

Additional support for Hounslow scaled back as spread of COVID-19 slows

Press release

Extra support deployed in Hounslow, London on 20 May is being scaled back as latest data shows local enhanced support has helped to slow the initial spread of the Delta variant in the area.



Following efforts led by Hounslow Council and residents living in the area, the rate at which coronavirus (COVID-19) cases are growing in the area has slowed and numbers are now in line with national and regional rates.

As a result, from today (Wednesday 23 June), guidance on taking particular caution when meeting anyone outside your household or support bubble and minimising travel in and out of the affected areas will no longer apply in Hounslow.

Hounslow will continue to receive other support measures, including surge testing, to ensure rates of COVID-19 continue to decrease in the area.

To continue to support this effort, everybody living and working in Hounslow is still strongly encouraged to continue following key behaviours and actions to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. This includes Hands, Face, Space and Fresh Air, and to take part in surge testing when asked to, as well as making use of the free, twice-weekly rapid testing offer.

Significantly, all over-18s are advised to come forward for the vaccine as soon as possible, and to get their second dose when able for the fullest possible protection.

Health Minister, Lord Bethell said:

It is a testament to the heroic efforts of local leaders and residents that case rates are slowing and are now comparable to those reported nationally and across the London region and we can safely remove additional guidance. Through surge testing we have

identified people without symptoms, who would otherwise spread the virus without knowing, stopping the spread of COVID-19 and breaking the chains of transmission.

While this is a great achievement, we need to keep following the guidance in place and put Hands, Space, Face and Fresh Air into practice as well as getting tested regularly.

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UN Economic and Social Council: UK statement on famine prevention

Thank you to the organisers for convening us to discuss this important issue.

Today, right now, risk of famine is a reality and let's all be clear; it is man-made and it is deeply concerning. A famine is likely already occurring in South Sudan, and famine-like conditions exists in parts of Ethiopia, Yemen and Madagascar. North-East Nigeria is projected to have populations in catastrophic conditions.

The situation in Tigray, Ethiopia is particularly harrowing – I visited recently and the world's worst food crisis since Somalia in 2011 is unfolding. The UK stands with other partners, calling for a ceasefire to bring an end to the conflict.

In response to the increasing risk of famine, the UK launched a Call to Action to prevent famine last September. There are 5 key elements required for any successful international response to do this. First, urgent, prioritised funding is essential from a broader funding base. This is not just about food, but also support to nutrition, health, water, sanitation, and protection.

Second, we should act earlier to save lives and livelihoods. Increasing our efforts on anticipatory action will enable us to mitigate the impact of droughts, epidemics and other catastrophes before they strike, including in protracted crisis and the most fragile setting. Prevention should be central to our thinking and efforts.

Third, we should support countries to strengthen their own crises preparedness, partnering with International Financial Institutions to enable access and efficiency of early response financing.

Fourth, quality data should guide all our actions and be made more readily available.

And finally, promotion of safe humanitarian access and protection of civilians in conflict is vital. Conflict remains the main driver of food insecurity and famine risk. Action at the UN Security Council is needed to address starvation as a method of warfare. There should be accountability of abuses of international humanitarian law. Promoting and measuring access should be a bigger part of diplomatic efforts in conflict resolution; and stabilisation activities: building peace and demonstrating peace dividends will follow helps build trust among communities and belligerents.

The UK will play its part, working with partners across the international system to prevent the risk of catastrophic famine.

Thank you.

UN Economic and Social Council: UK statement on health care during COVID-19

Thank you chair and panellists for your insightful comments and for the immediate relevance of this discussion.

Whilst the spread of COVID-19 is first and foremost a health crisis, we must not lose sight of the inevitable humanitarian, protection and development crises that follow an upsurge in cases in fragile settings. The UK welcomes the focus of this panel on the protection implications of the pandemic, in all its aspects.

Earlier this month, the UK brought together humanitarian and health leaders to discuss the specific challenges associated with delivering and administering vaccines to the world's most vulnerable communities. Representatives made clear the importance of engaging meaningfully with communities and in monitoring protection risks. A renewed energy is needed, and in this context, a focus on the intersections of the principles of accountability to affected people, adherence to International Humanitarian Law and on risk communication.

We also need to continue to press for humanitarian access in conflict affected contexts to ensure vaccines and wider humanitarian aid reach some of those most in need. In January this year, under the UK presidency of the UNSC, UNSCR 2565 was adopted to ensure appropriate access for health and humanitarian workers to areas of conflict, to pave the way for vaccine delivery and ensure their safety, wellbeing and protection, in alignment with UNSCR 2286. The UK continues to advocate for vaccine delivery to be part of a multi-sectoral, principled, and needs-based humanitarian strategy. The vaccine must also reach the estimated 70-80 million people in areas

controlled by non-state armed groups.

However, as the centre of gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic now shifts to the poorest, unvaccinated countries, our attention must also turn towards system-wide readiness and contingency planning, including resolving indemnity issues, and to address protection concerns. We must be ready to get vaccines into arms once they arrive on the tarmac.

Learning from last year's COVID-19 response – particularly as regards the specific groups in vulnerable and hard to reach settings, such as refugees, internally displaced people and host communities, migrants, women and girls and the elderly – is becoming increasingly important. The UK welcomes the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the COVID-19 response and encourages findings to be shared regularly so that they can be applied in real-time, if necessary.

Finally, I can assure you the UK remains fully engaged on this response and as others have made significant contributions. We also commend all agencies and staff working and delivering in very challenging environments during the pandemic.

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The UK will play its part, working with partners across the international system to prevent the risk of catastrophic famine.

Thank you.

[UK Minister for South Asia Lord Ahmad concludes 2-day visit to Pakistan](#)

During his visit, Lord Ahmad met with the Prime Minister Imran Khan and other government Ministers and Provincial leaders, including the Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed, the Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Chief Minister Punjab Usman Buzdar and Governor Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar.

The visit covered Islamabad and Lahore and was focused on the UK and Pakistan's friendship to build back greener to protect our world against climate change, build back better with more prosperity for both countries, build back safer to protect communities from COVID-19, and to build back for all ensuring that girls get the education they deserve.

During his visit, Lord Ahmad launched a new programme in Lahore to promote cleaner brick production practices which will help improve air quality, reduce smog and fight climate change. The UK will support a targeted training programme on Zig Zag Technology for the brick industry to substitute coal and reduce emissions. This programme will be implemented in collaboration with Government of Punjab, Brick Kiln Owners Association of Pakistan (BKAOP) and

the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

Lord Ahmad and Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Climate Change Amin Aslam planted a tree at the British High Commission residence garden in Islamabad to make the UK and Pakistan's joint commitment to tackling climate change, and recognise Prime Minister Imran Khan's ambitious Ten Billion Tree Tsunami.

The Minister also met young climate action leaders and discussed the importance of high ambition by global leaders at COP26 to protect our environment for future generations. The Minister hosted a roundtable for business leaders in Pakistan to discuss the UK's support for the trade potential in Pakistan. This visit also included a meeting with prominent interfaith leaders in Pakistan to exchange perspectives on achieving Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and interfaith harmony.

Lord Ahmad said:

My visit to Pakistan has reinforced just how important it is to work together to tackle the threat of climate change, to prevent a pandemic like Covid-19 from happening again, and to help our children catch up with lost learning, especially girls. No country can work in isolation. Global challenges do not respect borders.

I look forward to even more ambition in our relationship in the future, including on commitments to tackle climate change and ensuring that we leave no one behind as we build back from the pandemic.

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Contact

British High Commission, Islamabad
tel. 0300 500 5306