

Surge testing to be deployed in areas within Middlesbrough, Walsall, and Hampshire in connection to new variant



Working in partnership with the local authorities, additional surge testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas within parts of the TS7 and TS8 postcodes of Middlesbrough, areas in Walsall and in specific areas in the RG26 postcode in Hampshire where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

Surge testing is being introduced in addition to existing extensive testing, and in combination with following the lockdown rules and remembering Hands Face Space, will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus.

Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

People living within these targeted areas are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test this week, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should book a test in the usual way, and those without symptoms should visit their local authority website for more information.

Surge testing in the Egham and Broxbourne areas, which began on February 6 and February 1, is now complete and further data on surge testing will be provided in due course.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

Middlesbrough Council will deploy a Mobile Testing Unit from Saturday and encourage residents from a targeted area to come forward for a test.

The surge testing operation in parts of Walsall has been extended in response to a confirmed second case of the variant first identified in South Africa which is not believed to be linked to international travel. Surge testing in response to the first case has now been completed.

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1. 13 February 2021

Additional postcode in Middlesbrough added to the testing areas

2. 13 February 2021

First published.

[Transport Secretary hails work of transport industry in vaccination roll-out](#)

- Transport Secretary virtually visits mass vaccination centre at St Helens Stadium in the north west to see first-hand the efforts of those involved in delivering the roll-out
- Grant Shapps hails work of transport operators helping people get their vaccinations, as people aged 70 and over encouraged to contact NHS
- to improve access to vaccine sites, rail and bus operators are adding stops and changing routes, including new or free services

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps hailed the efforts of transport operators and employees across the country who have gone above and beyond to help [the nation's coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination roll-out](#), as government remains on track to meet its target of offering a first dose to those in the top 4 priority groups by 15 February 2021.

From the NHS and Metrobus working together to launch the UK's first COVID-19 mobile vaccination unit and a bus targeting hard-to-reach communities in Crawley through to rail and bus operators changing routes, adding stops and putting on free bus services, the industry is playing a vital role in helping people get their vaccinations.

It comes as the Transport Secretary met Dr Hilary Flett, GP clinical lead for vaccination roll-out, and volunteers at a mass vaccination centre at St Helens rugby league club's stadium to see first-hand how the roll-out is being delivered.

The Totally Wicked Stadium hosts both the GP-led Primary Care Network (PCN) vaccination clinic as well as the mass vaccination centre for St Helens and surrounding boroughs.

More than 14 million people have now received their first dose of the

vaccine.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Throughout this pandemic, our transport heroes have been at the frontline keeping the country moving. Now they are stepping up yet again to help deliver the vaccinations and get people to vaccination centres, helping us fight back from COVID-19.

We also owe a huge debt of gratitude to the medical staff and volunteers at St Helens, supporting people to get their vital jabs.

I urge everyone aged 70 and over who hasn't yet had a vaccination to come forward and contact the NHS to get their jab.

Dr Hilary Flett, St Helens GP and clinical lead for the PCN vaccination rollout in St Helens, said:

All 33 GP practices in St Helens have been working together since before Christmas to provide a service to vaccinate eligible patients, including house-bound and care home residents, and care home staff.

To date, we have vaccinated 80% of our GP registered population who are in priority groups 1 to 4, which is over 25,000 residents.

As well as working tirelessly to help keep the trains and stations running safely throughout the pandemic, [Network Rail](#) has continued to contribute towards overcoming COVID-19 away from the tracks by volunteering to help set up the new large-scale vaccination centre near Exeter, Devon.

Workers recently gave up their time to unload around 100 pallets of equipment from articulated lorries and set it up inside the main building at Westpoint, Exeter.

Graham Vidler, Chief Executive of the Confederation of Passenger Transport, said:

Bus and coach operators across the country have been delighted to be able to play their part in the national effort to vaccinate against COVID-19.

Operators have provided extra services and stops to help get people to vaccination centres and local GP surgeries across the country, showcasing the vital role buses and coaches play in helping people move from A to B.

