



# News

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## ICS update - 27 May 2021

This bulletin provides an update from the Integrated Care System in the North East and North Cumbria regarding our latest information and plans to care for patients, staff and our communities. This Integrated Care System is led by Alan Foster, executive lead. If you have any questions or would like us to send vital information to partners through this bulletin, please contact us [here](#).

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## Message from Alan Foster



## Bank holiday

With the bank holiday weekend and half term nearly upon us we are reminding our local communities to [use NHS services sensibly](#) and avoid putting additional pressure on our frontline teams across health and care. Bank holidays are always a busy time for our services and teams, so can I say a big thank you to everyone working to keep us safe over this time.

We have been sharing messages on our [social media](#) channels and the directors of public health from the seven north east local authorities have also released this [statement](#), echoing this message and encouraging the public to remain cautious and follow the rules.

## **North Tyneside – surge testing**

Last week we brought you the news that North Tyneside was one of the areas identified by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to start surge testing and ramp up vaccinations in the light of a new variant of concern first identified in India.

I would like to thank everyone working across the borough - and across the region - for their tireless work over the last week to ensure as many people as possible are tested and vaccinated in our attempts to keep this virus under control.

There has - once again - been some great partnership working – whether that's mutual aid to share vaccine supply, offers of mobile vaccination buses or the sharing expertise and staff. Once again, it's great to see everyone pulling together.

To date around 40 confirmed cases of the variant have been identified and public health measures put in place in North Tyneside. You can find the latest updates from North Tyneside Council [here](#).

## **Testing for covid-19 variants at the lighthouse lab**

Our region's purpose-built Lighthouse lab at Baltic Park has been processing Covid-19 tests since 3 March, as part of the integrated Covid hub managed by Newcastle Hospitals.

This expertise has now been commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care to carry out an additional stage of testing, looking for variants of concern currently known to be circulating in the UK.

From 17 May, all positive Covid-19 results at the lab are going through a second stage of testing on-site – genotyping - to determine whether they are a variant strain.

Timely testing for variants is vital in controlling virus spread. This additional analysis in the same lab will allow results to be communicated quickly to local public health teams, who can act swiftly to protect individuals and communities through implementing containment measures, including enhanced testing and contact tracing in the affected areas.

This speedy response is the important advantage that genotype results from the Lighthouse lab will provide.

All positive results and samples will then go on to a different lab for full genome sequencing and confirmation. Results data will also be used to enhance national pandemic surveillance and strategy.

The variant genotyping work will initially be carried out by Lighthouse lab senior scientists, in partnership with colleagues from the Covid hub's specialist innovation lab.

Additional training will then be extended to the wider Lighthouse lab team, to ensure capacity for 24/7 delivery of the service, with senior scientist support on every shift.

## **COVID-19 vaccine**

As the vaccination programme continues to move through the cohorts, the NHS is now asking those aged 30 and over to come forward for their vaccine.

This is a message we are continuing to communicate on our [social media](#) and we encourage you to do the same so we can get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible. So far we have given over 2.8 million vaccine doses – just a phenomenal achievement.

Have a safe weekend everyone and thanks to the many teams who will be working over the weekend.

Keep up the great work everyone.

Best wishes,

Alan.

**Alan Foster is the executive lead for the North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System**

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## **Other news and updates**

**The R number in the UK:** The latest reproduction number (R) and growth rate of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the UK can be found here on [GOV.UK](#).

**Public Health England dashboard:** The Public Health England (PHE) dashboard can be found [here](#). Daily reporting includes deaths that have occurred in all settings where there has been a positive COVID-19 test, including hospitals, care homes and the wider community. The report also includes case rates per 100,000 resident population at lower-tier local authority level.

**National flu and COVID-19 surveillance reports:** A link to the weekly national flu and COVID-19 report, monitoring COVID-19 activity, seasonal flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses can be found [here](#).

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