

Surge testing to be deployed in Bolton

Press release

Additional surge testing and genomic sequencing deployed in Bolton where a small number of confirmed cases of variants of concern have been identified.



Working in partnership with Bolton Council, NHS Test and Trace is providing additional testing and genomic sequencing in targeted areas within the BL3 postcodes in Bolton. It comes as a small number of cases of the variant first identified in South Africa (B.1.351) and a cluster of cases of the variant first identified in India (B.1.617.2) have been identified.

This follows the classification of the variant first identified in India as a variant of concern by Public Health England, and a public health assessment showing a rise in transmission in parts of Bolton. Confirmed cases have been asked to self-isolate and their contacts have been identified.

Everybody who resides or works in these postcodes 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. In these instances, contact tracers will look back over an extended period in order to determine the route of transmission.

By using PCR testing, positive results can be sent for genomic sequencing at specialist laboratories, helping us to identify variant of concern cases and their spread.

People with symptoms should book a free test online or by phone so they can get tested at a testing site or have a testing kit sent to them at home. Those without symptoms should visit the [local authority website](#) for more information.

People in this area should also continue using [twice-weekly rapid testing](#) alongside the PCR test as part of surge testing.

PHE health protection teams are working with local authorities, Directors of Public Health (DsPH) and NHS Test and Trace to detect cases and limit onward

spread.

[More information about the reclassification of the B.1.617.2 variant](#)

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Two-thirds of UK adults receive first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine

- Two-thirds of UK adults – 35 million – have been vaccinated with a first dose of a COVID-19 jab
- More than 16.7 million people in the UK vaccinated with a second dose of a COVID-19 jab
- Public urged to get the jab when their time comes and do their bit to send the virus into retreat

Two-thirds of UK adults have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Health services across the UK have now administered a total of 51.8 million vaccines between 8 December and 7 May, including 35 million people with their first dose (66.6%) and 16.7 million with their second (31.8%).

The government met its target of vaccinating the most vulnerable by 15 April, and remains on track to offer a first dose to all adults by the end of July.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This has been a truly national effort, with NHS and care staff and volunteers coming together across the UK to deliver the vaccine at an incredible pace, saving thousands of lives.

One jab at a time, the approved vaccines are helping to send this virus into retreat, with coronavirus cases and deaths now at their lowest levels since the start of the pandemic. I strongly encourage everyone to take up the offer when it comes so we can put this pandemic behind us.

Data from Public Health England's real-world study shows the vaccines are already having a significant impact in the UK, reducing hospitalisations and deaths, saving more than 10,000 lives in England by the end of March.

The latest vaccine effectiveness data from PHE show that in those aged over 70, both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines reduce the risk

of getting symptomatic disease by around 60% after a single dose.

This protection lasts for several weeks. In those aged over 80, protection against hospitalisation is around 80% and the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is 85% effective at stopping people aged over 80 dying from COVID-19.

Data from the ONS and Oxford University shows that COVID-19 infections fell significantly, by 65% after the first dose of the Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, rising further after the second dose.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Two thirds of the adult population have now been vaccinated with one dose in the UK – an incredible achievement.

It is now more important than ever to come forward for the second dose, so we can ensure everyone has the absolute strongest possible protection from this dreadful virus.

I encourage everyone to book their jab as soon as they're offered it, and to come back for their second dose. It's never too late to come forward if you are eligible.

An extra 60 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine have been secured by the UK government to help support preparations for the booster COVID-19 vaccination programme from the autumn if clinically needed.

All vaccines being used in the UK have met the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

Rolling reviews are underway by the MHRA to assess the Janssen and Novavax vaccines.

Approved vaccines are available from thousands of NHS vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.

- The latest UK-wide vaccination statistics are published [here](#) and NHS England publishes vaccine statistics for England [here](#).
- PHE's real-world data on the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines is available [here](#). Their latest study on household transmission can be found [here](#).
- The ONS survey on 'Barriers to COVID-19 vaccination' can be found [here](#).
- To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine to enable a rapid roll out.
- The UK has secured early access to 517 million doses of eight of the most promising vaccine candidates. This includes agreements with:

- BioNTech/Pfizer for 100 million doses
 - Valneva for 100 million doses
 - Oxford/AstraZeneca who will work to supply 100 million doses of the vaccine being developed by Oxford University
 - GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur to buy 60 million doses
 - Novavax for 60 million doses
 - Janssen for 30 million doses of their not-for-profit vaccine, alongside funding of their Phase 3 clinical trial
 - Moderna for 17 million doses
 - CureVac for 50 million doses
 - The UK government is committed to supporting equitable access to vaccines worldwide. The UK is the largest donor to the COVAX facility, the global mechanism to help developing countries access a coronavirus vaccine, and has committed £548 million in UK aid to help distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to 92 developing countries this year.
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Christopher Martin reappointed as a Member of the Treasure Valuation Committee

News story

The Secretary of State has reappointed Christopher Martin as a Member of the Treasure Valuation Committee for a term of five years from 7 February 2021.



