

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – Wednesday 16th June 2021

- **Section at end for those Q&A that can be briefed to Reigate and Banstead contact centre staff but not published.**

How many cases of the Delta variant (VOC-21APR-02) are there in the UK?

PHE publishes data on variants weekly. For more information visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/confirmed-cases-of-covid-19-variants-identified-in-uk>

How many cases of the variant are there in Reigate and Banstead?

Latest figures are published in the weekly surveillance report -

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/emergency-planning-and-community-safety/coronavirus/local-outbreak-plan/figures-and-statistics/full-report>

The report gives the number of variants detected with the 'S' gene. **The presence of an 'S' gene positive result is indicative of a variant of concern** (excluding Alpha (VOC-20DEC-01)), currently most likely to be variant Delta (VOC-21APR-02).

Why are you surge testing?

Introducing surge testing is a public health decision based on a range of factors including the presence of a particular variant in an area, the likelihood of onward transmission, and features of the area in question. Latest data suggests increased community transmission in some areas of Reigate and Banstead Borough, the majority of which are attributed to the Delta variant, which is why we are now introducing wider surge testing.

Where is the testing happening?

Testing will be taking place for anyone living or working in two areas of Reigate and Banstead:

- Area one is focused around Banstead, Walton-on-the-hill and Tattenham corner
- Area two is Reigate town centre

For an interactive map of the area please visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/surgetesting

How do I get tested?

There will be four mobile testing units (MTUs) in the affected areas:

- The Mound Car Park, Royal Drive, KT18 5PR
- Tadworth Leisure Centre- Preston Manor Rd, Tadworth KT20 5FB
- Banstead High Street Car Park- 58-60 High St, Banstead SM7 2LX
- Reigate & Banstead Town Hall Castlefield Rd, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0SH

Opening hours:

10am – 8pm weekdays

8am – 6pm Saturday and Sunday

Please note: From Thursday 24th June opening hours will revert to 9am-5pm

Please note that we anticipate before 9.30, lunchtime and after 5pm to be the busiest times. If you are able to come outside these times please do so.

Is there an age limit?

No, anyone who lives, works or studies in the affected areas can get tested. Children under the age of 16 will need a parent or carer present to help with the test.

Should I still get a test if I have had the vaccine?

Testing should continue even for those who have been vaccinated. Clinical trial evidence demonstrates that the vaccine reduces clinically severe infection and severe disease. The impact of the vaccine on preventing transmission remains under review and individuals who have been vaccinated may still carry and be able to transmit the virus.

We need testing of vaccinated people to continue in order to detect infections with new variants.

What should I do if I need help taking the test?

MTU staff will be on hand to explain and demonstrate but will not be able to provide physical assistance with the actual swabbing.

What if I have been in one of the affected areas recently?

Everyone should continue to follow the national guidance and book a PCR test by calling 119, visiting .NHS.UK or through the NHS Covid-19 app if they develop symptoms.

Has the guidance changed in these areas?

No. The same national restrictions continue to apply in these areas. Find out more about the restrictions at: (COVID-19) Coronavirus restrictions: what you can and cannot do - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

We are in a nearby area, can we get tested?

Anyone in the local area who is concerned of course can get a test.

I'm an employer in one of the areas, should I keep my workforce home?

In line with national restrictions, people should continue to work from home where they can and remember 'hands, face, space and fresh air'.

What is a PCR test?

Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests check for the genetic material (RNA) of the virus in the sample. The sample is tested in a laboratory.

Will standard PCR tests identify this variant?

Yes. PCR testing enables positive samples with a high enough viral load to be sent for genomic sequencing which can identify variants of concern.

Why are you not doing door to door testing?

We target testing in areas where there is likely to have been transmission. Door to door testing might not therefore always be the most effective method for testing. Testing is taking place in a large area in Reigate and Banstead Borough, so mobile testing units are the most effective way of reaching larger numbers of people.

Is the Delta variant more transmissible?

Evidence shows that the Delta variant is likely to be more transmissible than the dominant Alpha variant. Cases of the Delta variant have continued to grow faster than the Alpha variant but an increase in overall cases of COVID-19 has only been seen in a small number of areas. Public Health England experts are monitoring the situation closely to establish how much more transmissible the Delta variant may be. It is crucial that everybody, particularly in the most affected areas, take particular care to remain responsible and vigilant.

