

An important message from Richard Watts, Leader of Islington Council and Councillor Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Lead Member for Children and Families

Dear Parents and Carers,

These are extraordinary times. I'm quite sure none of us imagined what a challenging year 2020 would prove to be, and we have all had to adapt and respond to the very difficult circumstances that coronavirus has forced upon us.

Throughout this new lockdown, it's really important that we all stick to the rules and look out for each other, to keep our friends, family and neighbours safe.

Whilst some people contract coronavirus with few symptoms, for others it can have devastating effects and many of us have lost a friend or relative in this pandemic. So we want to thank you for your patience, your resilience and your positive spirit – we know that in Islington we stand together as a community and we will fight this deadly virus together.

Lockdown restrictions will be in place until at least 2 December. During this time **we must all stay at home and only leave for specific reasons**. The only reasons you should leave home are:

- for education or to provide childcare
- to exercise outdoors, with someone from your household or support bubble
- to work, but only if you cannot work from home
- to shop for food and essentials
- for medical reasons, appointments and to escape injury or harm
- to visit members of your support bubble or to provide care for vulnerable people, or as a volunteer

We wanted to reassure you that the health and safety of children, education staff and their families is our priority. We know school is the best place for children to learn and support their wellbeing. Schools and settings have already implemented a range of protective measures to make them safe, and we continue to work closely with them to keep everyone safe.

To help protect ourselves, our families, our schools and everyone in our community, it's essential that we all continue to pull together and follow public health advice:

- **Wash your hands** regularly– for 20 seconds, with soap and running water, especially before and after school, before and after eating, and after using a tissue or the toilet.
- **Wear a face covering** in public places, including shops and on public transport
- **Create space** – stay 2 metres apart from people who are not from your household, particularly in public places. Please move away from the school as quickly as possible and do not stay and chat at the school gates at drop off and pick up times, and please encourage older children to come straight home from school.

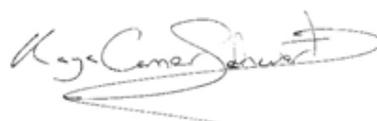
Please find more useful information over the page on Covid-19 and support that is available.

This year has already shown us how people in Islington step up and support each other in difficult times. We will get through the coming weeks by keeping that strong community spirit alive and supporting each other, as we each continue to do our part to keep ourselves, our schools and our community safe. Thank you for continuing to do your bit.

Yours,

Richard Watts, Leader Islington Council

Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Lead Member for Children and Families



Check your symptoms

The symptoms of coronavirus are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you or someone in your household start to develop any these symptoms make sure you self-isolate straight away and book a Covid-19 test - either by calling **119** or booking online at www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test

We know it can be hard to get a test - but please keep trying because new appointments and test kits should become available throughout the day. There is now a local test centre in Islington - but you must book before you visit.

Support if you're on a low income and need to self-isolate

People on a low income and who cannot work from home may be entitled to a one-off payment of £500 through the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. Details of how to claim are available on our website: www.islington.gov.uk/coronavirus

Support with work and training

If you need help to find work or training our iWork team can help match you to local opportunities, coach you and advise you on sorting out benefits while you train. Just email iWork@islington.gov.uk or call **020 7527 2706**. If you are working but your job has been affected by the Covid-19 crisis visit www.shawtrust.org.uk for advice on a range of issues including furlough. Free training and courses available in Islington can be found at www.adultlearning.islington.gov.uk or visit www.candi.ac.uk/adult-students/free-short-courses for the options at City and Islington College.

Mental Health support for young people

In Islington, our Social, Emotional, Mental Health (SEMH) Services are available to support any young person in the borough of Islington who may be displaying difficulties with their emotional wellbeing and/or mental health. The services include counselling and therapeutic services and also support to help you get involved with activities. Call **020 7527 7400** where the team will help find the best service for you. **Young people** can access free, safe, anonymous, online wellbeing support at www.kooth.com

Islington Family Information Service

Islington Family Information Service (FIS), is a free and impartial telephone and web-based information and advice service for families with children and young people 0-25. Information provided includes: childcare, things to do, after-school clubs, services for disabled children, how to find jobs working with children and young people, health, family support services, tax credits and any other issues relating to family life. Call **020 7527 5959**, email fis@islington.gov.uk or visit www.islington.gov.uk/fis

We are here to help

Please remember that the council continues to support people in the borough who are struggling due to coronavirus and need practical help or support and the **We are Islington** helpline is open 7 days a week.

Call **020 7527 8222** or email weareislington@islington.gov.uk