



Dear Parent/Carer

You will have read and heard about the rise of cases of Covid 19 in Blackburn and Darwen, and across the North West and that these have been linked, in part to a new variant of the disease first identified in India. Whilst there is currently no evidence that this causes more severe illness, there is evidence that it is more infectious and has been classified as a 'Variant of Concern'. Public Health England is currently working hard to understand this variant better.

**Testing:**

Following the identification of cases of this Variant of Concern, mainly in Shear Brow & Corporation Park and the surrounding areas, Blackburn with Darwen Council has been working closely with Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace to develop a programme of additional PCR testing and enhanced contact tracing for these areas.

From Tuesday, 18 May, there will be enhanced COVID-19 testing – known as surge testing – for anyone living, working or going to school in these postcode areas:

- BB1 6\*\*
- BB1 7\*\*
- BB1 8\*\*
- and BB2 6\*\*

Positive samples will then be sent for analysis at a laboratory to find out if there are any more cases of the variant in the area. People in these areas mentioned above are strongly encouraged to take a PCR test over the next two weeks starting from Tuesday 18 May.

We are requesting your supporting and asking:

- For your child to undertake a PCR test within the Surge Testing 2 week window
- PCR tests will be given out by school and should be registered and carried out at home
- Completed tests should be delivered back to school the following day. These will then be taken to a collection point, to enable the genomic sequencing.  
**Please do not put completed tests in the post.**

As above, schools in the above post code areas will be able to provide PCR test kits to their school community. However, if you would prefer, you can also access PCR testing via a number of other routes:

- Drive through PCR tests will be available at the Regional Test Site (RTS) at the Royal Blackburn Hospital
- Walk through PCR tests will be available at Local Testing Sites (LTS) at Blackburn College and Railway Road, Darwen.
- Mobile Testing Units (MTU's)
  - Corporation Park, Main Entrance, BB2 6AH
  - Charlotte Street Car-park BB1 7EG
- Community Hubs where you can collect PCR test kits will be open Monday to Friday 8am-6.30pm, and 10am-4pm on weekends:
  - Revidge Fold United Reform Church, Shear Brow, BB1 8DS
  - Corporation Park, Main Entrance, BB2 6AH
  - Bangor Street Community Centre, Norwich St, BB1 6NZ
  - West Park Lodge, Corporation Park Road, BB2 6DE
  - Charlotte Street Car-park BB1 7EG

In addition, from these locations people can also collect PCR tests for themselves and their household/neighbours, take them home, carry out the tests and then return them to the same place they collected them, for sending to the lab for testing.

People will only need to take one test each, and we urge those who test positive to self-isolate with everyone in their home to stop the spread of the virus.

Anyone who has symptoms of Coronavirus should stay at home and book a free test online or by phone, so they can be tested at a testing site or have a testing kit sent to their home. Tests can be booked on this link: [www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by calling 119](https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test-or-by-calling-119).

We want to remind you that as well as getting tested if you have symptoms, it is vital everyone in the borough continues to follow the guidelines and the 'Hands, Face, Space, Fresh Air' rules – as this is the most effective way to control the spread of all variants of coronavirus. Please also continue with the weekly lateral flow testing and we are advising for this to continue over the May half term period too. In addition, we are reminding all eligible adults to come forward to be vaccinated.

### **Vaccinations:**

A number of new sites are opening to boost the delivery of the vaccination and additional vaccination first doses have been secured.

Vaccination of residents is according to a priority list, as set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), based on age and vulnerability of people and the risk of them becoming seriously ill and dying from Covid-19.

The current criteria is:

- Aged 38 and over
- Aged 18 and over with any underlying health conditions
- Aged 18 and over AND living, caring or working with anyone with underlying health conditions
- Health and Social Care staff
- Any carers – paid or unpaid. You will not be asked for proof as unpaid carers are eligible.

The new vaccination sites have been arranged for the convenience of local residents but anyone who is eligible can book into the appointments for their first dose.

They include:

- Mobile 5 Bay Clinic with disabled access delivered by articulated lorry, Penny Street, Blackburn, BB1 6HQ
- Pop up clinic in Revidge Fold Church, Shear Brow, BB1 8DS.
- Acorn Medical Centre, 421 Blackburn Road, Accrington BB5 1RT
- Everest Pharmacy, 21 Cemetery Road, Darwen BB3 2LZ (Available now)
- Burnley General Teaching Hospital, Casterton Ave, Burnley BB10 2PQ
- Royal Blackburn Hospital, Haslingden Road, Blackburn, BB2 3HH

Appointments can be booked through the following link on the Council's website <https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/coronavirus>

### **School Processes:**

Just as a further reminder we would like to set out how you and your family can help to prevent passing the virus on. These are the steps that you must take:

### **Child with COVID-19 Symptoms**

If your child develops symptoms of COVID-19 please **do not** send them to school and ensure a rest is taken.

### **Child asked to self-isolate**

If your child has been asked to self-isolate, due to being a confirmed case of COVID-19 or being a school contact of a confirmed case, please take the following action:

- Your child must **stay at home**
- Your child **must not** go to school, public areas, shops, clubs or out of school settings and do not use public transport or taxis.
- Your child **must not** meet friends during a 10 day period
- Any exercise should be taken within your home.

### **Child develops COVID-19 Symptoms during period of self-isolation**

If during the period of isolation your child experiences symptoms of COVID-19, please take the following action:

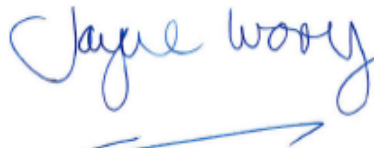
- Arrange a COVID-19 test for your child as soon as possible
- Once you have the test result you must inform your child's school or setting along with any clubs or out of school settings your child attends.

**It is really important you support your child to follow this guidance in order to keep our community safe and reduce the risk of transmission.**

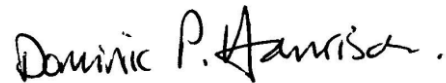
**Of course, if at any time your child becomes more unwell or their symptoms worsen, do seek medical advice straightaway.**

If you do have any questions, please do check our Council website <https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/coronavirus/schools-covid-19-information> or contact your child's school in the first instance.

Yours sincerely



Jayne Ivory  
Strategic Director of Children's  
Services



Dominic Harrison  
Director of Public Health