

Southwark's COVID-19 Test and Trace Communications and Engagement Strategy (incorporating its Outbreak Control communications plan)

Key roles

Lead spokesperson: Cllr Peter John, Leader

Supporting spokespeople: Cllr Evelyn Akoto, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health; and Jin Lim, Director of Public Health

Chief officers: Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive/Caroline Bruce, Strategic Director, Environment, Leisure and Public Health

Lead officer: Louise Neilan, Head of External Affairs

Supporting officers: Kirsten Watters, Jess Leech, Jasbinder Baddhan, Rosie Dalton-Lucas, Justin Ashworth

Background

In June 2020 the Government announced plans for a comprehensive test and trace approach with local councils playing a key role in a system which aims to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

In Southwark an Outbreak Control Plan has been published which sets out Southwark's approach to mitigating the impact of novel coronavirus on Southwark's population and communities, focusing on those most at risk.

There are three elements to the plan: prevent, identify and control. Communications and engagement will be key to the success of both the prevention and control elements. Although there is a great deal of work going on to help prevent outbreaks in specific settings such as schools and care homes, responsibility for managing an outbreak in these settings sits with other agencies. Our focus in this strategy is therefore on community outbreaks, which councils are responsible for managing.

The strategy builds on work already completed as part of the council's COVID-19 communications plan, which has included the promotion of healthy behaviours and testing through council channels, including widespread posters/banners, our newsletter, social media and Southwark Life magazine.

Research and analysis

Current position

Early in the COVID-19 outbreak, rates in London were very high, and Southwark had the highest rate in inner London due to early recording of cases, and the density of our borough. However, in recent weeks there has been a decline in cases in London and Southwark. In the seven days up to 2/7/20, Southwark had 3.2 cases per 100,000 (compared to 141 in Leicester which has been subject to a local lockdown, and 179 in Merthyr Tydfil in Wales where an outbreak in a meat processing plant led to a sudden rise). Despite some reports of mass gatherings with a lack of social distancing in recent weeks, daily reports of positive cases remain in single figures. However, the reopening of pubs, restaurants, playgrounds and other facilities in early

July, gives us cause for concern, and we will be closely monitoring our data, so that we can respond quickly to any rise.

Awareness and perceptions

Across London, research shows that awareness of the test and trace system, including how to get tested and when to self-isolate remains fairly low. Forty six per cent of Londoners don't know how to get a test and 35% know little or nothing about NHS Test and Trace.

Londoners from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and those over 65 are least likely to know how to get a test.

We also know from focus groups in London, that among those who do know how to get tested, there are barriers that could prevent them from doing so, including worries about the impacts of self-isolating such as disruption to food security, education, employment. There are also concerns about personal data security and ethics.

In some parts of London, residents said they would be more likely to follow advice if the messaging referred to their specific local area such as 'Keep Peckham safe' whereas others preferred 'Keep London safe'. This has not been tested in Southwark so a combination of messages may be advisable and can be tweaked based on evaluation. The London message has the advantage of also speaking to visitors who travel across boroughs.

In addition to these groups, the government has identified young people (aged 18-24), single mothers with young children, and people of working age as key targets for test and trace communications.

Objectives

Prevention

To use clear, simple, compelling and wide reaching communications to promote safe and healthy behaviours which help protect residents and prevent the spread of COVID-19

To increase awareness of test and trace so that anyone who develops symptoms or is identified as a contact understands the process and knows how to respond

To reassure residents that following the recommended advice re test and trace need not have a detrimental impact on their lives and that support is available

To make best use of our established network of community, business and faith groups, to help reach all our communities with clear messaging and signposting to support

Outbreak control/lockdown

To ensure we have a clear plan to communicate quickly with local people and other stakeholders in the event of an outbreak or local lockdown so everyone understands what they need to do and why.

Strategy

To prevent an outbreak happening in the first place, we will support all of our residents, communities and businesses to understand and continue to comply with public health advice. This includes advice to have a test if you get symptoms and to help trace people you've been in contact with to prevent further spread of infection.

We will be open and transparent with local people about our rate of infection, by publishing the data on our website and sharing it through our regular communications. Any increase would lead to a ramping up of communications and messages.

By using messages and an overarching narrative developed and agreed across London, we can support all Londoners to feel safe and reassured to engage with NHS Test and Trace. Communicating the same consistent messaging across London will also avoid confusion among our communities and reinforce that NHS Test and Trace will play a key role in keeping Londoners safe.

We will also target these messages at specific groups and parts of the borough where we know the risk of transmission, the impact of the disease, or awareness of the risks is greater, working closely with community groups, businesses and councillors to help reach all our communities.

Furthermore, in the event of a local outbreak we will need to quickly and effectively contact people at risk of catching it with advice that prevents them from passing it on. This will be key to preventing further spread of infection, rumours and misinformation. To support this, we have developed a clear set of processes, involving local communities, so that we can respond quickly and effectively in the event of a local outbreak.

To achieve this, a bank of template materials has been developed for London, including letters, a phone script and marketing materials, that can quickly and easily be locally adapted. In order to reach all of our vulnerable and diverse communities, resources will be available in different community languages.

Key messages

- 1) Keep Southwark Safe (Peckham/Camberwell/Borough etc) – the best way to avoid another lockdown is to keep your distance and get tested if you have symptoms
- 2) If you have any coronavirus symptoms (cough, temp, loss of taste or smell) stay at home and arrange a test by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

- 3) If you have to self-isolate, support is available. Visit <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/for-the-public/coronavirus>
- 4) Keep your distance - the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to keep your distance from other people who aren't part of your household
- 5) Wash your hands often, and for 20 seconds.
- 6) If you are able to, wear a face covering, especially in shops and on public transport

Audiences

These key local audiences are important to this strategy both as groups whose behaviour we aim to influence, and as allies to help us reach a larger number of local people:

- All residents including those in our vulnerable and diverse communities
- Council staff
- Councillors and MPs
- Voluntary and community sector organisations
- Community and faith leaders
- Workforce of local sectors/organisations who can help us raise awareness – e.g. TfL, NHS, Health and Social Care
- Businesses – from small businesses to large organisations
- Social venues, especially those serving alcohol
- Trade unions
- Early years settings, schools, universities
- Staff in high-risk settings – e.g. care homes
- Landlords of houses of multiple occupation, or where overcrowding is likely
- Media – including media aimed at specific communities e.g. local BAME media
- Local stakeholders – e.g. PHE London, Metropolitan Police, universities

Target demographics/audiences

In addition to widespread universal messaging to increase awareness of test and trace and healthy behaviours, we will take a targeted approach to reaching those who are most vulnerable to the disease, and to those who may be less likely to respond to general communications.

We know that some groups have been disproportionately affected by C-19, as well as in many cases having lower awareness of test and trace, and as such it is important that we go further in our efforts and plans to reach them with our key messaging and targeted engagement.

These groups include older people, men, people from black and ethnic minorities, people who live in deprived areas, those with underlying health conditions, and those working in public-facing jobs.

We have also, more recently, seen outbreaks across the country among people working in specific workplace settings such as those involved with food production. Our strategy will also ensure we are working closely with local business networks and communities to identify and target specific workplaces that may be more at risk of an outbreak.

Tactics and channels

A London-wide test and trace campaign has been created, informed by research and resident focus groups, to reach our diverse communities with simple but engaging messages. Southwark will use, amplify and 'localise' the Keep London Safe campaign and materials (see Appendix 2) to ensure consistency across London with the use of this strong campaign which has been specifically designed for London.

Keep London Safe is due to launch at the end of July, with the support of the Mayor of London, and will have wide reach with advertising planned on public transport, out of home advertising sites and social media.

We will use and share the posters, social media materials, core script for community groups, translated materials, accessible materials and other useful collateral, which we will also add to. Officers across the council are currently working together and with the community to map out who can help us reach our target audiences with this messaging, and we are developing an operational plan for dissemination and engagement. This will complement and enrich our corporate communications using the same messaging via council and partner channels such as social media, newsletters, posters, magazines and letters (more detail below).

Communications channels

We will use the following channels to get our message out to those who live and work in the borough:

- Local media including Southwark News, SE1, South London Press and News Shopper (some good local reach via print, social media and BBC syndication)
- Regional and national media are better read by our residents but are more likely to cover the London and national campaigns. However, they would be a useful channel for us to reach residents and reassure them and other stakeholders that Southwark is in control of any outbreak.
- Council enewsletter – goes to 100,000 subscribers, open rate currently 30-40% but likely to be higher in an emergency as it was when lockdown began.

