NHS Test and Trace

Communications support for workplaces

COVID-19 Variant of Concern Testing

Version distributed: 19 May 2021

VERSION CONTROL

Version Control	
Document Owner(s)	Janek Urbanowicz (DHSC) – Janek.urbanowicz1@dhsc.gov.uk Donika Paskova (DHSC) - Donika.paskova@dhsc.gov.uk
Updated / new content	18 May 2021
Date distributed	19 May 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

#	Chapter	Contents
1	**Introduction**	1.1 Purpose of this pack 1.2 Context 1.3 Targeted case finding models
2	**Informing your workforce**	2.1 Communication objectives 2.2 Proposed approach 2.3 Key messages 2.4 Communication activities
3	**Templates**	3.1 Draft content for newsletter or intranet article 3.2 Draft content for leadership email / vlog 3.3 Draft content for leadership calls/briefings scripts
4	**Resources**	4.1 - 4.4 Surge testing resources 4.5 - 4.9 Regular LFD testing resources
5	**Accessibility Considerations**	5.1 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
6	**Appendix**	6.1 How to access regular twice-weekly LFD testing

1. Introduction

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS PACK

This pack is designed to support organisations in communicating with their workforce about a targeted case finding interventions within their settings, following the initial notification of a Variant of Concern cases in their area.

This pack provides internal communications and HR leads with:

- Detailed background on the approaches taken both nationally and locally to suppress the spread of variants of concern;
- Examples of communications content for workplaces to cascade through their internal communications channels;
- Key messages to include in internal communications;

The materials in this pack should be used in conjunction with any advice given by your Local Authority, who would provide you with further information about the additional public health measures deployed in the area to monitor and help suppress a Variant of Concern.

If you have any queries about any content in this pack, or would like to discuss your communications approach, please contact the Testing Communications Team: masstestingcomms@dhsc.gov.uk

1.2 VARIANTS OF CONCERN – THE NATIONAL RESPONSE

We will continue to see variants of COVID-19 emerge as the virus evolves, and we should expect to live with them for some time.

In the UK, we widely monitor for variants of COVID-19 through genomic sequencing and are world leaders in this work. We can only do genetic sequencing on PCR tests, which are different to the LFDs you do in the workplace. This genetic sequencing allows us to find new cases of the variants and helps us to stop the variants from spreading.

Variants of COVID-19 are classified as 'of concern', if there are signs that the variant could cause more harm, meaning that the variant could be more easily transmitted, or escape immunity from previous infection or vaccinations. It can take weeks of research to establish this in newly identified variants of concern, which is why immediate action is needed to contain the spread.

We are taking a comprehensive approach to limit the risk from variants of concern, including:

- Lowering the overall cases of COVID-19 nationally;
- Enhancing the pro-active steps to minimise spread such as increasing contact tracing and surge testing in areas where a variant has been found;
- Increasing our genomic sequencing activity to identify variants early;
- Ensuring our vaccines can tackle new variants;
- Enhancing health protection at our borders.

On Friday 14 May 2021, we confirmed that further clusters of a COVID-19 variant of concern have been found in parts of the UK.

In areas where variants of concern are identified, local action is taken **immediately** to limit the spread and contain the variant.

1.3 VARIANTS OF CONCERN – THE LOCAL RESPONSE

Once a variant of concern is identified in an area, local health protection teams, working in partnership with NHS Test and Trace, will immediately take action to help monitor and suppress the variant. This can include:

- Increased contact tracing;
- Increased genomic sequencing of positive COVID-19 cases to identify where the variant has and hasn't spread;
- Surge testing interventions that best meet the needs of that area.

These surge testing interventions can include increases in symptomatic and asymptomatic testing through mobile testing units, home testing and additional testing through specific settings including schools and workplaces, alongside our universal rapid testing offer.

If your workplace or workforce is located within or near to a location that has been identified with a variant of concern, know that we are doing all we can to suppress the spread of the variant – and that your workplace and colleagues also play an important role in this.

