

COVID-19 BULLETIN UPDATE – 11th January 2021

Message from Edwina Grant OBE, Executive Director Education and Children's Services

I am writing in advance of the usual bulletin to thank you for your support to our children both since New Year and in advance for what I know will be challenging weeks to come. Last week we saw the country locked down again and rising transmissions of Covid, particularly in some areas of our county although the news on vaccinations is good.

Keeping children in schools wherever possible has been a national priority throughout this pandemic and has been your priority too. I was pleased to see that on Friday evening the Department for Education revised its guidance slightly. Whilst parents who are critical / key workers can ask for a place at school, even if this is one parent out of two, the DFE has asked parents, even those who fall into the wider definition of critical/ key workers, to keep their children home if they can.

Dr Sakthi Karunanithi, our Director of Public Health has advised us throughout the pandemic that we should reduce any contact with others wherever possible and the government advice is clear. Stay at Home. Whilst much work has gone into making schools Covid safe, so many parents and carers now fall into the category of critical / key workers that some schools simply cannot accommodate all these children within their risk assessment. This slight change in messaging from the DFE to parents will therefore help to keep everyone safe.

I asked our council communications officer to update the message on social media to parents living in the Lancashire County Council area advising that parents, except those of the children who are vulnerable, should only send children to schools where it is not possible to keep them at home. I know this is particularly important in some areas of the county where there are concentrations of large employment sites where the definition of critical/ key worker applies.

We shall also put out a message to employers to look at the frameworks by which they are advising their employees whether or not they are critical/ key workers to ask that they designate posts only for those who are operationally required to be at work and cannot work from home.

I know that these are very challenging times and we all need to support each other. If there is anything more I can do to help please do not hesitate to let me know.