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Bedford Borough Council Advice - COVID-19

Dear Parent/Carer

Please find below Bedford Borough Council's latest advice.

With Government figures showing that Bedford Borough has the third highest COVID-19 rate in the country, with 128 cases per 100,000 people in the population, surge testing is being rolled out to selected areas of Bedford Borough.

Working in partnership with NHS Test and Trace, everyone- adults and children- living in the Kingsbrook, Cauldwell and Queens Park areas of Bedford Borough and the village of Wixams, is strongly encouraged to take a PCR COVID-19 test this week, even if they are not showing symptoms. This will help to identify cases and ensure that people self-isolate, with the appropriate support.

These areas of Bedford Borough were chosen based on close analysis of the spread of COVID-19 in recent days.

Testing and self-isolating where required will, together with measures such as hands-face-space-fresh air and following national guidance, help us to control the spread of the virus, while enabling a better understanding of the new variant.

In this first phase of surge testing in Bedford Borough, Mobile Testing Units will be operating from Thursday 20 May until Friday 28 May every day at the following sites and times:

Oasis Beach Pool, Cardington Road, Kingsbrook, Bedford, MK42 0BZ (8am to 6pm)
John Bunyan Sports and Fitness, Mile Road, Cauldwell, Bedford, MK42 9TS (8am to 6pm)
Enterprise House, Old Ford End Road, Queens Park, Bedford, MK40 4PF (8am to 5pm)
Seasons Garden Centre, Bedford Road, Wixams, MK45 3HU (8.30am to 6pm)

The mobile testing units accept people in cars and on foot, and no appointment is necessary. Everyone who lives in the Kingsbrook, Cauldwell and Queens Park areas of Bedford Borough and the village of Wixams is encouraged to take a PCR COVID-19 test

during this week.

Further collect and drop off points for tests will be available in each of the areas from Friday at London Road Surgery, Cauldwell Community Centre on Althorpe Street, Queens Park Community Centre and Lakeview Village Hall at the Wixams and these will be open from 8am-6pm.

Both Mobile Testing Units and the collect/drop off sites will be operating throughout the weekend.

Mayor Dave Hodgson, Bedford Borough Council said "The figures we are seeing locally are really concerning, with cases thought to be doubling approximately every five days in Bedford Borough. I am glad that the Government has agreed to roll out this surge testing. This testing across these four areas will help us to identify cases, trace how the virus is travelling through our communities, and help slow the spread.

"We are hoping for as many people as possible to be tested in this first week of surge testing, so please, if you live in Kingsbrook, Cauldwell, Queens Park or the Wixams, come forward for a PCR test and help to keep your community safe."

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. A small proportion of these cases have no link to international travel suggesting that there are some cases in the community.

"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."

Aliko Ahmed, Regional Director at Public Health England East of England, said "The UK has one of the best genomic systems in the world which has allowed us to detect the variant here in Bedford. I urge everyone offered a test to take it up to help us to monitor the virus in our communities and to help suppress and control the spread of this variant.

"The most important thing is that people continue to follow the guidance that is in place – limit your number of contacts, wash your hands regularly and thoroughly, keep your distance and cover your face. If you test positive by any method, you must isolate to stop the spread of the virus."

Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 must self-isolate immediately and book a PCR test by calling 119 or visiting **www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test**