The Local Authority where your workplace is based, or where your workforce live, will have up to date information on action being taken locally so please check their websites and social media channels for updates.

NHS Test and Trace

2. Communicating with your colleagues

2.1 COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES



- **Limit spread of variants of concern by ensuring** organisations and their workforce are compliant in following all of the public health guidance.



- **Increase awareness and understanding around variants of concern** so that organisations and their workforce are more likely to undertake proactive steps to suppress the spread.



- **Provide reassurance for organisations and their workforce** on the national and local measures taken to quickly identify and control spread of variants of concern, building confidence in Test and Trace services.

2.2 YOUR WORKPLACE RESPONSE (1/2)

Workplaces have a key role to play in supporting the response to a variant of concern being identified in or near to where you live or work, whether your organisation has already been taking part in the workplace testing programme or not.

These are the pro-active steps that you can take:

- Strongly **encourage your colleagues to take part in the local surge testing,** regardless of whether they have received their first, or both of their vaccinations.

- Additional PCR testing resources will be made available in your area, including mobile testing units and increased home testing kits. For the latest information on where surge testing is taking place, visit here

- Reinforce the importance of immediate self-isolation of colleagues who test positive following a PCR test. This will prevent the spread of the virus

- Encourage colleagues to participate in test and trace, and **continue with frequent twice-weekly rapid testing.** Reiterate importance of getting tested regularly, regardless of whether they have received their first or both of their vaccinations.

2.2 YOUR WORKPLACE RESPONSE (2/2)

We also ask that you encourage your colleagues to continue with frequent twice-weekly rapid testing.

- It has never been more important to take up the offer of frequent testing. Continue taking part in the workplace testing programme if you have registered to do so, and support your colleagues in twice-weekly rapid testing. Reinforce that this applies to colleagues working from home and attending work settings.

- Encourage colleagues to get tested regularly, whether symptomatic or not and regardless of whether they have received their first or both of their vaccinations.

- Encourage colleagues who display symptoms (a high temperature, a new continuous cough or loss of smell/taste or it has changed) to get a PCR test as soon as possible, and to self-isolate.

- Encourage colleagues to carry out their follow up confirmatory PCR test if they receive a positive LFD result. Colleagues who test positive following a PCR test must self-isolate immediately, preventing the spread of the virus.

- Colleagues who test positive following an LFD test must also self-isolate immediately, but also arrange a PCR test as soon as possible to confirm the result via the online portal or by calling 119.

- If your organisation operates in the hospitality industry, front line colleagues can support contact tracing and stop the spread of variants by promoting your venue's QR check in code.

2.4 COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR WORKFORCE

We have put together resources to support you in communicating with your workforce on what the presence of a local variant of concern means, and how colleagues can help minimise the spread.

Your organisation will also have its own policies and guidance, and support programmes in place.

We understand that you will have multiple internal communications channels to reach your colleagues. Below you will find examples for you to adapt and use across these channels, with links to additional resources and assets.

- **Newsletter and/ or intranet article** – link to example
- **Leadership emails/vlog** – link to example content here
- **Leadership calls or town hall online briefings to all colleagues** – link to example script here
- **Key messages to include in your communications** – link to key messages here
- **Assets for posters, leaflets and digital screens** – link to PHE assets here

Many organisations have also engaged effectively with their workforce through using videos, for example videos of senior leaders showing how quick and easy it is to take rapid tests.

3. Templates

3.1 DRAFT CONTENT FOR NEWSLETTER OR INTRANET ARTICLE

SURGE TESTING TO TAKE PLACE IN [INSERT AREA] TO CONTROL SPREAD OF COVID-19 VARIANT

Extensive monitoring of Covid-19 has identified a small number of cases of the Covid-19 variant **[INSERT VARIANT],** in localities across England, including **[INSERT AREA], [INSERT HOW THIS RELATES TO WHERE WORKPLACE ARE LOCATED).**

Working in partnership with NHS Test and Trace, every person living / working in **[INSERT AREA]** over the age of **[INSERT AGE]** is strongly encouraged to take a PCR Covid-19 test this week, regardless of whether or not they are showing symptoms or whether they have received their first or second vaccination.

