

Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy
Director of Population Health
Tameside MBC
Market Place, Ashton Under Lyne, Tameside, OL6 6BH

www.tameside.gov.uk
e-mail : Jeanelle.degruchy@tameside.gov.uk
Ask for Jeanelle de Gruchy
Direct Line **0161 342 5615**
Date: Friday 12th June 2020

Dear Colleague,

I wrote to you last week (05 June) to advise a delay to the wider opening of schools, academies and childcare settings based on concerns about our understanding of the level of COVID-19 infection in the North West. I realise that this advice was both welcomed for its caution on safety, as well as being disappointing and upsetting for many children and parents. I would like to thank parents for their understanding and headteachers, staff, school governors and childcare providers for their response to this advice.

This morning, we reviewed the latest COVID-19 data we have available to us at our local Health Protection Board. We believe that there are some positive signs of improvement in the infection trends, which give us some cause for optimism. In addition, I am more reassured that the recently launched national NHS Test and Trace system along with the new integrated Greater Manchester hub is beginning to undertake contact tracing across Greater Manchester. Greater Manchester through Tameside Council is now one of the 11 national beacon sites for contact tracing and is contributing to this system development.

Headteachers and their staff, in partnership with the Local Authority, are making excellent preparations for wider opening, including undertaking and completing risk assessments in their schools, and instituting the necessary infection control measures to make them as safe as possible.

Given the trend in the infection rate, the progress on contact tracing, and the preparatory work done within your educational settings, I am advising that cautious wider opening can begin from 22 June 2020. However, I would like to stress that this should only be done at the pace individual schools and childcare settings feel confident to manage safely.

Schools and childcare providers will need to make careful, but sometimes difficult, decisions about bringing in additional children. Each school and childcare setting will continue to work at their own pace in making these decisions. The need to proceed carefully has been recognised by the Government's announcement that all schools are not going to be fully open before the autumn term.

As community leaders, I am grateful for your support and communication with parents and carers to ensure that we remain vigilant against the spread of COVID-19, working together to protect our communities. We need to continue to remind everyone that regular handwashing with soap and water is the most effective way to prevent the spread of the virus along with catching coughs and sneezes in a tissue and binning it. It remains vital that we all continue to socially distance ourselves outside our homes and self-isolate and get tested if we are symptomatic. This will support a reduction in transmission of the virus and protect the wellbeing of everyone.

The education and childcare sectors in Tameside have done us proud throughout this most difficult period. I thank each and every education and childcare worker who has made such a valuable contribution to the national effort and, in particular, for the support that they have provided to the children, young people and residents of Tameside.

I will continue to monitor what is a fast-evolving situation very closely and will write to you again next week to confirm my advice.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeanelle".

Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy
Director of Population Health