

Government launches new pilots to further support people to self-isolate

- Local authorities will pilot alternative accommodation and translation help to further support those who have to self-isolate
- Programme designed to help find further ways to support people self-isolating across the country

The government is to launch 9 trailblazing pilots in England to test new, creative ways to help ensure people stick to self-isolation rules in areas with higher prevalence of infection including from new variants.

In partnership with local authorities, the government is backing the pilots with £12 million which will be used for a range of initiatives including providing alternative accommodation for people in overcrowded households, social care support such as increasing existing social care support for vulnerable adults and providing 'buddying' services for people whose mental health has been affected by lockdown and the variant outbreaks, and language communications support for individuals where English isn't their first language. These pilots are designed to encourage people most at risk of catching and transmitting COVID-19 to come forward for testing and to self-isolate successfully if they test positive.

The areas that will receive funding for these pilots are: Newham; Yorkshire and Humber; Lancashire, Blackburn & Darwen, Blackpool; Greater Manchester; Cheshire and Merseyside; Royal Borough of Kingston; Hackney; Peterborough, Fenland and South Holland, and Somerset.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

From the very beginning of this global pandemic, the British public have made tremendous sacrifices and played their part whenever they're asked – social distancing, self-isolating, getting tested and now finally, getting the job.

Variants have the potential to be a Trojan horse for our hard won progress and it is more vital than ever that we do what we can to show them the exit door, following the rules and self-isolating when asked.

We recognise just how challenging self-isolation is for many people and these pilots will help us find the best ways to support people and making it easier for everyone to keep doing their bit.

To test ways to best support people to stay self-isolating if they test

positive for COVID-19 and to encourage uptake of testing, the government is already backing a pilot across the Greater Manchester region with £2 million of funding. This cash injection is assessing ways to boost people's ability to keep isolating, including 'support and engagement teams' who work with households within 24 hours of a positive test to develop a bespoke plan for self-isolation.

Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency, said:

We are doing everything we can to send this virus into retreat and stifle the spread of new variants, and at the heart of this effort is our collaboration with local authorities.

COVID-19 is a global disease but it requires local solutions as well as national ones, and I am hugely grateful for the efforts of the local authorities that are going to be involved with these pilots.

Our partnership with local councils has seen us reach more positive cases of the virus than ever before, many of whom were people who could otherwise have unknowingly spread the virus to their loved ones.

The government has acted swiftly and decisively to tackle head-on the spread of the B.1.617.2 variant, first identified in India. Working in partnership with local authorities, strengthened testing operations are working round the clock to help to control the spread of variants wherever they have been detected.

Additional surge testing, genomic sequencing and enhanced contact tracing is helping to control the spread of variants by rapidly break chains of transmission. NHS Test and Trace continues to trace the contacts of any individual who has tested positive while also providing support to local authorities throughout the process.

Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

Rapidly targeting local outbreaks and supporting people to self-isolate when required is absolutely crucial to our continuing fight against coronavirus.

These pilot schemes will provide further insight into what works best in supporting those who test positive and their contacts to do the right thing to protect themselves, their families and their wider communities.

All councils continue to use their unique local knowledge and connections to reach out to areas where they are most needed,

working with government in our joint national effort to stop the spread and keep case rates as low as possible as we look towards a return to our normal way of life.

Notes to editors