

Further support for Birmingham, Blackpool, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Liverpool City region and Warrington to tackle Delta (B1.617.2) variant

- Enhanced support package aims to suppress the spread of the Delta variant, and break chains of transmission
- Approach has been working in South London and Bolton, stopping a rise in the number of cases

Additional support including surge testing, tracing, isolation support and maximising vaccine uptake, will be rapidly deployed in Birmingham, Blackpool, Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Liverpool City Region and Warrington.

Further support for these areas follows extensive COVID-19 surveillance and, thanks to the UK's world-leading genomic sequencing capability, has detected a number of cases of the Delta (B1.617.2) variant in these communities. The new support is the same package [confirmed for Greater Manchester and Lancashire last Tuesday](#), and in Bolton which has since seen a decrease in cases.

Testing, isolation and vaccinations will help suppress and control the spread of the virus and variants in both the short and longer term, when used in combination with people following existing guidance such as hands, face, space and fresh air.

As part of the enhanced support package, extra guidance will be set out for the 6 areas on steps people can take, such as minimising travel in and out of the affected areas, to keep their loved ones and their communities safe. The guidance is the same as that already set out for 8 areas including Greater Manchester and Hounslow.

Introduction of this additional support will be led by local authorities to ensure the right steps are taken at the right time.

Support available to local areas will include:

- additional resources to help local authorities with testing, logistics, planning and workforce to assist with testing, door-to-door visits to engage with residents and other activities – these may come from the Surge Rapid Response Teams, from military aid or other sources depending on requirements
- wastewater testing samples being prioritised for sequencing
- specialist communications support to increase awareness and focus

- engagement with disadvantaged groups
- maximising vaccine uptake by expanding existing channels, developing new capacity and increasing local and targeted communications to reach different communities
- supervised in-school testing and discretion to reintroduce face coverings in indoor communal areas and classrooms in schools if they and directors of public health decide it is appropriate
- surge testing and enhanced contact tracing
- enhanced monitoring (genomic sequencing, genotype assay testing)

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We are doing everything we can to stop the spread of the Delta variant, and working with local authorities, we are providing a strengthened package of support in areas where cases of the variant are increasing.

We know this approach has made a real impact in South London and in Bolton where we have seen it stall rising cases.

I urge people living these areas to get tested, come forward for your vaccine as soon as you are eligible and make sure to get the all-important second jab – that is how we will beat this virus.

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

The Delta variant is now the dominant strain across the UK, with cases continuing to rise in some areas. People in these areas can help protect their community by remaining cautious, by working from home if possible and remembering to practise hands, face, space and fresh air.

Getting the vaccine gives a strong level of protection against this variant and I strongly recommend that everyone gets both jabs when the NHS invites you – it will protect you and your loved ones.

Early research shows that vaccines provide strong protection against the new variants. Effectiveness against symptomatic disease from the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant is similar after 2 doses compared with the Alpha variant (B.1.1.7), and even higher levels of effectiveness are expected against hospitalisations and death.

The government and its world-leading scientists are closely monitoring the evolving situation and the rates of variants, and will not hesitate to take additional action whenever necessary.

Further details about the measures in each area are being made available through individual local authorities.

The areas covered by the additional measures will be:

- Birmingham City Council
- Blackpool Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (Halton Borough Council, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, St Helens Council and Wirral Borough Council)
- Warrington Borough Council

Further support was [announced on Tuesday 8 June in Greater Manchester and parts of Lancashire](#).

Further support was also confirmed for [Bedford, Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton, Burnley, Kirklees, Leicester City, Hounslow and North Tyneside](#).

Genotype assay testing is a new technology which helps identify mutations linked to variants of concern, [announced by the Department of Health and Social Care on 22 March 2021](#).

Public Health England (PHE) published its [study into the effectiveness of vaccines against the Delta \(B.1.617.2\) variant](#) on 22 May.

