



**North Tyneside Council**

**Wendy Burke**  
**Director of Public Health**  
North Tyneside Council  
Quadrant  
The Silverlink North  
Cobalt Business Park  
North Tyneside  
NE27 0BY

Tel: (0191) 643 2104  
E-mail [wendy.burke@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:wendy.burke@northtyneside.gov.uk)

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Dear Parents and Carers

I wanted to update you on the additional measures being taken by the council and our NHS partners in response to rising case numbers of COVID-19 and the emergence of the Indian variant in North Tyneside.

As announced by the Government this week, surge testing and accelerated vaccinations will be launched in the borough to help limit the spread of the virus and keep infection rates low.

Although there have been no cases confirmed in any school outbreak to date, we would appreciate your support in doing all that you can to follow Government advice, take a lateral flow test twice a week, and to continue following the guidance on hands-face-space and social distancing.

While there is no current evidence that the Indian variant causes more serious illness, or that the vaccine is any less effective against it, it is believed to be a much-faster spreading variant and one that will become the dominant strain in the UK. We currently have 19 confirmed cases in North Tyneside and this is likely to rise.

Faced with this new challenge, we must all continue to take all necessary precautions to keep infection rates down and our recovery on track.

From Saturday 22 May, the council will deploy two mobile testing units (MTUs) in North Shields and Wallsend to offer PCR testing.

No appointment is required to visit the MTUs. They are for anyone who lives, works or studies in North Tyneside and does not have symptoms. Providing people do not have symptoms they do not need to isolate while awaiting the result of the PCR test.

The MTUs will be open between 10am and 4pm at Wallsend Forum, behind the Anson pub, and in North Shields town centre.

For anyone who does have symptoms of COVID-19 or who has tested positive using a lateral flow device, the guidance remains the same: stay at home, self-isolate and

book a test online or by calling 119. Anyone with symptoms can also get tested at The Parks Leisure Centre in North Shields and the Coronation Street car park in Wallsend.

This enhanced testing is in addition to lateral flow tests which the government encourages everyone to do twice a week.

The council and the local NHS is reminding residents that getting vaccinated is the best defence against COVID-19 and is encouraging those currently eligible to come forward for vaccination.

People over 50 and those with underlying health conditions who have not yet had their first dose will be contacted again with a further reminder and those awaiting a second dose will have the opportunity bring forward the date of their second dose (from 12 weeks to 8 weeks).

I have total confidence in the robust control measures and risk assessments that schools have in place. Our schools have done a fantastic job in providing education to children and young people in the borough in very challenging circumstances during this academic year.

The continued attention to hand hygiene, social distancing and wearing of face coverings remains critical together with self isolation for anyone who has symptoms or tests positive (together with their households).

Thank-you for all you are doing during these difficult times and the continued effort to prevent further transmission of the virus.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Wendy Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Wendy" on top and "Burke" slightly below and to the right.

**Wendy Burke**  
**Director of Public Health**