From the President

31 July 2020

Dear Wolfson Community

Living and Studying Safely at Wolfson

From 1st August Wolfson College is open to many of its College members once more.

At the heart of the new normal at Wolfson will be two important concepts, and five simple rules. The full participation and support of all current Wolfsonians, and especially those currently living and working in College, will be essential to ensure that these concepts are fully understood by newcomers and by those returning to College in Michaelmas.

The first concept, for residents in College accommodation, is the "Household". In effect, your household is the people you live with - those who will be your contacts if any one of you is found to have COVID-19, and who will have to go into 14 days' self-isolation with you. You will get to know them very well, and will have to cooperate closely with them. See below for the full definition.

The second concept, for all Wolfsonians (not just for residents) is the wearing of face-coverings in all indoor shared spaces, and other aspects of effective social distancing like keeping 2 metres apart and washing hands (the "Five Rules", again set out below). If you wear a face-covering and keep your distance in this way, those outside your household will not have to go into self-isolation if you develop symptoms of COVID-19, and you and the rest of your household won't have to go into self-isolation if a contact of yours develops symptoms.

The full rules and plan are set out HERE

It’s simple. Inside your household, behave with greater than usual consideration for the other members of your household, and act responsibly to protect the most vulnerable members. Outside your household, wear a face covering indoors and keep two metres apart. Stay safe yourself, and help newcomers and those returning to College to do the same.

Sir Tim Hitchens, KCVO, CMG
President
So what is a Household?

Our residential accommodation consists of single rooms, arranged in “sets” of, mostly, 4, 6 or 8 rooms sharing a kitchen and, in some cases, a bathroom, and flats and houses for couples and families. In line with the UK Government’s and the University’s guidance, each set of single rooms, and each individual flat or house, is regarded as a “household”. Cooperation and teamwork within households, especially with regard to cleaning, is essential to everyone’s safety. Most households will include both newcomers and long-term residents. On return or arrival, some will be required to self-isolate within their rooms, when they must avoid all contact with the other members of their household. If your household has shared bathroom facilities, those of you who are self-isolating must take especial care: when you move from your room to the bathroom, wear a face-covering and keep at least 2 metres from others; in the bathroom, clean all the surfaces that you touch before and after use. While you are self-isolating, you must not use the household kitchen.

Once all members of a household have completed their prescribed periods of self-isolation (if any), they are no longer required to maintain social-distancing within the household. Should they wish to do so, of course, individual members may maintain social distance from each other. How the members of a household interpret this should involve discussion, negotiation and decisions involving all members of the household. You should take into account that relaxing social distancing within your household will increase the risk of contracting COVID-19. That risk will rise and fall over time according to the course of the pandemic in Oxford: now, in early August, the risk is quite low, but by mid-September to mid-October, with the arrival in Oxford city of some 40,000 students from all over the world, the risk is bound to rise. That is why we are preparing now. The guiding principle must be that all members of a household should act in such a way as to protect the most vulnerable member. If a household cannot reach agreement, you should contact the College.

If your household decides not to maintain social distancing, this means that, while you must wear a face-covering and keep a distance of 2 metres from others outside your household, you need not do so inside your household. Other simple precautions will reduce the risk to the whole household, including: regular hand washing; frequent cleaning of surfaces that you all touch such as door handles and light switches, chairs and tables, counter-tops, fridges, microwaves and cookers; and making sure that you keep all shared spaces well-ventilated, even in winter.

Guidance suggests that the ideal maximum number of residents in a household is 8. In very few cases, the configuration of Wolfson accommodation means that more than 8 residents are expected to share a kitchen and, for some, a bathroom. In these few cases, the Home Bursar will liaise directly with household members to discuss and agree further mitigation.
You are currently not permitted to bring visitors or guests of any kind into College. Students are already beginning to return to Wolfson, and special arrangements are in place to allow non-resident students to collect their belongings from College. From 1st August, non-resident students, staff and fellows who live in and around Oxford are again welcome in the College but, until the new procedures are thoroughly established, Members of Common Room and non-Wolfsonians are not allowed in College. Please continue to check the College COVID pages for updates as restrictions on visitors and guests are likely to relax in due course.

And what are the Five Rules?

1. **Stay in your household and work from there as much as you can;** limit face-to-face contact in your household; inside and out, always act responsibly and with the greatest possible consideration for others.

2. **When outside your household maintain social distance.** This means: 2 metres when outdoors; 2 metres, wherever possible, plus a face-covering (see 4 below) when indoors in shared spaces. If possible, never spend more than 15 minutes closer than 2 metres to others, even if you are wearing a face-covering.

3. **Wash your hands** frequently, regularly and thoroughly for 20 seconds with soap and running water, or use alcohol-based hand-sanitiser (see here) — soap molecules break down the bacteria and viruses living on dirt, lock them up in bubbles and help flush them away.

4. **Wear a face-covering: indoors** at all times in shared spaces (except in your household, or when eating or drinking in the Hall, Bar or Café where special rules apply); outdoors whenever you are likely to come closer than 2 metres to anyone (e.g. on public transport, in crowded streets, in shops etc). This does not apply to those: unable to put on, wear, or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability; to whom putting on, wearing, or removing a face-covering will cause severe distress; interacting with someone who uses lip reading to communicate, or who has social communication impairments; and to children aged under 11 years.

5. **If you display any of the symptoms of COVID-19, self-isolate in your room, flat or house, alert all members of your household** (who should also self-isolate immediately), **report immediately** to coronavirus.help@wolfson.ox.ac.uk and **arrange to have a test** (see here for symptoms and how to arrange a test through the NHS. From the start of term, tests will also be available through the University).