Testing will, in combination with measures such as hands-face-space and following national guidance, help to suppress and control the spread of the virus, while enabling a better understanding of the new variant.

Positive tests with a high enough viral load will be sequenced to identify any further spread, enabling a better understanding of the variant and identifying if there are any more cases of this particular strand of the virus in the area. If someone tests positive, they must self-isolate immediately and pass on details on their contacts to NHS Test and Trace.

[INSERT INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO GET A TEST LOCALLY]

Dr Susan Hopkins, Chief Medical Advisor for NHS Test and Trace said:

“As part of our proactive sequencing work, we have identified cases of COVID-19 variants in a number of areas across England. PHE and NHS Test and Trace are monitoring the situation closely and appropriate public health measures such as increased testing and contact tracing are being put in place where necessary.”

[INSERT QUOTE FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM]

[INSERT DETAIL ON WORKPLACE TESTING WHERE APPLICABLE – AND ANY SUPPORT PROGRAMME OR RESOURCES COLLEAGUES CAN ACCESS]

3.2 DRAFT CONTENT FOR LEADERSHIP EMAIL / VLOG (1/2)

Dear Colleague,

As you may be aware, [Local Authority name] has announced a programme of additional testing in response to an identified case or cases of a variant of Covid-19 [insert variant name] in the area [insert area name]. As a result, we have been asked to take part in additional testing, using a PCR test which is processed in a laboratory. These tests allow Public Health England to assess if there are any cases of the variant amongst members of our workforce.

There is currently no evidence that this variant causes more severe illness or that it makes vaccines less effective. Although the risk to the wider community is considered low, as a precaution, [INSERT COUNCIL], working in collaboration with PHE and NHS Test and Trace, is taking swift and decisive action to deploy additional surge testing in the targeted area. Positive cases will be sent for sequencing of genomic data to help increase understanding of COVID-19 variants and their spread.

We will be providing testing kits to all colleagues on [insert date or dates]. Insert operational info about how testing will be conducted here. The PCR test results will be communicated directly to you.

To receive your test result, you must register your test. After you have completed your test, go to https://test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/register-kit or call 119.

3.2 DRAFT CONTENT FOR LEADERSHIP EMAIL / VLOG (2/2)

If you test positive, have any symptoms, or are contact traced following contact with someone who tests positive, then you should self-isolate immediately in line with the guidance on GOV.UK.

The more cases of the variant we find, the better chance we have at suppressing it. Please help to keep our workplace safer by participating in the surge testing.

All colleagues should continue to follow national guidance, including ‘hands, face, space, fresh air’ and also continue to be encouraged to participate in twice-weekly asymptomatic testing.

For more information please visit [PLEASE ADD YOUR LOCAL CALL TO ACTION, INCLUDING URL].

3.3 DRAFT CONTENT FOR LEADERSHIP CALLS/BRIEFINGS SCRIPTS

- Public Health England has recently identified X cases of the INSERT VARIANT, in INSERT REGION. At the moment, we have no evidence to suggest that this variant is any more severe than others.
- But to suppress any onward spread of the virus, NHS Test and Trace will be conducting extra testing for anyone living in XX postcode area, which we are urging colleagues to take up.
- Those tests will then be sequenced, to identify if there are any more cases of this particular variant of the virus in the area.
- We are strongly encouraging everybody who lives in XX to continue to follow the national guidance in the usual way, but to take a test, whether or not they have symptoms and whether they have had their first or second vaccination.
- People with symptoms should book a test in the usual way. People without symptoms should visit XX for more information.
- INSERT LOCAL CALL TO ACTION
- You will only be required to take one PCR test, but I do urge every single person to take one, and if you test positive, to engage with contact tracers and self-isolate to stop the spread of the virus.
- And remember, the best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 is to remember: hands, face, space and fresh air and to follow the national guidance.

