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Dear Parents/Carers,

We now have additional coronavirus testing capacity in Hackney.

Secondary school children and their family members, including siblings in primary school, can now access a coronavirus test even if they do not have symptoms of the virus. As your Director of Public Health, I am strongly encouraging you to take advantage of this in order to keep yourselves, your friends and families, and Hackney's communities safe over the coming period.

The borough now has additional testing capacity, and we have decided to prioritise asymptomatic testing for secondary pupils, staff and their families to help ensure the rates of coronavirus in schools are minimised. We want to ensure your child is able to attend school as safely as possible.

We are encouraging ALL households with a child in secondary school or a secondary staff member to test TWICE over the holiday period.

Firstly, keep your Christmas bubble safe by booking a test before the special Christmas rules begin on 23 December.

Secondly, we are urging students, staff, and their families to keep their school community safe when they return to school after the new year, by testing again before the first day of school, ideally between 28-31 December.

To book a test, **call 119 or visit nhs.uk/coronavirus or download the NHS COVID-19 app.**

When you arrive on the website to book a testing appointment or are speaking to a 119 operator, there are a number of steps, you will need to select:

- 1. No - not an essential worker**
- 2. No symptoms**
- 3. No - not part of a trial**

4. My council has asked me

You will be given the option of an appointment at one of a number of local testing centres.

If you test positive for coronavirus:

- You will need to self-isolate for 10 days.
- We know this can be challenging, so we will be in touch to provide delivery of an emergency food parcel, financial support and other services if you need them.
- In order to protect those around you from the virus, NHS Test & Trace will contact you to take the details of anyone you've recently been in touch with, to advise them to self-isolate. Thank you for sharing these details – it helps us to keep our communities safe.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to remind you of some of the support that is available for families in Hackney over the holidays:

- Families with children who are normally eligible for free school meals and who are struggling over the holiday period will be sent free school meal vouchers via their school by the Edenred system.
- 2,200 families with children under five who have been identified as needing additional support by their children's centres will also receive vouchers.
- To find out if your child is eligible for free school meals, but not yet signed up, and to apply, please visit: bit.ly/Hackney-FSM

If you are part of a family with migrant or refugee status, you may still be able to get free school meal vouchers. In 2018, the Council agreed to also fund free school meals for children in migrant and refugee families with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' – a status that usually makes them ineligible for Government support.

Find out more about coronavirus support on offer in the borough at hackney.gov.uk/coronavirus-support

Thank you for getting tested and keeping your family, your friends, your school and Hackney as safe as possible.

Wishing you all the very best for Christmas, and a safe and healthy New Year,

Yours sincerely,



Dr Sandra Husbands,
Director of Public Health City and Hackney