The study by PHE found that between 5 April and 16 May:

- the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was 88% effective against symptomatic disease from the Delta variant 2 weeks after the second dose, compared with 93% effectiveness against the Alpha variant
- 2 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine were 60% effective against symptomatic disease from the Delta variant compared with 66% effectiveness against the Alpha variant
- both vaccines were 33% effective against symptomatic disease from Delta 3 weeks after the first dose compared with around 50% effectiveness against the Kent variant

[Vaccination programme accelerated as Step 4 is paused](#)

- Step 4 of the Roadmap paused for four weeks while vaccination programme is accelerated following significant rise in more transmissible variant
- Second dose brought forward to 8 weeks for over 40s to provide strongest protection against Delta variant sooner
- Restrictions to be lifted on weddings and wakes on 21 June

Step 4 will be delayed by up to four weeks and the vaccination programme accelerated to respond to the rapid spread of the Delta variant, the Prime Minister has confirmed.

By 19 July, all adults will have been offered a first dose and around two thirds of all adults will have been offered two doses of the vaccine.

Data suggests that the Delta variant is between 40% and 80% more transmissible than the Alpha variant and is rapidly driving up case numbers.

There are currently around 8,000 cases a day, the highest since the end of February, and these are increasing by around 64% each week.

Hospitalisations are starting to rise, with the average number of people admitted to hospital increasing in England by 50% per week, and 61% per week in the North-West.

Our successful vaccination programme is weakening the link between cases and hospitalisations, but the latest evidence shows that two doses are needed to provide effective protection against the Delta variant.

The Roadmap has always been led by data and not dates, and the government's four tests have not been met. In order to offer two vaccine doses to more people, prevent thousands of unnecessary deaths and protect the NHS, Step 4 will be delayed by up to four weeks to Monday 19 July. If the data rapidly improves this could be brought forward to 5 July.

The four tests are:

- The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully
- Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated
- Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS
- Our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern

Two vaccine doses have now been shown to be highly effective in reducing hospitalisation from the Delta variant, with the latest PHE data suggesting this could be up to 96% for Pfizer-BioNTech and 92% for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

All adults aged 18 and over will now be offered a first dose by 19 July, 2 weeks earlier than planned. All adults aged 23 and 24 will be able to book their first dose from tomorrow (15 June).

By 19 July, all those aged over 50 and the clinically extremely vulnerable will have been offered their second dose, and those second doses will have taken effect.

Second doses for all over 40s will be accelerated by reducing the dosing interval from 12 weeks to 8 weeks. All over 40s who received a first dose by mid-May will be offered a second dose by 19 July.

The school holidays will also begin at the end of July, further reducing transmission among the younger age groups. Step 3 restrictions will continue in their current format with the following exceptions implemented from 21 June. No restrictions will be reimposed.

The 30-person limit will be lifted for weddings and wakes. There will be no set limit on the number of attendees, but venues must adhere to covid secure guidance, maintain social distancing and provide table service. All weddings in private settings, such as gardens, must have completed a covid risk assessment to ascertain how many guests they can host safely.

Event pilots will continue, including some Euro 2020 matches, Wimbledon, and some arts and music performances. Attendees will show proof of vaccination or a recent negative test.

Care home residents will no longer need to isolate if they leave their residence. Exceptions will include high risk visits including overnight stays in hospital.

Cases are expected to continue rising due to the transmissibility of the Delta variant, but with the acceleration of the vaccination programme hospitalisations are expected to stabilise.

Additional support is available for areas with high cases rates of the Delta variant, including surge testing, isolation support, and efforts to maximise vaccination uptake.

PM statement at coronavirus press conference: 14 June 2021

When we set out on our roadmap to freedom a few months ago, we were determined to make progress that was cautious but irreversible. And step by step – thanks to the enormous efforts of the British people and the spectacular vaccine roll-out we now have one of the most open economies and societies in this part of the world.

And as we have always known and as the February roadmap explicitly predicted – this opening up has inevitably been accompanied by more infection and more hospitalisation. Because we must be clear that we cannot simply eliminate Covid – we must learn to live with it. And with every day that goes by we are better protected by the vaccines and we are better able to live with the disease.

Vaccination greatly reduces transmission and two doses provide a very high degree of protection against serious illness and death. But there are still millions of younger adults who have not been vaccinated and sadly a

proportion of the elderly and vulnerable may still succumb even if they have had two jabs.

And that is why we are so concerned by the Delta variant that is now spreading faster than the third wave predicted in the February roadmap. We're seeing cases growing by about 64 per cent per week, and in the worst affected areas, it's doubling every week. And the average number of people being admitted to hospital in England has increased by 50 per cent week on week, and by 61 per cent in the North West, which may be the shape of things to come. Because we know the remorseless logic of exponential growth and even if the link between infection and hospitalisation has been weakened it has not been severed.

