

Statement



2 September 2020

Hoax messages concerning Nottingham schools and Covid-19 testing of children

Nottingham City Council is aware of a round of hoax messages that have been circulating on social media regarding schools having children tested for coronavirus without seeking permission from parents; and children to be taken into quarantine if they tested positive for the virus.

Cllr David Mellen, Leader of Nottingham City Council, said:

“We been alerted to these very troubling messages and can understand why they would they would be alarming for any parent or carer.

“Our Public Health team has continued to work closely with all schools during the summer months to put in place safety arrangements for the prevention of Covid-19 and to be able to rapidly respond to cases if they arise.

“We would like to make it very clear that there is no substance to the circulating rumours and they bear no resemblance to what will actually happen in the event of a young person being unwell.

“The Coronavirus Act is very clear that we can only screen or assess a child for COVID-19 in the presence of their carer, parent or guardian.

“For most people, children and parents will be asked to isolate at home as a family for 14 days if required. If, for any reason, this isn’t possible, alternative arrangements will always be discussed with the parents or guardians.

“If your child displays symptoms it is very important that they get a test and that they do not go to school or nursery so that they don’t make any other children unwell. If they become unwell at school, you will be contacted, asked to remove them from school and advised to take them for a test.”

In the event that a child is unwell and is showing the following symptoms, however mild, please keep your child from school until you are able to get a test:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

People should only take a test if they have symptoms of Covid-19. Tests can be arranged by calling 119, can be booked online at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus.

We can all do our bit to help prevent the spread of the virus by:

- Staying at home if you have symptoms, even if they are mild (this is what makes the most difference). We know that 50% of people with symptoms don't stay at home so this is the biggest difference you can make.
- If you have symptoms, get a free test.
- If you are asked to isolate, it does mean you must stay at home.
- Keep your distance, 2m where possible.
- Wash your hands with soap and hot water.
- Wear a face covering (if you can) when using public transport, entering shops and when you can't keep a safe distance from others.

Please see below further detail to clarify the powers contained within the Coronavirus Act.

The vast majority of the public are abiding by the government's public health advice if they suspect that they have coronavirus symptoms and we thank them for their efforts in stopping the spread of this terrible disease.

- The powers set out in the Coronavirus Act to impose proportionate requirements on anyone who is suspected has coronavirus and are not complying with public health advice voluntarily are to be used only by Public Health Officials and only as a last resort.
- These powers may only be exercised if it is considered necessary and proportionate to do so in the interests of the person, for the protection of other people, or for the maintenance of public health.
- The DfE has made very clear that any child or young adult who is displaying coronavirus symptoms must not attend their educational settings and their family must follow the public health advice to self-isolate for 14 days.
- If a child is symptomatic during school hours, it is important that the parent or legal guardian is contacted with urgency and emergency contacts can be used in the same way that they would inform them of any emergency medical procedure needed while the child is attending/in the care of an educational setting.
- There must also be facilities with the school grounds where a child can self-isolate until the child is picked up i.e. the health care room. If the child's condition deteriorates during this period, it is important the NHS is called and they will advise on the appropriate procedures.
- It is not true that Public Health Official's have the power to screen and assess without a parent or carer present. Public Health Official's power to screen and assess can only be exercised in the presence of an individual with responsibility for the child, the responsible adult under Schedule 21 is a person with parental responsibility for the child or a person who has custody or charge of the child for the time being within the meaning of the Children Act 1989.
- Public Health Officers will make the appropriate assessment and restrictions will be placed accordingly. Under these powers they could be asked to self-

isolate with their families at home for up to 14 days to stop the spread of coronavirus if they are not voluntarily complying with the public health advice. If the individual is unable to self-isolate at home this will need to be discussed with the Public Health Officer and alternatives discussed.

- If the guardian/parent feels that restrictions imposed on the child is unfair, he or she will be able to proceed with the right to appeal to the magistrate's court.