**Information for Welcoming Spaces 2023/24**

**Reducing the spread of infection in shared community spaces**

Respiratory infections like influenza (flu), colds and COVID-19 spread quickly and easily from person to person through coughing, sneezing and just general activities such as talking, laughing, singing etc. If you are running a Welcoming Space, you need to be aware of all these things to help reduce the spread of infections.

If the number of respiratory infections starts to increase, Sandwell Public Health will be guided by the government and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and will advise all our community partners to carry out an assessment and review precautionary measures within shared community spaces.

We may need to change some of the way our Welcoming Spaces operate to ensure the safety of everyone. These changes may include some of the following additional precautionary steps:

* Providing hand sanitisers and/or hand washing facilities to employees and customers who are likely to touch surfaces, for example, where people make drinks.
* Social distancing and ensuring space between chairs.
* Requiring face masks or coverings, especially when there is close contact between people.
* Easy-to-read signs will need to be visibly displayed. Everyone should be encouraged to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and bin the tissue afterwards. Providing tissues can help with this. Visible, easy-to-read signage around 'catch it, kill it, bin it' should be displayed in the space.
* People should be urged to stay at home when they are sick.
* The room should be as well-ventilated as possible to encourage airflow through the space
* Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces regularly in communal areas and where people make drinks and socialise should be strongly encouraged. A regular cleaning solution can be used for this task. It is more important that this task is done regularly; everyone should be encouraged to clean the space they have used when they are leaving the space
* Encourage everyone to report any symptoms; it may be necessary to include temperature checks upon entry to the space.
* Welcoming Spaces will be expected to introduce appropriate measures to protect their communities.

**Sandwell Public Health, Health Protection Team are very happy to advise and help and can be contacted at the following email:** **Health\_Protection@sandwell.gov.uk**

**September 2023**