

Date August 2021
Our Ref SW/dlm
Enquiries to Susan Webb
Extension 58478
Direct Line 01224 558478

Email gram.directorofpublichealth@nhs.scot

Dear All

I hope you have had an enjoyable summer break – I am sure preparations are now well underway for the return to school!

I am writing to you to explain some of things that have changed – and some of the things that stay the same. One thing we know for sure is that we all have a role to play in reducing the harm from COVID-19 in our communities by preventing spread.

First of all, testing remains really important. I am asking you to take a Lateral Flow Device test in the days running up to your return to school, and to test twice a week after that. About 1 in 3 of our cases show no signs of COVID-19, regular testing helps pick up cases early and reduces the chance of infecting others. Please only use these tests if you DON'T have symptoms or you are not a close contact of a case. If you start to show any signs of COVID-19 or are a contact, you will need to isolate at home and arrange a PCR test.

Following changes to the self-isolation guidance, we will no longer be isolating whole class groups when one person tests positive. Instead, we will take a targeted approach identifying those most at risk. Should you be the one who tests positive, you will still be required to self-isolate for 10 days. If you are identified as a close contact, you will need to take a PCR test. If this is negative, your period of self-isolation will end with confirmation of the negative result.

COVID-19 vaccines are effective. They can keep you from getting and spreading the virus. If you do get COVID-19, it can help keep you from getting seriously ill. Getting vaccinated yourself may also protect people around you, particularly people at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation is constantly monitoring the evidence around who would benefit from getting vaccinated. As they update their advice, we update our programme. If you are 16 or older on or after 1 August 2021 you are eligible for a vaccine. For more information just search 'NHS Inform COVID-19 vaccine'.

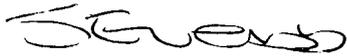
In a change to the usual arrangements, secondary school pupils will also be offered the seasonal 'flu vaccine this year. There will be more information about this shared in the coming weeks. I want to encourage you to take up the offer of both vaccines.

For the first few weeks of this term, you will be asked to keep wearing a face mask in class and when moving about the school building. Your teachers will still be required to keep a 1 metre distance from you and other staff members. This will be reviewed, and further information will be supplied by your school.

Taking these measures is the most effective way to reduce the spread of the virus and keep you in school and able to do the things you enjoy. Thanks to the success of the vaccination programme the proportion of people who become severely ill and die due to COVID-19 has reduced. However, the more people who become infected with COVID-19, the greater the number who will require hospital care, the less we are able to treat those who need our help with other conditions. I am asking you to be careful and cautious for a little longer.

Thank you again for all the support you have shown to those of us working in healthcare, our colleagues in education, and for sticking with the various safety measures we have lived with since March 2020. We wish you all the best for the new school term!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Webb', with a stylized, cursive script.

Susan Webb
Director of Public Health
NHS Grampian