

## **Statement from Greg Fell, Director of Public Health, Sheffield City Council:**

Having taken the time to carefully consider the risk and impact of COVID-19 locally in Sheffield, I have today advised Sheffield City Council that I am satisfied that schools and childcare settings can begin to open more widely, in a planned and measured way, from Monday 15th June.

A couple of weeks ago, I advised the delay of increasing numbers, as I was not assured that the systems and plans put in place were sufficient and that we needed more time to assess and test these. During this two week period, I have carefully monitored the position and now feel confident that it is possible for settings to widen their attendance of children.

What do I feel has changed?

- A wide range of data indicates that the number of daily new cases continues to fall, the number of people who need hospital treatment for COVID 19 continues to fall and the number of people who sadly die is stable and decreasing. In analysing the data from many sources our position appears to consistently be moving in the right direction and this trend is stable over a longer period now, compared to the end of May.
- I now receive a daily report monitoring the number of cases being diagnosed locally compared against the expected trend, there are clearly identified trigger points for Sheffield. This enables me to monitor and assess our position carefully.
- COVID-19 testing capacity has increased and I am confident that individuals can now access testing quickly when needed
- NHS Test and Trace has now been mobilised since the end of May. Members of my team and I have been engaged with the system and schools have also seen it in operation. I feel assured that the model is in place and working in Sheffield. We know that contact tracing is taking place in Sheffield and that local outbreaks are being well managed, and we have the right systems in place to enable this.
- My team is working with Public Health England and we have developed a local outbreak management plan for settings to help guide and provide support where it may be needed.
- Settings have been working hard to become COVID-19 secure. Pulling together detailed risk assessments to plan how they will implement national guidance and minimise risk. This has been supported by Sheffield City Council providing a template risk assessment for settings to follow.

Of course, starting to slowly make changes to ease lockdown is a balance. Settings will be operating differently with small protective social bubbles to help reduce risk. This means that settings will carefully and slowly increase numbers, where they have capacity to do so, and when they feel that they have the right plans in place.

COVID-19 remains a priority. It is never possible to completely minimise risk and we all have a continued role to play. This means we should:

- Continue to wash our hands regularly with soap and hot water for a minimum of 20 seconds
- Maintain social distancing and don't become a contact
- Anyone with symptoms should isolate and access a test

I have a responsibility to regularly review and monitor the position locally and very carefully. My priority is to advise the Council relating to Public Health matters and I will continue to rigorously review the situation. I know there will be cases associated with schools and early

years settings, there may also be outbreaks. I am satisfied that we have the right arrangements to manage this. If at any time I feel that the local situation is changing and that this will have a negative impact on the health of children and staff within schools I will have no hesitation in changing my position and advising further.

Thank you for all that you are doing at this time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AG Fell', written in a cursive style.

Greg Fell  
Director of Public Health