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[Targeted testing to be offered to children in north east London, Kent and Essex](#)

- Government announces a targeted testing drive for secondary school and college students in parts of north east London, Essex and Kent
- Aims to combat a rapid increase in cases among this age group by identifying asymptomatic cases and helping to break chains of transmission
- Mobile testing units will be deployed and home tests kits will be distributed and staff, students and their families will be urged to get tested this weekend

Cases in London, Essex and Kent have been rising rapidly, with the fastest rates in those aged under 11 to 18 years old.

From today all staff, students and their families in certain schools and colleges will be urged to get tested. Latest figures from the ONS showed almost 1 in 3 people in England show no symptoms of having the virus but are still able to pass it on. Large-scale rapid testing helps identify these asymptomatic cases, driving down infection rates and helping break chains of transmission.

Schools and colleges will be provided with information on how to get involved, and parents or carers will be able to apply for tests using the online testing portal. Children under 16 attending a mobile testing unit (MTU) need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The surge testing capacity will be deployed to help identify as many positive cases as possible, especially those who may be asymptomatic and unwittingly transmitting the virus.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We want to keep schools and colleges open, because it is right both for education and public health, but in the face of rapidly rising cases we must act to target rising rates in secondary school pupils.

From our successes in Liverpool and Leicester we know surge testing is safe, and helps us quickly assess where the virus is spreading most and take action to stop it in its tracks.

I urge every student, parent and teacher in these areas to step forward for testing, irrespective of whether they have symptoms. While COVID-19 may be lower risk to children and young people, it still poses a significant risk to their families and communities. By taking these vital steps, we can get on top of cases and help bring transmission of this virus under control now.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This additional testing capacity underlines this government's commitment to ensuring that education is a national priority, because that is in the best interests of students' progress, development and wellbeing.

I would encourage everyone eligible to access the testing and I'd like to thank staff for continuing to ensure that schools and colleges have protective measures in place to reduce the risk of transmission.

Any student, staff or family members who test positive will have to isolate for the required period, and NHS Test and Trace will work closely with Local Authorities to take appropriate measures to support contacts within schools, and carry out necessary contact tracing.

The additional capacity comes thanks to the historic expansion of testing capacity by NHS Test and Trace, which is now able to process nearly 600,000 PCR tests every day and deploy new rapid lateral flow tests.

Children under 12 must be accompanied by a guardian and the test has to be administered by that guardian.

Children 12 to 17 must be accompanied by a guardian and can administer the test themselves.

Children under 12 do not need to wear a face mask.

In London

An additional 44,000 home test kits will be made available for school staff including teachers to test before returning in January.

Additional MTUs will be deployed in or near schools for staff, students and their families to be tested, providing tests over and above existing test sites in the capital.

London boroughs receiving additional testing are:

- Barking and Dagenham
- Hackney and the City
- Havering
- Newham
- Redbridge
- Tower Hamlets
- Waltham Forest

In Essex

An additional 10 MTUs will be deployed tomorrow and over the weekend.

Essex boroughs receiving additional testing are:

- Southend
- Basildon
- Basildon
- Canvey Island
- Harlow
- Brentwood
- Harlow
- Southend

In Kent

An additional 2 MTUs will be deployed tomorrow, with a further 10 MTUs arriving at the weekend.

[Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce meeting, 10 December 2020](#)

News story

Joint statement on progress made by the taskforce at its meeting on 10 December 2020.



The ninth meeting of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was held yesterday, 10 December 2020.

It was chaired by Transport Minister, Baroness Vere. Attendees included the Project Director Dana Skelley plus representatives from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the Greater London Authority, Transport for London (TfL), and the Port of London Authority.

Dana Skelley, speaking on behalf of the Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce, said:

The taskforce acknowledged the publication yesterday of DfT-commissioned [reports by consultants AECOM and Prof. Norman Fleck](#) which provide reviews of the condition of the bridge's pedestals and of the recent modelling and analysis of the bridge by other engineering consultants.

Taskforce members agreed to meet again next week to discuss the reports' contents and implications.

Taskforce members were updated on the first of a series of collaborative meetings with TfL to explore the current full works programme and cost schedules in detail and to consider alternative procurement approaches, shift patterns and de-risking the programme with advanced investigation work.

The taskforce was also pleased to hear from TfL that procurement for the temporary ferry service was proceeding on schedule.