And even if the link between hospitalisation and death has also been weakened, I'm afraid numbers in intensive care, in ICU are also rising. And so we have faced a very difficult choice. We can simply keep going with all of step 4 on June 21st even though there is a real possibility that the virus will outrun the vaccines and that thousands more deaths would ensue that could otherwise have been avoided.

Or else we can give our NHS a few more crucial weeks to get those remaining jabs into the arms of those who need them. And since today I cannot say that we have met all four tests for proceeding with step four, I do think it is sensible to wait just a little longer.

By Monday 19th July we will aim to have double jabbed around two thirds of the adult population including everyone over 50, all the vulnerable, all the frontline health and care workers and everyone over 40 who received their first dose by mid-May. And to do this we will now accelerate the 2nd jabs for those over 40 – just as we did for the vulnerable groups – so they get maximum protection as fast as possible.

And we will bring forward our target to give every adult in this country a first dose by 19th July that is including young people over the age of 18 with 23 and 24 year olds invited to book jabs from tomorrow – so we reduce the risk of transmission among groups that mix the most. And to give the NHS that extra time we will hold off step 4 openings until July 19th except for weddings that can still go ahead with more than 30 guests provided social distancing remains in place and the same will apply to wakes. And we will continue the pilot events – such as Euro2020 and some theatrical performances. We will monitor the position every day and if after 2 weeks we have concluded that the risk has diminished then we reserve the possibility of proceeding to Step 4 and full opening sooner.

As things stand – and on the basis of the evidence I can see right now – I am confident we will not need any more than 4 weeks and we won't need to go beyond July 19th. It is unmistakably clear the vaccines are working and the sheer scale of the vaccine roll-out has made our position incomparably better than in previous waves.

But now is the time to ease off the accelerator because by being cautious now we have the chance – in the next four weeks – to save many thousands of lives

by vaccinating millions more people. And once the adults of this country have been overwhelmingly vaccinated, which is what we can achieve in a short space of time, we will be in a far stronger position to keep hospitalisations down, to live with this disease, and to complete our cautious but irreversible roadmap to freedom.

Surge testing to be deployed in Slough

Press release

Working with the local authority, NHS Test and Trace is providing additional testing and genomic sequencing in Slough.



NHS Test and Trace – in partnership with the local authority – is deploying additional testing and genomic sequencing in Slough.

Surge testing will commence on Wednesday (16 June) in certain postcodes of Slough (SL1 3, SL2 1, SL2 5), following the identification of a small number of confirmed cases of the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant. All the confirmed cases have been instructed to self-isolate and their contacts have been identified.

Everyone in Slough who lives or works in these areas is strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 PCR test, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

Enhanced contact tracing will be used for individuals testing positive with a variant of concern (VOC). This is where contact tracers look back over an extended period to determine the route of transmission.

By using PCR testing, positive results are sent for genomic sequencing at specialist laboratories, helping us to identify COVID-19 cases with a VOC and then prevent their spread.

If you have symptoms you should book a free test online or by phone. You can then go to a testing site or have a kit sent to your home. If you have no symptoms, you 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.

Published 14 June 2021

Surge testing to be deployed in Bracknell Forest

Press release

Working with the local authority, NHS Test and Trace is providing additional testing and genomic sequencing in Bracknell Forest.



NHS Test and Trace – in partnership with the local authority – is deploying extra testing and genomic sequencing in Bracknell Forest.

Surge testing will commence on Wednesday (16 June) in one postcode of Bracknell Forest (GU47 0), following the identification of a small number of confirmed cases of the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant. All the confirmed cases have been instructed to self-isolate and their contacts have been identified.

Everyone over the age of 11 in Bracknell Forest who lives or works in this area is strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 PCR test, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

Enhanced contact tracing will be used for individuals testing positive with a variant of concern (VOC). This is where contact tracers look back over an extended period to determine the route of transmission.

By using PCR testing, positive results are sent for genomic sequencing at specialist laboratories, helping us to identify COVID-19 cases with a VOC and

then prevent their spread.

If you have symptoms you should book a free test online or by phone. You can then go to a testing site or have a kit sent to your home. If you have no symptoms, you should visit your [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.

Published 14 June 2021