

Dear student

Normally about this time of year I would be sending out a plea to you all to please look after each other during Freshers' Week.

Sadly 2020 has snatched much of the celebrating from our grasp, but as you begin your first or next stage in university life, I wanted to speak directly to you.

COVID-19 hasn't gone away, there still isn't a cure and we are all still at risk if we don't play by the rules. Nobody wants to end up back in lockdown, nobody wants to have to limit our social time to video calls and nobody wants to see pubs and restaurants have to close down again – either from a social or work perspective.

As you'll know already, we are seeing increased number of COVID-19 cases in most areas of Greater Glasgow and Clyde. This is often due to people meeting up in relatively large numbers and visits to bars and restaurants, which is the staple of student life for many of you.

The new rules which came into effect on Monday mean a maximum of six people from two households can meet up at any one time, whatever the setting. Remember:

- At university – follow and keep up to date with university/college guidance on all aspects of your course,
- In your home or place of residence: no-one from another household should be coming in for a social visit if you live in most areas of Greater Glasgow and Clyde. You should not be going into someone else's home.
- Outside or in places such as pubs, cafes or restaurants: only meeting in groups of 6 or less.

As there should only be two households in any group of 6 this will often mean that groups need to be even smaller than 6. For those who live in a house or flat it may be quite easy to identify who your household is. For those living in other types of accommodation a household is those who share the same bathroom or kitchen.

I want to thank those of you who are abiding by the rules. It's been a tough year for all of us but teenagers and twenty-somethings have had their freedoms curbed more than most.

If you don't follow the rules, you need to remember that you are putting yourselves, your loved ones and other students at risk. As the First Minister keeps saying, things should not feel normal yet. So meeting up with a lot of friends or visiting three or four pubs a night just doesn't work.

By all means go to the pub and see friends within the numbers allowed, but if you do, you must socially distance. If you go somewhere and it's packed, please leave and find somewhere quieter - and safer. If you are out, pick a bar or restaurant and stay in that one place, as moving between venues just increases your chances of catching the virus. And please, please remember that after-parties in halls or student flats cannot happen.

Remember to look out for each other. You may become aware of fellow students who are coming in from abroad and having to quarantine, so please do what you can to support them, by dropping off shopping etc. and helping them to stick to the rules too.

Nobody wants to back to into lockdown and if we want to continue to meet our friends and family to enjoy a night out then we all need to play by the rules.

Remember you are infectious for around two days before you get any symptoms, so everyone should be limiting their 'contacts' all the time. My advice is go around with the thought that you could be infectious and meet as few people as possible within two metres.

We all need to play by the rules (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others>) or risk a return to even tighter restrictions, such as bars and restaurants being forced to shut. This is in our hands – so let's take control and make this work.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda de Caestecker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Linda de Caestecker
Director of Public Health
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde