

Thursday 17 December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

COVID-19 COMMUNITY TESTING – EXTENDED HOURS AT HAMLET COURT ROAD WALK-THROUGH SITE AND COLLECT AND DROP-OFF POINT IN LEIGH-ON-SEA

Many thanks to the hundreds of you who have responded to my letter of last week and have been tested in recent days, with or without symptoms.

The COVID19 rate continues to rise across Southend-on-Sea, particularly in young people and young adults, but also in the over 60's. In order to help stop the spread, the Government has made additional testing capacity available for all children/young people and their families to enable you to get a test even if you do not have symptoms of COVID19.

Thanks to the response of the local community and some feedback received, the Government have agreed to extend the opening hours of the Hamlet Court Road car park (HCR) walk and drive through site to 8am to 4pm, to allow more time for families to get tested. You do not need an appointment at this site, you can just say that your local authority has asked you to get a test.

In addition, a COVID-19 testing 'collect and drop-off' point is also opening outside Leigh Town Council offices (Leigh Community Centre) in Elm Road tomorrow (Friday 18 December) for people **without** symptoms. Residents will be able to pick up a home testing kit from 9am, do their swabbing test in private (facilities not available on site), register it online (<https://test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk/register-home-test>), and then return the kit back to the collection point by 3pm, where it will be sent directly to the laboratory via courier. The point will be open from 9am to 3pm seven days a week, apart from bank holidays. We hope to open another point in the east of the Borough next week.

In addition to the HCR site and 'collect and drop-off' point, mobile testing centres local to you are also available as below:

- Southend Airport, Long Stay Car Park 3, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6YE – this mobile testing unit is now open **seven days per week**. Please book through the national system (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>)
- Short Street local testing site remains open **seven days a week**. This is available for both walk-through and appointments booked through the national system (<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>)

The national system also allows you to order tests by post if you cannot drive or walk to one of the drive-through testing centres. Please select "Yes" to the question "*Is the person who needs a test part of a trial of government pilot project*" on the website. Please do not get a test if you have had a positive test in the last 12 weeks as it may give an incorrect positive result.

If you have been asked to self-isolate for 10 days by the NHS Test and Trace Programme, your school or the council's Public Health Team because you have been in contact with someone else who has tested positive for COVID19, you can still get tested but you should complete your period of self-isolation even if you test negative. This is because the test may not detect COVID19 in some people who are incubating the virus.

I would also ask that you take your child for a second test in the New Year around 3-4 days before return to school so we can ensure that no-one is infectious and can start an outbreak.

Getting tested is particularly important now as Christmas approaches and families look forward to meeting and spending time together. I am therefore urging you to please have your child and family tested for coronavirus.

Thank you for your support in helping us to prevent the spread of COVID19 during these difficult times.

With best wishes to you and your family,

Krishna Ramkhelawon
Director of Public Health