The taskforce also agreed to continue discussions on funding and the temporary road bridge proposal from Foster and Partners at its meeting next week.

The Hammersmith Bridge Taskforce was set up by the Department for Transport in September 2020 to work towards safely reopening the Hammersmith Bridge. The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Vere and includes representatives from TfL, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, London Borough of Richmond

upon Thames, Network Rail, the Greater London Authority and the Port of London Authority.

Published 11 December 2020

[The Secretary of State has appointed Lucinda Orr as a Member of the Treasure Valuation Committee.](#)

News story

Lucinda Orr has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as a Member of the Treasure Valuation Committee for five years from 21 October 2020 to 20 October 2025.



Lucinda Orr is a practising barrister, called to the Bar of England and Wales (2006), and a Partner in the disputes specialist law firm, Enyo Law LLP, based in the City of London, where she specialises in international commercial litigation and civil fraud. She has previously chaired the Bar Association for Commerce, Finance and Industry (2012-2015) and the Employed Barristers' Committee for England and Wales (2017-2019), and currently sits on the General Management Committees of her Inn of Court (2018 – to present) and the Bar Council (2012 – to present).

In addition to her legal qualifications, she holds M.A. (2003) and M.St. (2004) degrees in History from Oxford University, where she was President of the Oxford University Numismatic Society, the History Society and the Young Friends of the Ashmolean Museum. She has archaeological experience from excavations at the Roman site, Tripontium, in the late 1990s, and cataloguing the coin finds.

Having been a keen collector of coins for over 30 years, she is a Fellow of

The Royal Numismatic Society, and has longstanding membership of the British Numismatic Society and the London Coin Club. She also studies and collects antique jewellery and is a member of the Society of Jewellery Historians.

This role is not remunerated. This appointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#), the process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Ms Orr has not declared any activity.

Published 11 December 2020

[International Human Rights Day: UK statement](#)

Thank you Mr Chair.

The UK supports the statement just delivered by the EU. They have correctly underlined the importance of the OSCE and its autonomous institutions in strengthening and promoting human rights across the OSCE region.

This year has seen the COVID-19 pandemic magnifying and exacerbating some of the world's greatest challenges, including to human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. To that end, Mr Chair, we have seen disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable in our societies.

The pandemic underscored the need for international leadership on human rights, and a strong defence of the rules-based international system.

The UK was therefore pleased to join 46 other participating States at last week's Ministerial Council in a joint statement on human rights and fundamental freedoms. Our statement recognised, 30 years after the Copenhagen Document, our joint commitment to democracy based on the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Thirty years on from the Copenhagen Document, the UK remains committed to being a force for good in the world, with human rights, democracy and the international rule of law acting as our guiding lights. In the last year, we have worked alongside partners in a variety of initiatives to foster more resilient, more just, and ultimately, more open societies.

Alongside the Canadian government, we have launched the Media Freedom Coalition, a partnership of countries to promote media freedom globally.

Working with UNESCO, we have helped establish the Global Media Freedom Defence Fund, to support the provision of legal advice to journalists and foster media protection around the world. Within the OSCE region, we remain keen supporters of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and look forward to working with Maria Teresa Ribeiro as she starts her term as RFoM.

In November, we launched the [Declaration of Humanity](#) by faith and belief leaders. The Declaration calls for an end to sexual violence in conflict, and it denounces the stigma faced by survivors and children born of rape. Crucially, it commits leaders of faith and belief groups to do all in their power to prevent sexual violence in conflict and to support victims.

We also continue to defend Freedom of Religion or Belief, accepting all the recommendations of the report by the Bishop of Truro into the UK Government's work to defend persecuted Christians, which emphasised the importance of freedom of religion or belief for all.

Finally, the United Kingdom, of course, remains a strong supporter of ODIHR in its work to support participating States in implementing their OSCE human dimension commitments. We have seen the vital role that ODIHR plays in standard setting across the OSCE region, in its on-the-ground fieldwork, for example in election monitoring and ensuring freedom of expression. We welcome the appointment last week of Matteo Mecacci as Director of ODIHR, and look forward to working with him and his team in the years ahead.

Mr Chair,

In 2021 and beyond, the UK is committed to continue to work alongside our international partners as a force for good: bilaterally and multilaterally, including at the UN, the Council of Europe and – of course – in the OSCE.

Thank you.