3.4 KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUR WORKFORCE (1/2)

Below are some key messages for you to include in communications with your workforce:

- The UK will continue to see variants emerge as the virus evolves and so we should expect to live with them for some time. It is vital that we adapt and respond to the changing nature of the virus in a way that works for our region and our diverse communities.
- As the monitoring of new variants continues, remember that the best way to protect against the virus is to continue following the public health advice.
- Public health advice to everyone remains the same: the best way to stop the spread of the virus is to follow the guidelines - remember hands, face, space and fresh air, socialise outdoors, work from home if you can, get vaccinated and take up the offer of regular rapid and PCR testing.
- If you are told to get a test, if you have any symptoms at all or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive, please make sure you get tested too.
- By law, if you test positive or are instructed by the Test and Trace programme, you must self-isolate. You should not go to work if you have tested positive and should not meet up with others during this time.
- As part of our proactive sequencing work, new cases of COVID-19 variants of concern have been identified in a small number of localities across England.

3.4 KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUR WORKFORCE (2/2)

- Working in partnership with the local authorities, additional PCR testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed to targeted areas where variants have been found.
- We will also be working with Local Authorities to make increased asymptomatic PCR testing available in targeted areas.
- The more cases of the variant we find, the better chance we have at suppressing it. Please help to keep your community safe by getting tested so we can find the variant and protect you and your loved ones.
- If a person tests positive, has any symptoms, or are contact traced following contact with someone who tests positive, they should self-isolate immediately.
- We have a broad reach of testing capability across the UK with over 1100 test sites, including mobile testing units which are designed to rapidly respond to outbreaks, and significant laboratory capacity to process over 650,000 tests a day. And we have a significant surplus of tests so we can distribute them quickly to local areas.
- The Test and Trace system is built to be future-proofed, which has allowed us to efficiently respond to increased demand within short timescales. Having the capacity to deploy mobile testing units, along with a significant supply of test kits and laboratory processing capacity, is testament that the system is working.

4. Resources to support internal communications

Surge testing resources

4.1 MARKETING ASSETS – GET TESTED

Surge testing for new variant assets (posters, flyers and social) have now been developed and are available here: https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/variant-surge-testing/resources/

Posters (A3/A4), leaflets (A5), social assets available in two variations.
You will need to insert your own call to action with a URL and information on where to get a test:

GET TESTED:
"2021.05.11_Variant_Gettested_May_"
(published May 2021)

These assets are available as editable PDFs – all Local Authorities should be able to co-brand, insert a postcode and insert their localised call to action without the need for editing software.





Translations of v. April 2021 posters are available in:
Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi (India), Punjabi (Pakistan), Romanian, Slovak, Somali, Sylheti, Urdu, Welsh
https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/variant-surge-testing/resources/translations-variant-surge-testing/

4.2 PROMOTING KIT REGISTRATION

It is important that individuals taking a PCR test in a surge testing area register to receive their results.

When someone does not register to receiver their results, we are unable to alert the individual to their result and cannot commence contact tracing or other interventions. This means that infectious people (including those infected with a Variant of Concern) may be spreading the virus in the community.

To help minimise the potential for unregistered PCR test kits, please do use the following assets to promote kit registration locally.

