

Email director.publichealth@derbyshire.gov.uk

Dear parents and carers

A Message from Dean Wallace, Director of Public Health for Derbyshire

As we approach the Christmas holidays, I want to say a huge thank you for all your efforts in following the COVID guidance over this last term. I know that it has been difficult for many school communities, from families dealing with the challenges of children having to self-isolate, to students having to adjust to new rules in school, and teaching staff taking on the role of contact tracing in addition to their day jobs. Your efforts to follow the guidance during lockdown and in Tier 3 are making a real difference and helping to reduce the spread of the virus in Derbyshire. Thank you for everything you are doing.

I want everyone to enjoy their well-earned Christmas break safely and healthily, and this message includes some ways you can reduce the risk of COVID being passed among your families and friends.

The government is bringing in some new guidelines over the Christmas period which are:

Between 23rd and 27th December 2020:

- you can form an exclusive 'Christmas bubble' composed of people from no more than three households;
- you can only be in one Christmas bubble;
- you cannot change your Christmas bubble;
- you can travel between tiers and UK nations for the purposes of meeting your Christmas bubble;
- you can only meet your Christmas bubble in private homes or in your garden, places of worship, or public outdoor spaces;
- you can continue to meet people who are not in your Christmas bubble outside your home according to the rules in the tier you are meeting in;
- if you form a Christmas bubble, you should not meet socially with friends and family that you do not live with in your home or garden unless they are part of your Christmas bubble,

From 28th December 2020, the Christmas rules will end, and we will return to the current restrictions. Further details are available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-the-christmas-period>

However, our message is simple. COVID-19 has not gone away, the infection rate locally has, unfortunately, once again started to increase, and it is important that we continue to limit our social contact and take other practical steps (hands-face-space) to protect our loved ones, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

This is really difficult, and it is up to each one of us to make decisions that we feel comfortable with and decisions that are appropriate for our friends and family. If you choose to form the broader Christmas bubbles, then limiting your social contact as much as possible in the seven days prior to forming your bubble will help reduce some of the risk, as well as following good hand hygiene practices.

Other ways to reduce the risks include:

- Keeping your Christmas bubble/household group as small as possible.
- If possible, find alternatives to indoor mixing e.g. meet outdoors, or online.
- Think carefully about older and vulnerable family members. It may be better to meet them outside, online or talk to them on the phone.
- If you are meeting indoors, think about ways to reduce risk e.g. hand washing, face coverings, keeping distance, cleaning surfaces regularly, reducing the time spent together, keeping windows open.
- Plan ahead and let people know what will happen so that they know what to expect e.g. bring a jumper, the windows will be open!
- Swap board games for a quiz (to reduce close contact).
- Plate food instead of having buffets (to reduce close contact and touching the same items).

Please continue to look out for COVID symptoms in your children, but also in other family members. Children and young people can be infectious even when they are not showing symptoms themselves. So, if anyone in your household, or Christmas bubble, shows any of the three main COVID symptoms below, they and their household should self-isolate immediately and book a COVID test:

- *Fever*
- *New, continuous cough*
- *Loss of, or change in sense of taste or smell*

Further details are available at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/>

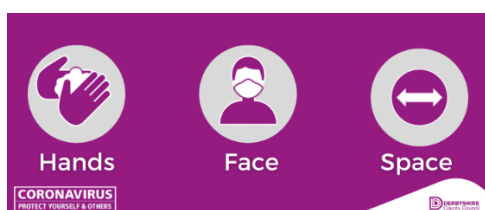
Looking ahead to 2021, we have COVID vaccines which are now being rolled out, and will, in time, help us to get back to the kind of contact with family and friends that we all want to have. Until then, we all need to protect our loved ones and keep COVID at bay by following the rules for a while longer.

I wish you all a safe, healthy and happy Christmas holiday.

Yours sincerely

Dean Wallace

Dean Wallace
Director of Public Health



For further information; www.derbyshire.gov.uk/coronavirus