

Surge testing to be deployed in areas around Manchester, Norfolk, Southampton and Surrey

Press release

Further targeted areas will have additional testing made available to control and suppress the spread of a COVID-19 variant.



Working in partnership with the local authorities, additional surge testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas within Norfolk (targeted areas within the IP22 postcode), Southampton (S015) and Woking, Surrey (GU22) where the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

Following the [deployment of surge testing in Manchester last week](#), testing in Manchester will be expanded to targeted areas within the M40 and M9 postcode districts.

Surge testing is being introduced in addition to existing extensive testing. In combination with following the current lockdown rules and remembering [‘Hands. Face. Space’](#) advice, it will help to monitor and suppress the spread of the virus. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help understand COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

People living within these targeted areas are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test this week, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should [book a test in the usual way](#), and those without symptoms should [visit their local authority website for more information](#).

Surge testing in parts of Haringey, Merton and Sefton is now complete. Further data on surge testing will be provided in due course.

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PM call with United Nations Secretary-General: 16 February 2021

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres this evening.



The Prime Minister spoke to the United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, this evening.

They agreed on the importance of scaling up the global manufacturing of coronavirus vaccines and increasing international support to the COVAX facility, to ensure vaccine access for developing countries.

Looking ahead to the COP26 summit in November, the PM and Secretary-General committed to work together to encourage states to put forward ambitious plans to reduce global emissions.

They also discussed their concerns regarding the situation in Myanmar, and stressed the need to continue international support for the political process in Libya and for a negotiated solution to the crisis in Yemen.

The Prime Minister looked forward to joining the Secretary-General at the UN Security Council next week for a virtual session chaired by the UK on climate and security, and to welcoming him to the Cornwall for the G7 Summit in June.

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Further £650 million funding boost for Covid-19 response in Wales

Press release

Latest Treasury announcement brings the extra funding provided since March 2020 to the devolved administration in Wales to £5.85 billion.



- UK Government provides devolved administration in Wales with additional £650 million to help tackle coronavirus
- Funding can be spent now or carried over to spend in 2021/22 financial year, providing vital and unprecedented flexibility
- Money is in addition to the £5.2 billion already provided for this year through the upfront Barnett guarantee, bringing the total to £5.85 billion

The UK Government has provided the Welsh Government with an additional £650 million to support people, businesses and public services affected by coronavirus.

This funding brings the total allocated through the Barnett formula to the Welsh Government since the start of the pandemic to £5.85 billion.

In recognition of the exceptional circumstances and in response to calls for flexibility, the Welsh Government will be able to carry over any of the £650 million not spent this year into the 2021/22 financial year on top of their existing tools to transfer funding between years.

Welsh Secretary Simon Hart said:

We in UK Government have been relentless in our determination to get the necessary support to all parts of the UK, and today's announcement will top-up that support for Wales to £5.85 billion.

That is on top of all of the other UK Government support packages including the furlough scheme, the Eat Out to Help Scheme and the different business loans.

It is important that this funding now gets to the businesses and individuals across Wales as we look to rebuild the UK economy.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury Steve Barclay said:

We're committed to giving the Welsh Government the resources and flexibility it needs to tackle coronavirus and today we're delivering an extra £650m boost.

We have worked closely with the Welsh Government in advance of this announcement to ensure they have the certainty they need ahead of finalising their budget on 16 February.

UK Treasury schemes such as furlough, support for the self-employed and business loans also continue to protect jobs and livelihoods across Wales.

Following the previous update on 24 December, this is expected to be the final update for 2020-21 as part of the process for finalising departmental funding at Supplementary Estimates.

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[Invitation to Tender for research for the 2021 report and beyond](#)



The Low Pay Commission (LPC) has launched an invitation to tender for research projects to inform recommendations on next year's National Minimum Wage (NMW) and National Living Wage (NLW) rates. There are two separate open calls for projects, with deadlines on Thursday 11 March and Friday 12 March respectively.

This work is part of our ongoing remit to monitor the operation of the NMW and NLW, and to assess the impact of increases in the levels of those minimum wages. We carry out continuous evaluation of the impact of minimum wage upratings on the sectors and groups of workers most affected, and on the labour market more generally. To do this, we draw on a range of evidence to making our assessments, including research projects commissioned specifically to inform our recommendations. As in previous years, we wish to commission a number of new research projects to inform our future work. However, the onset of the pandemic and its continuing effects makes our assessment of the impact of minimum wages much more difficult than in previous years.

We are therefore keen to understand the impact of the recent unprecedented upheaval in the economy and the labour market caused by measures to control the global pandemic. This has affected some sectors, in particular many low-paying sectors, more than others. It has also disrupted many of the usual data sources upon which much of our standard analysis depends. The pandemic has, however, also led to the development of new data sources. We are therefore keen to consider tenders that can take advantage of these. In addition to the impacts from the pandemic, the UK began a new trading relationship with the EU on 1 January 2021 that will see significant changes in the way the UK trades. This will have different implications for low-paying sectors and minimum wage workers. We are therefore also keen to try and understand these developments.

With concerns about the pandemic and its impact on the labour market our usual data sources, we have broadened the coverage of our call for research this time. We would particularly encourage innovative use of new and existing sources of information to help us assess the impact of minimum wages in the UK. The evidence generated will inform our deliberations on the recommendations for future changes in the minimum wages.

In both of these open calls, we have identified a number of areas of research that might be particularly interesting but we would welcome any research that gives insight into the impact of the NMW, including the NLW. These insights will help inform our recommendations in our autumn 2021 Report and beyond.

Information about previous LPC research projects is available elsewhere on [our website](#).

Please direct all enquiries through UKSBS Research and Contracts Finder. Details of how to apply are given in the links provided for the individual calls.

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Last updated 18 February 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 18 February 2021

Page updated with link to the second invitation to tender (UK SBS CR21035).

2. 16 February 2021

First published.

Recovered appeal: Land at Mitchelswood Farm, Allington Road, Newick, East Sussex (ref: 3119171 – 16 February 2021)

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