



Important information about the spread of Covid in St Helens

Dear Parents/Carers

Young People urged to follow guidance following cluster of Covid-19 cases

Residents across St Helens are being asked to remain vigilant and reminded to act within the guidance after a noticeable spread of COVID-19 cases in the borough.

St Helens had seen a decrease in cases of covid-19 overall, however a recent increase in the last 10 days (29 March to 7 April) of COVID-19 cases has been reported, predominantly in school aged children and their families, and as a result a number of schools have had to ask year groups to isolate for 10 days to reduce the risk of spread.

Parents should follow these rules:

- If your child has been asked to isolate, they should not leave the house for any reason until the end of the isolation period unless it is to get a test if they develop symptoms of Covid-19 or receive urgent medical treatment. This includes a ban on all social activities such as sports activities or meeting with other children.
- During the school holidays and beyond, continue to use the free lateral flow tests and parents should report the results, positive or negative, to their schools.
- If they develop symptoms or test positive through a symptom free test they should book in to have a traditional PCR test to confirm if they have Covid-19.

With some outdoor sports under way again across the borough sports clubs are also being urged to remember the guidance that only one parent is allowed to attend a match of their child and those not participating should keep their distance and wear a mask if possible when attending games. People should not be attending if they have been asked to isolate, or they or anyone in their household has symptoms of covid-19 (new cough or temperature and or loss of taste or smell).

Sue Forster, Director of Public Health at St Helens Borough Council, said: "Everyone in St Helens Borough has worked really hard to help us bring our rates down from the heights of 870 cases per 100,000 people down to 21.6 cases as we are at the moment. With rates so low now it means when we have cases that are linked together across a number of locations like we have in these two areas we can be clearer on where the spread has come from and warn people to watch out.

"The key message parents of school children have to remember is to make sure your child is regularly having testing if they have the home test kits and that all the family should also test regularly as a number of these cases have come to light after parents have tested positive. If anyone in the household is feeling unwell and displaying symptoms everyone has to isolate while that person is tested, which includes not sending children to school. Finally please make sure you keep your school up-to-date with the testing record of your child too.

"Testing is a crucial way to make sure that we can break the chains of transmission, keep our rates low, protect lives and make sure as more services unlock we keep Covid-19 rates low. Now that symptom free testing is open to everyone please make use of the free testing options we have and get tested twice a week to protect our communities."

If you do **not** have COVID-19 symptoms, you can walk in (no appointment required) to one of our symptom-free testing stations for a quick, free, supervised test:

- St Mary's Indoor Market, town centre
- Chester Lane Community Centre, Sutton Manor
- Grange Valley Youth Centre, Haydock
- Torus Housing Office, Newton Road, Parr
- Perth Community Centre, Thatto Heath

at the following times:

- Monday to Friday, 8.30am–6pm
- Saturday and Sunday, 10am–3pm
- Torus Housing Office is open 1pm–6pm, Monday to Friday and 10am–3pm on Saturdays and Sundays
- Perth Community Centre is open 1pm–6pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
- Grange Valley Youth Centre and Torus Housing Office in Newton Road will be open from 8am on Saturday 10 April.

To collect a home testing kit;

You can also walk in to **collect** a COVID-19 home testing kit from any of the above sites, as well as the following sites (subject to availability):

- Fairclough Street Car Park, Earlestown (Monday to Friday, 2.30pm–8pm)
- Haydock Park Racecourse, Newton-le-Willows (Monday to Friday, 2.30pm–8pm)

There is no need to make an appointment to collect a home test kit. Do not visit a collection site outside of opening hours, as they could be used to test people with coronavirus symptoms outside of these times. If you are 18 or over, you can collect two packs of home test kits; each pack contains seven tests.

You can find out more about testing at www.sthelens.gov.uk/letsgettested including opening hours and how to register for traditional PCR tests too. You can also order home testing kits if you cannot access them from one of our sites via <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>