Assets (including a leaflet, poster / signage) to support this are available here: [Variants of Concern - Coronavirus Resource centre (phe.gov.uk)]

The following translations are available upon request and will be uploaded on the PHE resources centre in due course:

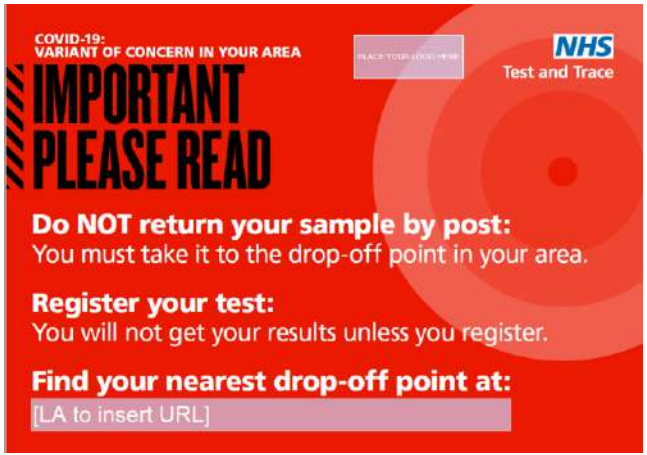
- Arabic, Italian, Polish, Somali, Urdu
- Link to translations: [Translations - Variants of Concern - Coronavirus Resource centre (phe.gov.uk)]



4.3 RETURNING HOME TEST KITS

It is really important that employees taking their PCR tests at home are aware of the appropriate channels to return their kits to a designated drop-off collection point and not by post.

Please arrange printing out the sticker below and instruct staff responsible for distributing home test kits in your organisations to label up each test kit before distributing to employees.



The high res generic and editable versions of the sticker are available here:

https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk/variant-surge-testing/resources/

Regular LFD testing resources

4.4 REGULAR TWICE WEEKLY TESTING ASSETS

- Different professions featured
- A3/A4 posters with localisable CTA and logo
- A5 leaflets
- Social static assets in 4 sizes
- FAQs for employees
- Key messages
- Example internal comms: employee letter, email sign off
- User guide and instructional videos on how to take a test
- Animation video on how LFD testing works
- Case studies (individuals/businesses) who are using LFDs successfully



Download resources: Workplace Testing - Coronavirus Resource centre (phe.gov.uk)

4.5 HOSPITALITY, PERSONAL CARE AND NON-ESSENTIAL RETAIL

- Different professions featured
- A3/A4 posters with localisable CTA and logo
- A5 leaflets
- Social static assets in 4 sizes



[Download resources: Workplace Testing - Coronavirus Resource centre (phe.gov.uk)]

4.6 SOCIAL STATICS IN 4 SIZES – 14 PROFESSION VARIATIONS



1 x 1



4 x 5



9 x 16



16 x 9

Download resources: Workplace Testing - Coronavirus Resource centre (phe.gov.uk)

4.7 TRANSLATIONS



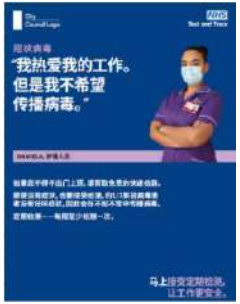
English



Bengali



Arabic



Mandarin Chinese



Farsi



Gujarati



Hindi



Welsh



Punjabi India



Polish



Punjabi Pakistan



Romanian



Slovak



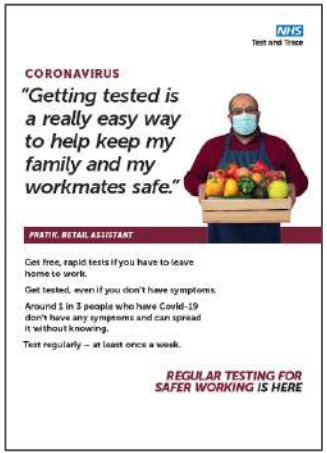
Urdu

Specific barrier to address – Engaging people/workers who have to leave home for work and English isn't their first language

