

Joint statement from the Directors of Public Health in Cheshire & Merseyside

This weekend has seen our focus move to a new strain of coronavirus which is being transmitted at an even faster rate than the original COVID-19 disease, and we ask everyone to be extra careful over social distancing, social contacts and general hygiene during the festive period.

It is important to remember that COVID-19 continues to be a potent threat in its original form and so this latest variant needs to be tackled in exactly the same way, with anyone who has travelled from a Tier 4 area being particularly vigilant to protect their loved ones.

It is why we urge everyone to double down on what they have been doing so far to drive the infection rate down by:-

Staying local and not travelling between tiers, following good hand hygiene at all times, wearing face coverings when required to do so, taking extra care over social distancing - staying at least 2 metres apart - keeping all social contact to a minimum and staying in well-ventilated places.

We should all act as if we have got the virus to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities, particularly those who are most vulnerable, while doing our utmost not to place an already busy NHS under further strain.

Anyone with symptoms should also book a test as soon as possible and follow the guidance around self-isolation until the result is known and thereafter if it comes back positive. If you have the opportunity of asymptomatic testing, people should also take up that offer.

The virus will continue to mutate and **Hands, Face, Space** is proven to be the best defence at least until the population has been vaccinated.

We know how difficult this is, especially at a time of the year when families traditionally come together to celebrate Christmas.

Our advice remains - just because the Tier 2 rules now allow three households to meet on Christmas Day does not mean we should. If you do, then you still need to do so responsibly, so please follow the guidance, do everything you can to limit your activities as of today, make sure windows are open, keep the visit short and do not hug others outside your own household.

We thank everyone who has been doing their bit for so long, and we know everyone desperately wishes we could see an end to the restrictions, but it's more important than ever that we all put in that extra effort to keep our friends and families as safe as possible in the coming weeks.

Matthew Tyrer - Cheshire East Council
Ian Ashworth - Cheshire West and Chester Council
Eileen O'Meara - Halton Council
Sarah McNulty - Knowsley Council
Matthew Ashton - Liverpool City Council
Margaret Jones - Sefton Council
Susan Forster - St Helens Council
Thara Raj - Warrington Council
Julie Webster - Wirral Council

For further information on government guidance around Covid-19 please visit:

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

For further resources on mental wellbeing visit: www.kindtoyourmind.org