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Subject: Update from Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council

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Update on fighting coronavirus in Buckinghamshire



10 December 2021

Dear Resident,

When I wrote to some of you last week, I thought that would be my last newsletter update before Christmas. However, as we all learned on Wednesday evening, the Government has moved to its 'Plan B'; new restrictions are coming into force and the guidance has been updated. Although the numbers infected are still very small, the new variant of Covid, known as Omicron, is spreading rapidly and is now believed to be infecting people who have no connection with southern Africa. The scientists are still learning about how easily Omicron is spread and how serious any cases may be.

There are not currently any reports in the UK of people being hospitalised suffering from Omicron. Nevertheless, the Government's view is that it is better to be cautious at this stage and slow the spread until more is known and the number of people with booster jabs has increased. Whilst it still doesn't necessarily mean that you would be seriously ill if you catch this new strain, we are all being asked to do a little bit more to help slow the virus spreading.

'Plan B'

These guidelines or 'Plan B', as they are referred to, mean the following requirements are being introduced:

- From today (Friday 10 December) face coverings will be required by law in most indoor settings, including our libraries and customer access centres.
- From Monday (13 December) office workers who can work from home should do so.
- From Wednesday (15 December) certain venues and events will be required by law to check that all visitors aged 18 years or over are fully vaccinated, have proof of a negative lateral flow test in the last 48 hours, or have an exemption.

The guidance does provide exceptions to where you need to wear a face covering; these include restaurants, cafés and canteens, bars, gyms and exercise facilities, and nightclubs. It is also not necessary to wear a face mask if you are attending a wedding or funeral.

From Wednesday 15 December you will also need to have an NHS COVID Pass as a condition of entry into several places and events including nightclubs, other venues that provide music for dancing, indoor events with 500 or more unseated attendees, outdoor events with 4,000 or more unseated attendees and any events with 10,000 or more attendees indoor or outdoor.

There are some settings however that will be exempt from having to use the NHS COVID Pass including communal worship, wedding ceremonies, funerals and other commemorative events, protests, and mass participation sporting events.

These changes won't affect any of our services although, as I mentioned above, you will be expected to wear a mask in our libraries and customer access centres.

I would encourage you to check the new guidance which is [on the Government's website](#).

Booster jabs

Our best line of defence against Covid remains the vaccine including having the booster jab as soon as you can. Please make sure you take this up and please keep an eye out for the changes which should be available soon, which will offer boosters to all adults over 18 and who have had their previous vaccination at least three months ago. **Please keep looking at the NHS website for details of when you will be able to book.**

Don't forget too that you can book a first or second dose at any time. To do this, or to book your booster and find out more vaccine information [please check the NHS website](#).

Covid rates in Buckinghamshire

The infection rate from all types of Covid has increased to 622.1 per 100,000 in Buckinghamshire. This is an increase of 10% compared to the previous week. We have seen increasing rates in the former Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern and South Bucks District areas but a decline in the former Wycombe area. School age residents overall (5 to 18 years old) make up 39% of cases in Buckinghamshire. The highest case rates remain in those aged 5 to 15 years old. We have seen a decrease in infection rates amongst those aged 60 to 69 years compared to the week before (210.6 per 100,000 - down by 29 cases). This may well be due to the roll out of the booster vaccine to this age range.

A reminder of general precautions

- Keep using regular lateral flow tests, especially before you meet up with others in an indoor space/are seeing someone at higher risk from Covid-19.
- Isolate and book a PCR test if you develop symptoms.
- Keep windows open, even if it's cold; good ventilation plays a big part in blowing virus particles away and stopping the spread.
- Keep up the basics – good hygiene and handwashing in particular.

Covid news via email

I am often asked why some people no longer receive these Covid newsletters. It is because Government regulations restrict what we can communicate to you about without your agreement. On the plus side, with your agreement, it does mean I am able to talk about other Council services and support such as roads, waste collections, social care and the help we can provide if you are struggling with food or energy costs.

If you wish to receive regular emails from myself and the Council – which will continue to contain Covid information too – please sign up at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/signup.

You can of course, unsubscribe from these emails at any time using the link at the bottom.

Finally, I know you will all be frustrated that again we are being asked to make more sacrifices in our battle to combat this virus, but when applied with common sense, we should all be thankful that these latest guidelines will allow us to all to have a much better Christmas than we faced last year.

With best wishes for a happy and healthy Christmas.

Martin Tett

Leader of Buckinghamshire Council



Buckinghamshire
Council

Stay safe, protect Bucks

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