

Surge testing to be deployed across Lancashire

Surge testing is being expanded across parts of Lancashire, following the identification of a number of confirmed cases of the B.1.617.2 variant, first identified in India. All cases have been instructed to self-isolate and their contacts are being identified.

Working in partnership with local authorities, NHS Test and Trace is launching additional testing and genomic sequencing across a number of areas, including Burnley, Pendle, Hyndburn and Rossendale. Additional mobile testing units and COVID-19 tests are being deployed to higher educational settings in these areas, and door to door testing is taking place to find and isolate cases.

Local authorities will shortly confirm the areas where additional testing will be offered in their boroughs, and reach out directly to residents to ensure people come forward for testing to stop the spread of the virus.

Everyone who lives, works or studies in the targeted areas and settings, including children, are being strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, whether they are showing symptoms or not. By using PCR testing, positive results can be sent for genomic sequencing at specialist laboratories, helping us to identify variant of concern (VOC) cases and their spread.

In tandem with increased testing, enhanced contact tracing will be used for individuals testing positive with a VOC. This is where contact tracers look back over an extended period to determine the route of transmission.

Anyone with symptoms should book a free test online or by phone. They can then go to a testing site or have a kit sent to their home. If individuals have no symptoms, they should visit the local authority's website for more information.

People in this area should continue to make use of free twice-weekly rapid tests, commonly known as lateral flow devices, alongside the PCR test as part of surge testing.

The government and its scientific experts are closely monitoring the evolving situation and rates of variants, and we will not hesitate to take additional action as necessary.