

## Update on fighting coronavirus in Buckinghamshire



Dear Resident,

I hope that many of you managed some sort of break during the summer. I certainly enjoyed a change of scene during my 'Staycation' in the north east, and as I mentioned last time, it was great to see people everywhere doing their bit to follow the current guidelines and to keep us safe.

As we head into the autumn, we really need to be doubly careful as we will have less opportunity to be outside, which means more risk of not being able to socially distance as easily. COVID has not disappeared and we all need to keep safe in the weeks ahead.

### Schools Reopening

The big news this week is obviously the reopening of our schools in Bucks. It's fantastic to see them welcoming back all students into the classroom this week for the first time since March. There's been a huge amount of work to make this happen and parents, carers and students will see many changes to how things are done so our schools can reopen safely.

Every school in Buckinghamshire has carried out a thorough risk assessment. Many of the measures now common in public places are being used in our schools too, like enhanced cleaning, hand sanitiser stations and use of face coverings where needed. Many schools are bringing in changes like staggered start and finish times, and students will be kept in class or year group 'bubbles'.

Every school has its own tailored plan in place for the new school year and this is being communicated directly by the schools themselves, including the rules on face coverings. If your child is starting or going back to school, make sure you look out for any communication that you get from school in the usual way.

I want to reassure all parents and carers too that while our schools are obviously focussed on helping students to catch up with their studies, there is a big emphasis on their emotional well-being too. We recognise the events of the last few months have impacted all our young people in many different ways and our fantastic school staff are ready to support students however they most need it.

**You can [read more about the return to school on our website](#).**

Most importantly, **if your child or any member of the household starts showing any symptoms of coronavirus please do not send your child to school** and begin self-isolating immediately.

### Up to date coronavirus case information in Buckinghamshire

We are now publishing up to date information about the number of new coronavirus cases in Buckinghamshire on our website.

Please check [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus) to see how many new cases we are getting in Buckinghamshire each day. There is a slight lag while the data comes through to us but it gives you a picture of the local situation. There is also a link to a map where you can put your postcode in and find data on the number of new cases where you live.

### Stay vigilant

As you will see if you check this link, although the number of cases in Buckinghamshire remains relatively low, there has been an increase in the number of positive tests recently. Some of these new cases relate to students and

their families at Sir William Borlase's Grammar School in Marlow and Chesham Grammar School after some students contracted the virus during trips abroad.

All affected households are isolating having been contacted by test and trace staff and we are working closely with Public Health England to monitor the situation. Pupils at both schools have been contacted by the Head Teachers and the schools are safe and are reopening as planned.

These new cases remind us all of the need to stay vigilant at all times, and this includes younger people. If you choose to meet up with friends, you **must do it safely and [within the guidelines](#)**.

If people fail to do this, we give the virus a chance to spread. That will impact everyone's freedoms and will put the vulnerable at risk.

So please, follow the rules, **keep your distance, wash your hands thoroughly and regularly and wear a face covering where needed**.

It's also vital that if you or someone you live with develops any symptoms of coronavirus that the household self-isolates immediately and you [seek advice from the NHS website](#).

## **Overseas Travel**

There has been a lot of publicity recently as the UK government has moved countries such as Spain and France on and off the non-quarantined travel list at short notice. We understand that people like to travel, particularly to warmer countries during the autumn. If you or a member of your family is thinking about travelling to an overseas holiday resort, for example during the next school break, please consider thoroughly the risks of contracting COVID overseas and the implications of being forced to quarantine away from school or work and of infecting older relatives.

## **Face coverings**

Thank you to everyone who is following guidance and wearing a face covering on public transport, in shops and other venues. **It is really important that you continue to do so to keep us all safe.**

I mentioned last time that if you are genuinely unable to wear a covering, for example due to an age, health or disability reason, you do not legally have to carry an exemption certificate or wear a badge.

Many people however may feel more comfortable having something to show anyone who asks. You do not have to pay or donate to any organisation for a certificate or badge. Clearly if you wish to support a particular organisation you are free to make a financial contribution if they request you to.

Free government approved cards explaining an exemption are available [on the government website](#). Please do not abuse this system and only use it if you are genuinely exempt. People's health and possibly lives depend on us all acting responsibly.

## **Carry on eating out and helping out!**

The success of this summer scheme has been tremendous. Throughout August the government's 'Eat Out to Help Out' scheme gave you money off your bill at participating cafes and restaurants every Monday – Wednesday. I have certainly used it and it has given our local businesses a huge boost at a time they really needed it – which of course is what the scheme intended to do!

It's worked so well that many businesses are continuing it and are shouldering the expense themselves. The official scheme has ended, but keep checking with your favourite eatery to see if they're still offering a discount. It's a great way to keep supporting our local businesses in the hospitality sector.

## **We want feedback on local health services**

We've all had to do things differently during the coronavirus pandemic and that's the case for accessing local health services too. Maybe you've had a phone call instead of a face to face conversation with your doctor for example?

Lots of these changes had to be made suddenly and now Buckinghamshire's Integrated Care Partnership (the group of organisations delivering local health and care services) wants to hear your views on them.

Tell us what is working well, and what can be improved. Your feedback is invaluable and will help us make changes to help meet the growing need for care within Buckinghamshire, so please **do take part by [visiting our online survey](#)**.

### **Alcohol support – it's there if you need it**

The pandemic and the stresses it's brought have undoubtedly added pressure onto many people in many different ways. For some this has led to an increase in alcohol consumption. Please know that support is out there – One Recovery Bucks Alcohol Support Team and their family and carers team can help you and your family if you need it.

If you would like to speak to someone at One Recovery Bucks **call 0300 772 9672** or email [OneRecovery.Bucks@nhs.net](mailto:OneRecovery.Bucks@nhs.net).

### **There's also 24/7 support if you're struggling with your mental health**

Perhaps the pressures of the last few months are manifesting in a different way for you, and it's impacting how you feel. Unfortunately for some people the stress and upheaval has proven too overwhelming and we have seen an increase in the number of people seeking help for their mental health problems.

World Suicide Prevention Day is on 10 September and with this very serious issue in mind, we are very keen to get help to residents and their families before a person gets to that point and starts having suicidal thoughts. **We want to encourage anyone who is struggling to contact one of the local or national support organisations.**

There is a dedicated, free helpline available 24/7 at the following numbers:

**Adults:** 0800 783 0119 or 01865 904 997

**Children and young people:** 0800 783 0121 or 01865 904 998

There's also more help available on the [Healthy Minds Bucks website](#).

You can also [visit our coronavirus mental health support webpages](#) and find out about the full range of help and support available. And lastly, do take a look at our videos below too for more advice on managing your worries.

### **COVID-19 honours – who's been your hero?**

Don't forget - there's still time to think about who should be recognised for their outstanding and exceptional contribution during the coronavirus pandemic response.

These are official government honours which will be given out to individuals or groups for their efforts during this crisis. Take a look at the new [COVID-19 honours nomination form](#) on the government's website if you want to nominate a person.

The deadline for applications is **Friday 25 September**.

### **STAY ON TOP OF DIFFICULT FEELINGS**

Concern about returning to work and to normal activities is perfectly normal following the lockdown. However, some people may experience intense anxiety that can affect their day-to-day life.



Try to focus on the things you can control, such as how you act, who you speak to and where you get information from. **Take a look at these videos**, they are designed to help you manage your worries around coronavirus.

As ever, stay safe and protect Bucks,

**Martin Tett**

Leader of Buckinghamshire Council



**Buckinghamshire  
Council**



**Stay safe, protect Bucks**

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