Is the variant more severe than others?

There is insufficient information available on the severity of this variant at this time and we are closely monitoring the situation. Early data demonstrates an increased risk of hospitalisation with Delta compared to Alpha. Hospitalisations are starting to rise nationally.

Should I be worried?

It is right that we should be cautious about new variants, we appreciate that people may be anxious in the current climate. The UK has a world leading genomic sequencing capability. We are constantly on the lookout for any new variants, our ability to identify any early will allow us to deploy public health interventions to keep people safe.

Viruses evolve into new variants as part of their normal life cycle, this is not unusual. We are carrying out work as a priority to understand the potential risk this variant may cause. It is important to say that there is currently no evidence that this variant causes more severe illness.

The best way to stop infection is to stick to the rules – wash our hands, wear a face covering and keep our distance from others.

Should I take part in surge testing if I tested positive (Lateral Flow or PCR) for COVID-19 recently?

The national guidance is not to re-test as part of the surge testing if you have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days, unless you develop symptoms. This is because the PCR test is very sensitive and can pick up old infection beyond the infectious period. However, if you wish to participate in surge testing and have a further positive result you will need to follow the advice given by Test and Trace, and it is likely you will need to isolate again.

If you are having regular lateral flow (rapid) tests for work, should I take part in local surge testing?

Yes. If you do not have symptoms and live or work in one of the eligible postcode areas you are strongly advised to take part. The localised testing programme allows public health

agencies to carry out an important process called genomic sequencing which helps to monitor and understand the evolution of new COVID-19 variants and respond accordingly.

How will I receive my results?

You'll usually get a text or email with your result when it's ready. Most people get their result the next day, but it may take up to 3 days. Please don't call your GP as they will not have access to these results.

What should I do if I develop symptoms after the test?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 (a high temperature, a new and persistent cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste), however mild, you should self-isolate for at least 10 days from when your symptoms started.

You should also get a test straight away through the NHS Test and Trace Service by calling 119 or visiting www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test

Once you have received your test result, you should follow the guidance on test results.

I am an essential worker, can I go to work whilst awaiting my results?

Yes. However, if you develop symptoms you must self-isolate.

What can I do to prevent further spread?

The best way to prevent the spread of the virus is the same no matter which variant. Follow the government guidance <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> , test twice a week, book your vaccine when it is your turn, and make sure you get your second dose.

Does the COVID vaccine protect against this variant?

A recent Public Health England study showed that 2 doses of vaccine offer high levels of protection against symptomatic disease from the Delta variant. We expect the vaccines to be even more effective at preventing hospitalisation and death, so it is vital to get both doses to gain maximum protection against all existing and emerging variants.

If you are working out in the community...

Do I need to take any extra precautions?

No. Continue to adopt the same level of precautions (hands, face, space, fresh air) that you do now. We will keep the situation under review and will keep you informed of any changes.

Do current PPE protocols remain the same?

Yes, there are no changes at this time to PPE protocols and staff should continue to use the same level of PPE as they would usually use, as set out in national guidance.

Do I need to wear PPE / extra PPE/ different PPE?

If you usually wear PPE for your work you should continue to wear the same levels of PPE as you do now. We will keep the situation under review and will keep you informed of any changes.

Is there anything I need to do differently?/ stop doing?

You should continue to follow the national lockdown rules, hands, face, space and travel only when it is essential.

Should I stop visiting patients/ clients in that area?

Continue to undertake home visits as you do now and adopt the same precautions and wear the same level of PPE. We will keep the situation under review and will keep you informed of any changes.

What happens if a patient I am visiting/had contact with tests positive to the Delta variant?

Regardless of variant, if you are a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case you should be contacted by NHS Test and Trace who will advise you on isolating for 10 days from the date you were last in contact with the positive case.

Do I need to be tested/have regular tests if I have been in contact with people who live in this area?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 you should isolate for 10 days and book a test as soon as possible. If you are a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case you should be contacted by NHS Test and Trace and should isolate for 10 days from the date you were last in contact with the positive case. You should access regular symptom-free testing. To find out how visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/coronavirustesting