Over the course of the pandemic, the transport sector has stepped up to

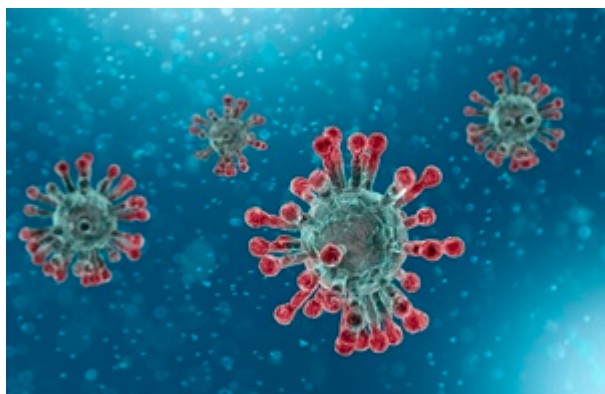
support the vaccination roll-out in a wide range of ways, including:

- the NHS and **Metrobus** have launched one of the UK's first COVID-19 mobile vaccination units in a bus in Crawley, targeting hard-to-reach and vulnerable communities
- **Great Western Railway** has put in place additional station stops on trains between Paddington and Bedwyn to help those travelling to the new vaccination centre established at Newbury Racecourse
- in Hartlepool, **Stagecoach's** Tees Flex bus, a partnership service with the Tees Valley Combined Authority, is offering a bespoke service for healthcare workers travelling between Hartlepool and North Tees Hospital
- **Go North East, Nexus** and **Go Ahead** have worked together to put on 3 free-to-use vaccination centre shuttle buses operating to Nightingale Hospital vaccination centre in Washington, and have set up a new dedicated bus stop
- in Newcastle, **Go North East** has launched a network of vaccination shuttle buses for the North East Nightingale Hospital and is set to launch a vaccination bus in the coming weeks
- **Arriva** will be operating 2 free shuttle services, in partnership with Shropshire Council, to the new NHS Vaccination Centre at Sports Village in Sundorne Road, Shrewsbury
- **Arriva's** Derby's Pride Park and Ride's Saturday timetable will be increased to run every 30 minutes throughout the day, from 7.30am to 6.00pm, to provide a service for the public attending the NHS vaccination centre at Pride Park
- the **Oxford Bus Company** and **Stagecoach* have amended services to provide links to the new mass COVID-19 vaccination centre at the Kassam Stadium, Oxford
- Harrogate's leading bus operator, **the Harrogate Bus Company**, is to provide a free bus service to make travel easier for COVID-19 jab appointments at the town's vaccination centre
- **LNER** has made more than 370 free car parking spaces available for people attending the NHS COVID-19 vaccine clinic at Newcastle's Life Science Centre
- *local and national firms* have offered free travel to vaccination centres including in Burnley, Shrewsbury, while **Uber** is offering free rides so people can get their jab right across the country

[Groundbreaking COVID-19 treatments to be fast-tracked through clinical trials](#)

Press release

The world's most innovative treatments for COVID-19 will soon be fast-tracked through the UK's clinical trial system, as the government announces funding for the most promising treatments.



- Government awards multi-million-pound funding to phase 1 clinical trial platform to fast-track innovative treatments
- NHS patients could receive cutting-edge COVID-19 treatments in months rather than years
- Move will bring in the world's best researchers to trial treatments in the UK

The move marks a landmark development in COVID-19 research that could see results for brand new treatments in months rather than years, and will enable the government to get even more safe and effective treatments to the NHS rapidly through a more streamlined process.

Currently, the government funds phase 2 and 3 trials, such as the RECOVERY trial, which brought life-saving treatments dexamethasone and tocilizumab to the NHS. Phase 1 trials, usually arranged by the researchers, are the earliest stage of human trials that ensure treatments are safe and show a signal of benefit in treating a disease.

The funding has been awarded to expand the AGILE clinical trial platform and will allow for global innovators to progress cutting-edge treatments for COVID-19 through all 3 clinical trial phases in the UK, further protecting our supply chain. This in turn will attract the brightest of researchers and manufacturers from around the world to trial their medicines here in Britain.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Today's news will ensure all phases of clinical trials for new treatments are done in the UK, protecting our supply chain and securing the world's best treatments for NHS patients at a much faster rate.

I am immensely proud of the work that's been undertaken by the brilliant scientists behind these treatments and the thousands of UK patients who have taken part in the trials.

Together, we can continue to ensure the UK is one of the best countries in the world for trialling and deploying the most

groundbreaking medical advancements for both COVID-19 and for dangerous diseases in the future.

The funding has been awarded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and co-funded through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR).

A phase 1 trial is the earliest stage of human trials and is an essential first step that ensures treatments are safe. Once they pass phase 1, they then go into larger-scale phase 2 and 3 trials, such as RECOVERY or PRINCIPLE, before being made available on the NHS once proven to be effective.

The UK has proven throughout this pandemic to be a world leader in medical research and life sciences, stepping up quickly to the task of finding effective therapeutics for a completely new virus and supported by millions in funding by the UK government.

