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Dear parents and carers

This has been an extraordinarily difficult start to the term for schools, children and young people and their parents and carers. Since the announcement of the latest national lockdown on the 4<sup>th</sup> January we have all been focusing on how we can keep our children and families as safe as we possibly can whilst also protecting our staff and maximising the educational opportunities that we can offer to our children.

We know that these restrictions will add additional pressure to many families but they are absolutely essential if we are to protect the NHS and reduce the transmission of the new variant of the virus.

### **Places for vulnerable children and children of critical workers**


All our schools and the vast majority of our early years settings are open to the [children of critical workers and vulnerable children](#). They are reviewing their risk assessments in order to ensure that all children and staff who are attending school are kept safe.

Whilst we are absolutely committed to providing school places for the children of our most critical key workers there is evidence from the last week that the demand for places in primary schools is much higher than during the March lockdown. The government have broadened their definition of vulnerable children meaning that more children are able to attend school under this category. In addition many schools have had requests for places from a number of parents who are critical workers.

In Luton we are continuing to see a worrying increase in the number of people testing positive for Covid 19 and sadly the number of people dying from the virus continues to increase. The Luton and Dunstable hospital is under immense pressure and we all need to do everything that we can to keep ourselves and each other safe.

It is in this spirit that I am writing to you all to thank you for everything that you are doing to support your children and our schools in this very challenging time and to ask for your help. We know that some of you are working hard to help your children as well as managing your own work. The government guidance is that the children of critical workers can attend school even if only one parent or carer meets the criteria

**Luton**



but **you should keep your children at home if you can**. In order to help our schools to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children we are asking that if you are a critical worker and you can keep your children at home, please do so.

### **Childcare bubbles**

If you cannot keep your children at home, you can also form a childcare bubble with one other consistent household for informal childcare where the children are under 14. This is to enable parents to work and must not be used for social contact between adults. Further information about support and childcare bubbles is available from this [government website](#).

### **Remote learning**

Our schools will do all that they can to support families and will provide as many places as it is safe to. If children are not in school, they must be supported to learn remotely. I am sure you will have heard that the government are providing laptops to schools and many of our schools have benefitted from the delivery of devices. These were meant to help disadvantaged pupils and support others in the event of a temporary bubble closure. There are simply not enough devices provided by the government to meet the needs of all pupils in Luton during this lockdown. The Council is working with local charities to provide additional devices but we know that more are needed. Please do talk to your school if your child is not able to access learning remotely.

### **Free School Meals**

If your child is entitled to benefits-related free school meals you will receive either a food parcel or voucher from your school. Schools are working hard to put provision in place and are following closely the government's guidance which continues to evolve.

This is a very challenging time for families as well as schools and we hope that the current lockdown measures have the desired effect quickly so that we can get all children back into school where they belong. We hope that you will help our schools and community by staying at home as much as possible and following the guidance to reduce the spread of the virus.

Yours sincerely



John Wigglesworth  
Service Director for Education  
Luton Borough Council