

## **Targeted local enhanced testing and vaccine acceleration to take place in areas in Hillingdon to suppress spread of COVID-19 variants of concern**

Hillingdon Council is working with Public Health England (PHE) to carry out enhanced COVID-19 testing and accelerated vaccination in pockets of the borough where cases of the variant first discovered in India have been found.

Extensive tracking of the virus has identified at least two cases of the variant in six areas in Hillingdon (Harlington, West Drayton, Yiewsley, Uxbridge, South Ruislip and Charville).

Some of these can be tracked back to international travel, while some cannot. Those infected have been advised to self-isolate in line with government guidance and their contacts are being identified.

Working in partnership with PHE and NHS Test and Trace, between Monday 24 May and Sunday 6 June every person aged over 16 living and working in targeted areas within the UB3, UB4, UB7, UB8 and UB10 postcodes is being asked to take a PCR COVID-19 test, whether they are showing symptoms or not. Even those who have been vaccinated are being encouraged to take a test.

Enhanced testing is already taking place in the South Ruislip (HA4) area following the discovery of a single case of the variant first discovered in South Africa, with testing due to end on Sunday 23 May. More than 5,000 people in the area have so far been tested and enhanced testing will not be extended.

People with symptoms should book a test in the usual way by visiting [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or calling 119.

Hillingdon Council will be offering PCR testing for people without symptoms living or working in the targeted areas. This testing will be available daily at:

- Beck Theatre, Grange Road, Hayes, UB3 2UE
- Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW
- Harlington Young People's Centre, Pinkwell Lane, Hayes, UB3 1PB
- Sipson Community Centre, Sipson Way, Sipson, UB7 0DW

People are asked to visit their nearest centre and book an appointment in advance at [www.hillingdon.gov.uk/enhanced-testing](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/enhanced-testing).

PCR testing is also available daily for those without symptoms at Topping Lane Car Park at Brunel University, Uxbridge, UB8 2TF; at Heathrow Airport Car Park E2, Eastern Perimeter Road, TW6 2SQ; and every two to three days at the Mobile Testing Unit at Central Avenue Car Park, Hayes. To book visit [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test](http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test) or call 119.

Anyone who is unable to attend a testing site is asked to contact the council's Community Hub (details below) for a home visit to be arranged.

There is currently no evidence to suggest this variant is more serious than others, or that the regulated vaccines would not protect against it.

This testing will, in combination with measures such as hands, face, space and fresh air, and following national guidance, help to suppress and control the spread of the virus, while enabling a better understanding of variants of concern.

All positive test results in the targeted areas will be genome sequenced to identify any further spread of variants of concern.

If someone tests positive, they must self-isolate immediately for 10 days and pass on details of their contacts to NHS Test and Trace.

Hillingdon Council's COVID-19 Community Hub will be contacting those who test positive to offer a range of support. For more information on this service and the other support available, visit [www.hillingdon.gov.uk/community-support](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/community-support) or call 020 3949 5786 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For more information about the enhanced testing (including maps of each area), visit [www.hillingdon.gov.uk/enhanced-testing](http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/enhanced-testing).

In addition, the NHS is encouraging residents to come forward for their vaccination as soon as they are eligible. The vaccine is safe and effective and remains the best way to protect against the virus.

Cllr Ian Edwards, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: "While rates of COVID-19 in London are much lower than we saw earlier this year, enhanced testing is taking place as a precautionary measure in these areas, which have seen at least two cases of the variant first discovered in India. This testing will help us to understand the extent of the variant in the community and enable us to support those required to self-isolate.

"By also encouraging people to get vaccinated it will allow us to ensure the maximum number of residents are protected.

"I ask those living and working in the targeted areas to get tested, and vaccinated, if eligible, as soon as possible.

"Once again, I would like to thank residents across the borough for remaining vigilant and following the government guidelines in order to keep everyone safe."

Professor Kevin Fenton, London Regional Director for Public Health England, said: "Following close monitoring of cases across London of the variant of concern first identified in India, we have decided to take early preventative action in five North West London boroughs. Surge testing was announced for Hounslow earlier this week and we are now also mobilising surge testing in targeted settings and areas in Brent, Ealing, Harrow and Hillingdon.

"Rates of COVID-19 in London remain low overall but variant cases are present in many parts of the city. As such, we are continuously assessing situations on a local, sub-regional and city-wide level so we can act early and decisively to prevent cases from spreading.

"If you are asked to come forward for a PCR test as part of the effort in these areas, please get tested, even if you don't have symptoms. If your test is positive, self-isolate immediately and engage with contact tracers to help stop the spread of variants in the local community.

"If everyone plays their part by continuing to follow the public health advice in their local area, and getting vaccinated when invited, we can break chains of transmission and keep all of London safe."