- [AGILE](#) is a UK phase 1 and 2a clinical trial platform designed for rapid clinical evaluation of potential COVID-19 treatments
- It is a collaboration between the University of Liverpool, the University of Southampton Research Unit, and other external partners
- The innovative design of the trial means that multiple potential treatments can be evaluated in parallel and important testing stages can be completed in months rather than years, while maintaining a high level of safety at all times
- Patients in early stages of COVID-19 infection will be recruited to AGILE from the community, in addition to patients who have been hospitalised with COVID-19
- Treatments that show a signal of benefit in AGILE will be rapidly considered for advancement into later phase clinical trial platforms, such as PRINCIPLE and RECOVERY, where the effectiveness of treatments can be proven in greater patient numbers
- The Therapeutics Taskforce will work with innovators to support them to progress their promising treatments through clinical trial phases
- 4 treatments have so far been selected for AGILE:
 - EIDD-2801 (Molnupiravir), an antiviral
 - VIR-7831 and VIR-7832, both monoclonal antibodies
 - Niclosamide, an anthelmintic
- Future treatments to enter AGILE will be selected by the UK COVID-19 Therapeutics Advisory Panel (UK-CTAP), who lead the process of reviewing

and evaluating proposals for treatments to enter UK national trial platforms – [read more about UK-CTAP and how drug proposals can be made](#)

- The UK was the first in the world to find a treatment which was proven to significantly reduce the risk of death: dexamethasone, found through the government-funded RECOVERY trial
- On Thursday 11 February, RECOVERY also found the drug tocilizumab, when administered to hospitalised patients on oxygen with dexamethasone, further reduces the risk of death by 14% and length of hospital stay for patients by 5 whole days, on top of the benefits of dexamethasone – which will mean once rolled out to patients will significantly reduce pressures on the NHS
- REMAP-CAP, which also received government funding, last month published results showing tocilizumab reduced the length of time in hospital by 10 days when administered to patients with 24 hours of being admitted to intensive care

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[Business Secretary urges Surrey residents to come forward for vaccine after virtual visit](#)

Press release

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng has paid tribute to clinicians and volunteers during a virtual visit to a vaccination hub in Surrey, after which he urged anyone who is eligible to come forward for their jabs.



Speaking to local NHS leads at The Hythe Centre in Egham, the Secretary of State heard how the vaccine rollout has been going in Surrey, as well as from volunteers at the centre who have been tirelessly supporting the vaccination effort.

After his visit, the Business Secretary said:

I am bowled over by the hard work and dedication of those I spoke to at the Hythe Centre today. It is thanks to their efforts that our vaccination programme has been going at such pace and that so many people have come forward for their vaccines.

To those who have been invited but haven't yet come forward, please do so as soon as you can. Each vaccine given is another step closer to normality for the whole country, and there are incredibly dedicated teams across Surrey waiting to help.

Since the vaccination effort began more than 50,000 people have received a jab in North West Surrey across four different sites, including The Hythe Centre, as well as 55 care homes.

200 staff and 370 volunteers have contributed to the effort, taking part in a range of activities from developing a video about what people can expect when they come for their vaccine to helping with more practical issues such as sourcing microwaves and fridges.

Dr Caroline Baker, CEO of NICS, the GP federation leading the roll out of vaccinations in the area, said:

Our teams have been working tirelessly and we're so proud to have offered the vaccine to nearly all our over 70-year-old and shielding patients.

The community spirit here has been phenomenal. From our dedicated clinical teams and support staff, to our army of volunteers and enthusiastic local council and voluntary sector colleagues – everyone has played a part in making the local programme a huge success.

Published 13 February 2021

New vaccine uptake plan published

- Ministers and NHS launch plan to help boost vaccine uptake in all communities
- Plan based on local initiatives already in place that are successfully boosting uptake
- Plan sets out best practice and will help vaccinators and local leaders to engage with communities
- Comes ahead of 15 February target date to give all top 4 priority groups their first jabs

Published today (Saturday 13 February), the [COVID-19 vaccination uptake plan](#) sets out how the government and NHS England are partnering with directors of public health, charities and the faith sector to increase vaccine take up and ensure equal access.

Evidence from the roll-out so far has shown the vital role of health and social care staff and community leaders who are providing advice and information to their local communities.

Data published today shows comparable vaccine programmes achieved a 75% uptake rate, but so far, the COVID-19 vaccination programme has exceeded expectations, seeing 93% uptake in those over 75 years of age. Our aim remains to achieve the highest possible uptake in all other groups.

Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

We have seen an incredible response so far from the public to the vaccination programme and are on track to offer everyone in the top priority groups a jab by 15 February.

