

2nd October 2020



Chief Executive

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Good afternoon,

It's October; the weather is rapidly becoming autumnal and with it sees the start of the second wave of coronavirus for the country to get to grips with.

Although we have seen a small increase in cases locally, the impact here in West Berkshire is nowhere near as significant as in other parts of the country. A few days ago the Local Outbreak Engagement Board met and provided an update on some of the activities which are taking place locally to support communities through Covid-19. This includes running a public awareness campaign to ensure people continue to follow the "Hands, Face, Space" advice which should now be familiar to us all. We have also supported individual communities where possible. For example, we have listened to feedback from parents unsure about what to do if their child has a cough or cold and have produced a new leaflet providing specific advice about this for schools to distribute to parents.

Communication continues to be at the core of our approach to Covid-19 and to that end we held a live question and answer session on Facebook earlier in the week. Thank you to everyone who came along to listen and to engage with us on the issue. We welcomed the opportunity to update residents on the work we are doing and listen to their experiences, and we will be holding these events on a regular basis.

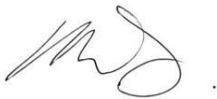
During the Facebook Live session, there were several questions about schools, the impact of Covid-19 and the precautions being taken to reduce Covid in these settings. We understand these are anxious times for parents sending their children off to school or university and particularly for those with exams coming up at the end of the year. The current plan is that exams will happen as normal, but there are discussions taking place about whether this is appropriate given the impact of time out from school for those sitting exams. Should things change, we will share information with you as it becomes available.

Whether it's at schools, in workplaces or elsewhere, coronavirus continues to be part of our everyday lives and the guidance on what we should do continues to be refined according to the latest government guidelines. Last weekend it was difficult to escape the

publicity for the new NHS Covid-19 app – an important part of our collective response to the virus. The latest figures show that the app has been downloaded 12 million times and we continue to encourage local people to use it to keep everyone safe. It is an important part of the national Test and Trace programme as well as providing users with quick access to information and the online test booking system.

This week we have also focused on finalising the online application process for the new £500 Test and Trace Support Payment. The grant will be available to those on lower incomes who are required to self-isolate, but cannot work from home and have lost income as a result. We know this will make a difference to people who may be worried about making ends meet. More details about the fund and the online application process will be available on our website in the next few days.

Yours sincerely,



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