

To
All headteachers of Nursery, Primary, High and Special Schools
Early Years Providers

Ealing Council
Perceval House
14-16 Uxbridge Road
London W5 2HL

Tel 020 8825 5000

February 1st 2021

Dear Colleague

South African Variant of COVID-19 Virus

You may have heard on the news this lunch time confirming that several areas in the UK had been identified as having the South African variant of COVID-19. A small number of individuals in these areas who tested positive with this variant had not travelled to South Africa or been in contact with anyone who had links to South Africa. One case was detected in the W7 postcode area. The person who was tested at the end of December followed public health advice and self-isolated and has since made a full recovery.

National test and trace asked that as none of these individuals had travelled to South Africa or been in contact with anyone who had links to South Africa, enhanced testing is put in place in these areas to identify the possible spread of this variant.

The government has told us that there is no evidence the South African variant causes more severe illness or that the current vaccines would not protect against it. You can find out more about COVID-19 variants [here](#). More information on the variants is available [here](#).

The strain of the virus was discovered through the ongoing government sampling of 5% of positive tests. Public health officials expect that in all of these cases there may be other people with this strain of the virus in these areas. Tests that determine which strain of virus people have contracted take a few weeks to complete and so news of this incident was recently shared with the relevant local authorities.

We are asking all residents over the age of 16 living or working in the area identified on the map (attached) within the red markings, **who do not have Covid-19 symptoms** to take a PCR COVID-19 test that will be laboratory analysed. This is to understand if this strain is present and to contain any further cases in the area. The aim is to test as many people as possible living in the area, at least once in the next couple of weeks. People who live near to the area and are worried can also book at test.

To support this the council has arranged for a new walk-through mobile testing unit specifically for people without symptoms to be set up at Dean Gardens Car Park, Leeland Terrace, West Ealing W13 9DA from Monday 1 February to make accessing testing as convenient as possible. To book a test people should go online via www.ealing.gov.uk/covidtest.

The link will take people to a form and they should click to book a test at the **variant testing centre at Dean Garden's Car Park**. People with queries about the testing that is taking place can call the Ealing Together helpline on 020 8825 7170.

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Over the coming days, the council will also be delivering free home test kits to all households within the identified area. On the Council's website, there will be a postcode finder for residents to check if they are in the area.

They will be delivered and collected, so despite the instructions in the kits, residents are being asked not to, post them back. The delivery schedule will be publicised as soon as it is available. Should a test come back positive, the individual concerned will be asked to self-isolate from that point.

If anyone has Covid-19 symptoms (high temperature, new continuous cough, loss/change in taste or smell), it is essential that everyone in the household [stays at home](#) and the person with symptoms book a test via NHS 119 or online at www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test. This may be at one of the drive-through centres in the borough at nearby Gurnell Leisure Centre, Greenford and the regional testing centre at Heathrow. Walk-through appointments are also available at the Featherstone Terrace car park, Southall or Michael Flanders centre, Acton

COVID Infection Prevention Control Measures

You do not need to take any further prevention control measures beyond those you already have in place or update your general or individual risk assessments. During this national lockdown, staff or pupils/students who have already been identified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable must not attend school or other settings. What we ask you to do is to ensure that these continue to be implemented as rigorously as possible.

Further Information

If you have any further general queries please refer to the Council's web-site or for specific queries about your school/college community contact:

publichealth@ealing.gov.uk

from Tuesday 2nd February, Raj Chowdhury ChowdhuryR@ealing.gov.uk

Monday 1st February only, Gary Redhead 020 8825 5773, gredhead@ealing.gov.uk
For any HR related matters contact your HR adviser.

I realise that this may be worrying news for staff and parents but please be assured the Council will continue to work with NHS test and trace to do everything possible to keep our community safe. We will continue to provide support and advice to Heads on all COVID-19 matters.

Yours sincerely



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