

235,000 haulier tests completed as lorry drivers urged to get tested away from border

- 235,000 hauliers now tested following requirements introduced by French government in December
- coronavirus (COVID-19) testing for hauliers available at 37 sites upstream of Kent
- government continues to call on hauliers to make sure they have a negative COVID-19 test before heading to the border

Over 235,000 hauliers have now been tested for coronavirus, meaning that vital goods continue to flow into the UK and heavy goods vehicle (HGV) traffic in Kent is back to normal levels.

Following the [decision by the French government in December to require hauliers to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test to cross the border](#), a number of other European countries put in place similar requirements.

Such requirements had the potential to lead to sustained backlogs of HGVs in Kent and at borders but, thanks to swift government action, traffic has continued to flow freely. NHS Test and Trace staff and Ministry of Defence (MOD) personnel provided rapid lateral flow device testing around the clock to drivers within their cabs at sites across Kent. Ten mobile testing units deployed to the region and offered testing 24 hours a day over the Christmas period in order to test as many drivers as possible, as quickly as possible.

[Video about post-disruption in Kent](#)

The French government has recently changed the testing arrangements facing hauliers looking to travel from the UK into the country. These changes mean that French authorities will now accept testing certificates from Ireland for hauliers using UK ports, and that hauliers who are in the UK for less than 48 hours won't need a test.

However, the UK government is reminding any hauliers who do need a test to get one early in their journey at one of the [37 haulier advice sites](#) set up around the country, ensuring there is no build-up in congestion in Kent or other ports.

Transport Minister Rachel Maclean said:

It's really encouraging to see traffic continuing to run smoothly through Kent, and I'd like to thank the haulage industry, the armed forces, motorway service stations and the Kent Resilience Forum for working tirelessly with us to ensure the majority of hauliers cross the border without any issues.

While we are making good progress, it is vital that hauliers keep making use of the various advice sites around the country – where they can get a COVID-19 test before travelling to Kent.

The armed forces played a key role in the testing effort. Testing has now been handed over to civilian testers.

Colonel Ian Adkins, Deputy Commander of the Joint Military Command, South East, said:

We were pleased to support the Department of Transport and partners in the Kent Resilience Forum with COVID-19 testing of hauliers through the Christmas period and into the New Year. The initial backlog of thousands of vehicles was cleared within 3 days with the focus then switching to maintaining a smooth flow of hauliers through Kent. Armed forces personnel conducted over 128,000 tests and helped to deliver logistic and information support before handing over to a civilian testing solution.

Hauliers are also reminded that the [Kent Access Permit](#) is only valid for the 24-hour period stated on the permit – they must enter Kent and cross the border in this period or risk delays as they apply for a new permit.

[ESFA Update: 24 February 2021](#)

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[Alister Jack responds to December GDP figures](#)

Scottish Secretary, Alister Jack said:

“We know that the latest lockdown continues to have a significant impact on

people and businesses which is why the UK Government continues to provide direct support. Our £280 billion economic package has protected nearly one million jobs and 100,000 businesses in Scotland through our furlough, business loans and self-employed schemes. This direct support is on top of £9.7 billion additional funding provided to the Scottish Government.

“We are also taking direct action to support economic recovery in Scotland, investing billions in our Plan for Jobs, initiatives such as City and Region Growth Deals and in the supply of vaccines which are important in lifting restrictions and reopening the economy.

“At the Budget next week, the Chancellor will set out the next stage of our support for the remainder of the pandemic and our recovery.”

Background

- The UK Government furlough scheme, paying 80 per cent of wages, will run until the end of April. The self-employed support scheme has also been extended to the end of March and with an increase from 55% to 80% of average profits – up to £7,500. At their peak in summer 2020 our furlough and self-employed support schemes were supporting more than 930,000 jobs in Scotland.
- More than 90,000 businesses in Scotland have been supported from UK Government business loans worth £3.4 billion.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people of all ages back into work – including our £2 billion Kickstart scheme for young people, sector work experience programmes and recruitment of thousands of extra Work Coaches.
- The UK Government has provided billions in extra funding for the welfare system for those unable to access other forms of support.
- This support is on top of an additional £9.7 billion upfront funding given to the Scottish Government this financial year for their covid response.
- The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of covid testing in Scotland and has moved quickly to buy vaccines, securing more than 400 million doses from seven developers with Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines currently being distributed in Scotland.

[JCVI advises inviting people on Learning Disability Register for](#)

vaccine

The advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) remains that adults with severe and profound learning disabilities, and those with learning disabilities in long-stay nursing and residential care settings, should be offered the vaccine in priority group 6 (people with Down's syndrome are included in group 4). Adults with less severe learning disabilities are not currently prioritised.

However, GP systems may not always capture the severity of someone's disability, meaning some adults who are more severely affected by learning disabilities may not be invited for vaccination alongside people with other long-term health conditions.

JCVI asked the [OpenSAFELY](#) team to perform an updated analysis in those with various code sets for learning disabilities on GP systems and to include data from wave 2 of the pandemic.

The updated analysis confirmed a higher risk of mortality and morbidity in those on the GP register with learning disabilities – it's expected that individuals with more severe learning disabilities are more likely to be on the list.

To ensure those most at risk of death or hospitalisation are prioritised for vaccination, JCVI supports the plan to invite anyone on the GP Learning Disability Register – as well as adults with other related conditions, including cerebral palsy – for vaccination as part of priority group 6.

JCVI also supports an approach for the NHS to work with local authorities to identify adults in residential and nursing care, and those who require support, for example as part of assisted living in the community, and those in shared accommodation with multiple occupancy.

This will mean at least 150,000 more people with learning disabilities will now be offered the vaccine more quickly.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, COVID-19 Chair for JCVI, said:

The JCVI's advice on COVID-19 vaccine prioritisation was developed with the aim of preventing as many deaths as possible. People who are severely affected by learning disabilities are at higher risk of death from COVID-19.

As the severity of any disability may not be well recorded in GP systems, JCVI supports the NHS operational plan for anyone on the GP Learning Disability Register to be invited now for vaccination as part of priority group 6, and to reach out in the community to identify others also severely affected by a learning disability but who may not yet be registered.

JCVI will continue to consider the emerging evidence and will keep its advice under review.

[Letter from the Health and Social Care Secretary on COVID-19 vaccination in people with learning disabilities](#)

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