We recognise that some groups feel more hesitant about getting a jab, or have more barriers, both physical and mental, preventing them from accessing one when it's offered.

Each shot in the arm brings us closer to beating this terrible virus. That's why we are setting out our plan to make sure everyone is protected equally, by working hand in hand with those who know their communities best to make sure as many people as possible take up the offer of a lifesaving vaccination.

The plan highlights work being done at a local and national level to make sure specific groups, including those with mental illness or without a fixed address, can access the information and advice they need to make a decision on taking up the vaccination.

Building on work already underway to reach more hesitant audiences, which includes translating vaccine resources in over 13 languages, the plan aims to raise awareness of how the NHS is making vaccination accessible to all,

especially ethnic minorities, homeless people, asylum seekers and those with disabilities.

Community leaders are being urged to make clear that an NHS number is not needed to get a jab and that there are a large number of vaccination sites spread right across the country that people can go to. Over 98% of the UK population now lives within 10 miles of a vaccination site.

The uptake plan sets out best-in-class real-world examples of community-led engagement to improve vaccine uptake that other local areas could replicate to drive uptake in their areas. This includes:

- the GP Federation Alliance for Better Care have launched a mobile vaccination service in Crawley, staffed by members of the community, to reach those who are housebound or less physically mobile
- the OneSlough Partnership has trained vaccine community champions and produced social media resources to dispel vaccine myths and boost vaccine uptake within their communities
- Bradford Council and the Race Equality Network have built on established groups and events such virtual women's exercise classes and befriender services as a forum to ask questions and share information about vaccination
- NHS England and NHS Improvement have produced short films to provide accessible information for people with a learning disability including autism, about what a vaccine is, how it's made and how to decide whether to get vaccinated
- a branch manager at MiHomecare, a domiciliary care provider in North London, noticed her staff were initially hesitant to take the vaccine, so she shared a video of herself getting a vaccine on her workplace social media and WhatsApp group. This led to a noticeable increase in staff vaccine uptake

Local initiatives are also being bolstered by national support programmes. The Community Champions scheme that recently received a £23 million boost is helping 60 local councils to fund local engagement with groups including older people, those with disabilities and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

NHS England and PHE have been working with Rethink Mental Illness to produce communications materials which aim to overcome barriers and address common causes of concern faced by people living with severe mental illnesses or learning disabilities and autism.

A new Vaccination Equalities Committee, led by NHS England and NHS Improvement, is bringing also together government departments with national representatives from the Association of Directors of Public Health, local authorities, Fire and Police services and third sector organisations to advise and guide the vaccine deployment programme on addressing inequalities.

The plan published today builds on the [UK COVID-19 vaccines delivery plan](#), published on 11 January, which provided details about vaccine investment and supply, as well as the operation of vaccination sites across the country.

Equalities Minister Kemi Badenoch said:

COVID-19 affects everyone, whatever their background. Life-saving vaccines need the trust and confidence of every community to protect us all from the virus. That is why the government is working with local figures, faith leaders, and doctors to combat misinformation and encourage everyone to get vaccinated.

Two months since the start of the vaccination roll-out, over 13 million people across the UK have already taken up the offer of a vaccine. Jabs are now being administered at 267 hospitals, 1,034 local vaccination sites, 90 vaccination centres and 194 community pharmacies. The NHS is on track to offer a first dose to the top 4 priority groups by 15 February – care home residents and staff, frontline health and social care workers, all those aged 70 or over and the clinically extremely vulnerable.

NHS top trauma surgeon and volunteer vaccinator Dr Martin Griffiths said:

Thanks to the fantastic efforts of hard-working NHS staff and volunteers, the largest vaccination programme in the health service's history has now jabbed four in five people aged 70 and over – but it's not too late to come forward.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic people are disproportionately affected by COVID so it's really important they get the vaccine. I've had it myself but understand that each person has their own specific reasons why they are hesitant and I want to ensure every person I see understands the vaccine is safe and effective as this will help us all get back to as normal a life as possible.

- [ONS coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest insights](#)
- the [COVID-19 vaccine uptake plan is published on GOV.UK](#), and includes full details of all case studies
- [latest NHS data on COVID-19 vaccinations](#)
- of the 10,523,774 first doses administered up to 7 February, 8,161,314 (78%) were white British or white Irish, and 875,344 (8.3%) were from ethnic minority backgrounds, including 4.7% Asian (excluding Chinese) and 1.6% black
- to arrange interviews with the case studies, please [contact the DHSC press office](#)