4.8 ADDITIONAL FORMATS AVAILABLE FOR PRINT AND DIGITAL







Easy print white



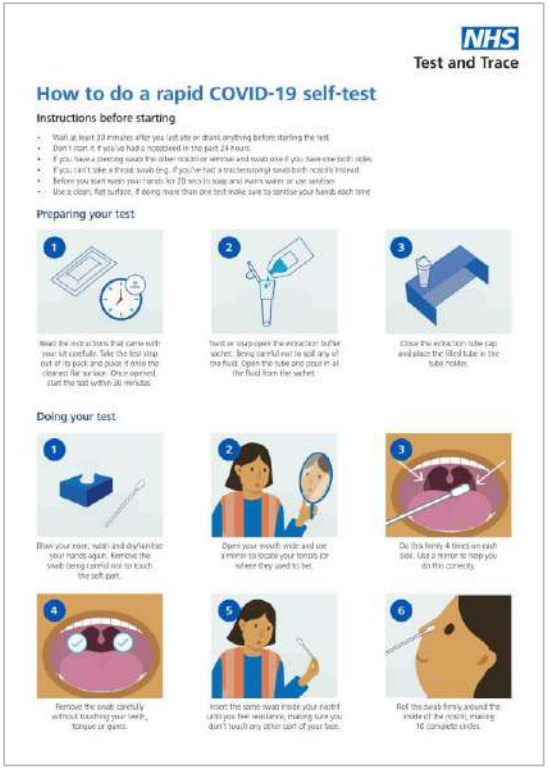
Editable digital asset

Download resources: Workplace Testing - Coronavirus Resource centre (phe.gov.uk)

4.9 AVAILABLE SUPPORT VIA THE PORTALS

Instructional assets

- A3/A4 – assisted test poster
- A3/A4 – self-test poster
- A4 flyer - ‘Before you test’
- LFD explainer - 13 languages





5. Accessibility considerations: Targeting underrepresented groups

5.1 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)

1

Communication activity should be planned specifically for digitally excluded employees; so we get better at reaching them:

- Consider increasing physical signposting through traditional and printed media and ensuring these are targeted and multi-language
- Leveraging existing company-wide groups

2

The rationale and the importance of regular testing must be clearly communicated, as:

- Digitally-excluded employees are unlikely to do weekly testing unless formally requested through other channels
- The difference between *symptomatic* and *asymptomatic* testing is confusing to employees
- Employees need to know how they are going to get tested and what this will involve

3

In addition, digitally excluded employees are often also vulnerable and need additional assurance around:

- The assistance provided in going through the testing process, the reliability of the test and effectiveness of self-testing

6. Appendix

6.1 HOW TO ACCESS REGULAR TWICE - WEEKLY LFD TESTING

We want to make it as easy as possible for everyone in society to access testing, and take-up the offer of twice-weekly rapid testing. The following routes are available, depending on individual circumstances.

- **Workplace Testing** – 1000's of employers registered to enable access to free tests until the end of June. The testing includes test sites, where you can take a supervised test and also workplace collect, where employees can pick up a box of tests to be taken at home. If an employer offers workplace testing, this is still the best route for individuals to access rapid testing.

If an employer has not registered for workplace testing, the following routes are available to all employees:

- **Community Testing** – All Local Authorities are offering local community testing sites, where you can go and take a supervised test. Most Local Authorities also offer a community collect option, where you can pick up a box of tests to use at home. A full list of sites can be found here.

- **NHS Test and Trace sites** – Regional and Local Test Sites are situated across the country, with the majority of sites operating a collection model. On a morning, sites will conduct symptomatic PCR testing, but will provide an LFD collect service on an afternoon.

- **Pharmacy Collect** – Thousands of pharmacies across England have signed up to offer Pharmacy Collect. You can go into a participating pharmacy and pick up a free box of tests to use at home. NHS England's site finder allows users to search for nearby pharmacies who offer this service.

- **Education** – Secondary and college students are already being given tests to use at home twice a week, throughout term-time and the holidays.

- **LFD Direct** – For people who can't access tests through the above routes, you can order a box of tests online or via 119, which will be delivered to your home.

Get in touch

For questions about anything in this guidebook or to discuss your communications plans please get in touch: masstestingcomms@dhsc.gov.uk