An early interest in the Ancient and Medieval World led Chris Martin into the world of numismatics and archaeology, entering the world of collecting at a very young age. Funding his own collection through trading in ancient coins, he founded the company C J Martin (Coins) Ltd in 1971 and has been dealing in the antiquities and numismatic business ever since. He has bought, sold and studied enormous numbers of coins and antiquities enabling him to lead at the forefront of the industry and have a wide knowledge of the market. Currently

serving on the Treasure Valuation Committee, as Vice Chairman of the Antiquities Dealers Association (ADA) and Chairman of the British Numismatic Trade Association (BNTA).

His brand “Ancient Art” previously collaborated with Fortnum and Mason, the world renowned luxury department store in Piccadilly, for many years and organized over 15 exhibitions based on the Ancient World. From his businesses and passions, he has helped tens of thousands of people to realise the possibility of owning a piece of the past. He has been proud to nurture many of these first time buyers to become the collectors of the future.

This role is not remunerated. This reappointment 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 including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Christopher has not declared any political activity.

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Heather Blackman, Bronwyn Hill and Wesley Kerr reappointed as Trustees of The Royal Parks

Heather Blackman

Heather is an experienced Chief Executive Officer within the retail sector, latterly at the lifestyle clothing, purpose-led brand Finisterre. She has worked in retail at board level for 15 years across a number of premium brands including Hotel Chocolat, Laura Ashley & Fat Face.

She started her career in Buying and Merchandising, then moved into multi-channel retailing, specialising in change management and growth stages of organisations. She brings vast experience of brand, strategy and commercial planning centred around the customer to The Royal Parks. Heather serves on The Royal Parks’ Audit & Risk Committee and is Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

Wesley Kerr

Wesley Kerr is a broadcaster, journalist, historian and horticulturist. He holds an MA from Trinity College, Cambridge. He served on the advisory board

of the Royal Parks from 2013 to 2016 when it was a DCMS executive agency, and was a Trustee at the foundation of the Royal Parks charity. He was closely involved in restoring Brompton Cemetery and sits on the Greenwich Park Revealed Programme Board. He is a vice-president of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association and was a member of the RHS Show Gardens panel. Chaired the Heritage Lottery Fund's Committee for London 2007-2014. Awarded the OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2015 for services to heritage.

He worked on numerous BBC television and radio programmes including Nationwide, Newsnight, Panorama, Holiday, Watchdog, Healthcheck, Value for Money; and all the daily news outlets. Specialist coverage of Chelsea and Hampton Court Flower Shows. Recently he has curated several art exhibitions. He was also a BBC royal correspondent, and appears in many documentaries on ITV, C4, C5 and internationally on this subject. He has worked in 40 countries and continues to write as a freelance for newspapers and journals and to lecture on heritage and horticulture.

Bronwyn Hill

As Permanent Secretary at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2011-2015), Bronwyn led a complex organisation through transformational change and a series of crises, including the 2012-13 flooding. A CBE for transport services was in recognition of her contribution to national transport strategy, major projects and transport in London. She applies this experience of leadership and learning in challenging times in her non-executive work. Her interest in the environment and the importance of green spaces for people in London led to her joining The Royal Parks Board in 2016. She is now the Lead Non-Executive Trustee.

Bronwyn joined the University of Greenwich as a Governor in 2016, becoming the Chair in 2020. As the first in her family to go to University, Bronwyn is keen to help others benefit from the transformative experience of higher education. Outside work, Bronwyn is a life-long rower and cyclist. She is a Director of the Trafalgar Rowing Centre and former Chair of Globe Rowing Club in Greenwich. She has worked with the Port of London Authority to encourage greater use of the Thames for recreational water sports.

These roles are not remunerated. These reappointments have 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 including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Bronwyn, Heather and Wesley have not declared any activity.

Government spending with small businesses continues to rise

- More than £15bn paid to small and medium sized businesses to help deliver vital public services in 2019/20
- Figure is at its highest rate since records began in 2013
- Increase reflects Government's continued support for the small business sector

New data published today shows that government spending with SMEs continues to rise.

The latest procurement figures for 2019/20 show that across government, £15.5bn was paid to small and medium sized businesses to help deliver vital public services.

The figure is an increase of £1.3bn on the previous year and the highest since records began in 2013.

Cabinet Office Minister, Lord Agnew, said:

Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of the UK economy, fuelling economic growth and providing employment for almost 17 million people.

That is why we are determined to make sure the power of government spending supports this vital sector and helps bring forward the delivery of top class public services.

Figures for government spending with small businesses are measured both in terms of direct spending, where money goes directly from the government to small businesses, and indirect spending, which goes through the supply-chains of larger companies.

For 2019/20, the total direct spend was £6.6bn, compared to £6.4bn in 2018/19, and the indirect spend was £9bn, compared to £7.8bn in 2018/19.

Overall, spending with small and medium sized businesses represented 26.7 per cent of the £58bn spent by the government in 2019/20 – an increase of 1.1 per cent on the previous year.

The boost in spending is a result of both a long-term government commitment and greater working with the sector.

It marks the government's commitment to obtaining value for money for taxpayers and supporting small businesses and start-ups through procurement.

Work includes talking directly with SME organisations to better understand the challenges and barriers facing smaller firms when bidding for and

contracting with government departments.

Details of all contracts awarded by the government are published on Contracts Finder.