

# Statement from Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Whitty about new strain of Covid-19

Press release

New strain of Covid-19 reported to World Health Organisation



Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Chris Whitty said:

As announced on Monday, the UK has identified a new variant of Covid-19 through Public Health England's genomic surveillance.

As a result of the rapid spread of the new variant, preliminary modelling data and rapidly rising incidence rates in the South East, the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (NERVTAG) now consider that the new strain can spread more quickly.

We have alerted the World Health Organisation and are continuing to analyse the available data to improve our understanding.

There is no current evidence to suggest the new strain causes a higher mortality rate or that it affects vaccines and treatments although urgent work is underway to confirm this.

Given this latest development it is now more vital than ever that the public continue to take action in their area to reduce transmission.

Published 19 December 2020