

To: All CSC & EH / FSS Staff

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Our Ref: GH/dh

Your Ref:

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Dear Colleagues

Re: Reducing the risk of the spread of COVID-19

I hope you are all managing to stay well and are looking after yourselves during the COVID-19 pandemic and the second lockdown.

I am touching base with you all to pick up on some concerns that have arisen over the past week in relation to a report that a small number of staff have tested positive and others have been advised to self-isolate.

It is really important that all staff are aware of the guidance that has been issued by the Council, which is based on sound public health advice, and the measures that are being taken to control the spread of the virus to keep us all safe. This is important for everyone in our workforce, the children, young people and families who we support, our own families and friends as well as the wider community and society at large.

We have done incredibly well during the pandemic and throughout the whole of the first lock down. Our level of absence due to reasons of ill health has been markedly better than it was pre-COVID and only a very small number of staff have been symptomatic or tested positive since March 2020. As a result, we have all managed to continue delivering services as usual. Our face to face visiting performance matches and exceeds other local authorities and even Ofsted in their recently published Focus Visit letter states that:

“The local authority’s response to COVID-19 has been positive, proactive and well-managed.”

So, we have much to be proud of and a solid base upon which to continuing doing all the right things to keep the show on the road, so to speak. This includes making sure that we are all doing everything we can to look after ourselves, each other and our nearest and dearest.

During the past week however, we have started to hear about a number of reports, in Hartwood House, Cheltenham Locality and in the hotel where our three new overseas social workers are residing. This has prompted me to reiterate some key messages and appeal to you all to re-double efforts to reduce the spread of the virus.

Having reviewed the specific reports and discussed these with Public Health it would appear that:

- The small number of reported COVID-19 infections appear to come from external, rather than internal, sources and these are all isolated and unconnected
- As long as staff are adhering to all the published advice and guidance in terms of the ‘Hands, Face, Space’ messaging we ought to be able to avoid the spread of the virus

- Staff coming into offices and undertaking face to face home visits are reminded to socially distance, use the hand hygiene packs that have been issued, wear a face covering, open windows and don't share cars
- The risk of being in contact with someone who is infected with the virus needs to be 'close' contact
- If there has been close contact self-isolation is required as a precaution
- Anyone feeling symptomatic can access a COVID-19 test as a priority and children's social workers are classed as a priority key worker

The following link provides up to date information and I advise you all to click on it and make sure you keep well informed:

<https://staffnet.gloucestershire.gov.uk/employee-information-and-support/covid-19-advice-for-employees-and-managers/managers/possible-covid-19-symptoms-in-council-buildings/what-do-i-do-if-a-member-of-my-staff-reports-feeling-unwell-with-possible-covid-19-symptoms-while-in-a-council-building/>

If you have any questions please refer to your line managers in the first instance who ought to be able to assist.

I hope this communication has been helpful and reassuring. I would like to also take this opportunity to thank you for everything that you have done / are doing to support vulnerable children, young people and families in Gloucestershire – it really is very much appreciated.

Kind regards



Gail Hancock

Interim Director for Children's Safeguarding & Care