavirus (COVID-19) updated

Updated guidance for parents is now available via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know-about-early-years-providers-schools-and-colleges-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

I will continue to keep you updated with any information I receive.

A special well done for our super talented children can be found via this link - <https://youtu.be/3pxtrFvYru8>

If you need any help or support please contact school via telephone or email.

Thank you for your continued support,

Yours sincerely

Mrs E Henderson

