

Public Health
Public Health Directorate
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Dear parents and carers,

This year has been one of the most challenging that many of us have encountered and it has certainly been a testing time for our schools. I am sure, like me, you are thankful for the lengths your school has gone to in order to ensure that children have been able to complete as much of their education as possible.

We know how challenging 2020 has been for you and your children; from home-schooling to remote learning; to new social distancing and hygiene rules; you have really stepped up to the challenge to help our fantastic school staff ensure disruption to our children's education has been kept to a minimum.

As the end of term and Christmas draws closer - and with Covid 19 infection rates still high - I would like to offer you some advice about how you can have a Covid-safe Christmas.

It is essential that your children understand that school 'bubbles' only exist when in school to support children and young people's education. When out of school and in the school holidays, children from different households must follow the same tier 2 rules as the adults in their family. For example they should not visit their school friends' houses or meet socially indoors, and should only meet outdoors in groups of six or less.

There is hope for 2021 with the first groups of people now being vaccinated against Covid-19. But it will take time for the vaccine to reach enough people to make a real difference. So for now, we need everyone to keep thinking about how they can keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

December is the time of year when many people want to spend time with their family and friends, whether they celebrate Christmas or not.

At the moment, Tier 2 regulations mean you must not spend time with friends or family indoors, unless you live in the same house or are in a support bubble. The Prime Minister has said that from 23rd December until 27th December, there is a special Christmas exemption, and people from three households can meet indoors - in a house, a private garden or place of worship. However, this should only be done if you feel it will not put elderly or vulnerable friends and family at risk. It also means the same three households across all five days, not three different households each day.

But even on those days, the **safest** way to celebrate Christmas is at home with the people you normally live with or your existing support bubble. And the safest way to spend time with other family and friends is either online, on the phone or outside. Maybe organise a walk or get together at the

local park, or have a family get together online. Remember, if you do meet outdoors, you must socially distance at all times.

If you do choose to form a Christmas bubble:

- you should stop unnecessary social contact outside your immediate household as soon as possible and for at least five days before you meet other households in your bubble
- you should keep your Christmas bubble as small as possible, meet indoors for as short a time as possible, and avoid overnight stays unless absolutely necessary’.
- Do not meet with other households in your bubble if anyone in your household has Covid-19 symptoms - your household should self isolate and the person with symptoms should get a test.

When indoors try to give each other space and stay 2m apart, wash your hands regularly and open windows for 10-15 minutes every hour or so, to allow good ventilation. You’re more likely to catch Covid in poorly ventilated places. Clean all your surfaces, handles and objects that people might touch and have hand sanitiser available for yourself and guests. Try and reduce the number of people in one room, meet in the largest space possible and rearrange furniture to make more space.

If you’re going out Christmas shopping, remember your face mask and hand sanitiser. Keep your distance from others who are shopping, avoid peak times of the day between 12 and 2 when it is most busy and try not to queue close together for shops. Please try and avoid public transport at busy times too – walk or cycle if you can.

Look out for lots of tips, ideas and activities on how to enjoy yourself safely over this period on the council’s social media channels.

I know we continue to ask a lot of our residents and the impact on all our lives is immense. There is light at the end of the tunnel, with an effective vaccine which will start to have a real impact in the spring. This is why it is so important that we continue to work together now to stop Covid spreading, and protect vulnerable residents, our NHS and our local businesses and jobs. Thank you for everything you and your family are doing and I wish you a safe and peaceful Christmas.

Kind regards,



Dr Liz Robin FFPH
Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