- Internal communications - many of our staff are residents, others have direct daily contact with our residents and businesses, and so it will be essential to engage our staff in this campaign.
- Social media – we will use Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to reach our followers with a mix of clear messaging and brief videos from our spokespeople and community leaders (in different languages as appropriate). We will also try to engage local celebrities or influencers to help extend our reach.
- Schools – we will keep our school updated with the latest situation, and ask them to share key messages with parents and families through their regular communications
- GP surgeries – GPs often offer patients a text service. Via the CCG we can ask GPs to text all registered patients with key messages
- Out of home advertising – limited in Southwark but we will explore available options, and there will also be London-wide advertising on billboards and public transport.

Engagement

We cannot rely on broadbrush communications if this strategy is to be successful. We need to reach a number of different target audiences, some of whom may not engage with council communications either because of language barriers or digital barriers. It is therefore essential that we work with our local community leaders, groups, and voluntary and community sector, to ensure this campaign has as wide a reach as possible. We will ask the following groups to help us disseminate messages, understand and overcome barriers, and in some cases work intensively with specific groups who need extra support.

We will also seek advice on hyperlocal media that we may be able to work with to disseminate messages to help us reach some of our target groups, particularly those who may not speak English as a first language.

We hope the following colleagues and groups will be advocates for Southwark's test and trace programme, and help us to support communities across the borough. We are currently developing more detailed plans for working with the VCS and business community over the coming months. This may involve commissioning specific support to amplify messaging for communities at risk; to support behaviour change within communities; and to ensure local communities can feed in to improve effectiveness of the programme. This process will need to evolve and respond to feedback from community leaders. For example, if a specific concern regarding behaviours or lack of awareness is identified in a church or business, we will offer additional support as appropriate.

- Community groups/VCS including faith groups
- Business community

- Tenant and Resident Associations
- Frontline council staff (eg Resident Services Officers)
- Ward councillors and MPs
- Other local public services (police, fire, health)

Evaluation

As we share some of our objectives and messages with other agencies, it will therefore be challenging to evaluate the impact of all our activity. However, we will monitor the success of our communications in signposting residents to testing, encouraging takeup of testing and contact tracing, and work with the community to measure awareness. The success of this strategy and the outbreak control plan depends on constant evaluation of our success, by monitoring rates of infection, and adapting our plans and approach accordingly.

Appendix 1: Communications flow in a community outbreak scenario

- 1) DPH briefs Leader, CE, Gold, Head of External Affairs
- 2) Leader informs Cabinet, CE informs COT
- 3) Message drafted and agreed with those listed above to include:
 - Scope and location of outbreak
 - Immediate actions taken (closure of setting?)
 - Clear instructions for those in affected area/setting
 - Clear instructions for wider population (eg stay at home, avoid area x, continue to follow basic test and trace advice)
 - Quote from the Leader – reassurance, explanation of what we are doing, reiterate advice as per above
- 4) Agreed message shared via some or all of the following channels (proportionate to size of impact):
 - Resident newsletter (100,000 subscribers)
 - Email briefing for all councillors and local MPs
 - Twitter, Facebook and Instagram using key messages and brief video messages as appropriate
 - Council website
 - Health partners
 - Intranet and all staff email
 - Local media (and national if appropriate)
 - Tenants and residents associations
 - HMO Landlords and Housing Associations
 - Voluntary and Community Sector (via Community Southwark)
 - Faith groups via the Faith Network
 - GPs (request for them to share basic messaging with patients via their text service)
- 5) Quickly distribute appropriate materials to the area affected. This process will be carefully mapped for different scenarios but depending on the scenario, it could include hand-delivered leaflets or letters to residents and businesses in the affected area (translated as required); posters distributed to resident services officers for placing prominently across an estate; community doorknocking; social media messaging targeted by area or demographic; and core scripts in appropriate languages sent to voluntary and faith organisations who can help to get the message out.
- 6) Comms support for settings where an outbreak occurs
The council's External Affairs team offers support to local organisations such as schools in the event of a crisis or emergency. If an outbreak were to occur in a local setting, the team will work with Public Health colleagues to offer advice and support to partners and businesses on issues such as stakeholder communications, media relations and internal comms.

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Appendix 2 – examples of London-wide communications materials which will be used in Southwark, with the council's logo, and local place names added.



KEEP WALTHAM FOREST SAFE

Waltham Forest

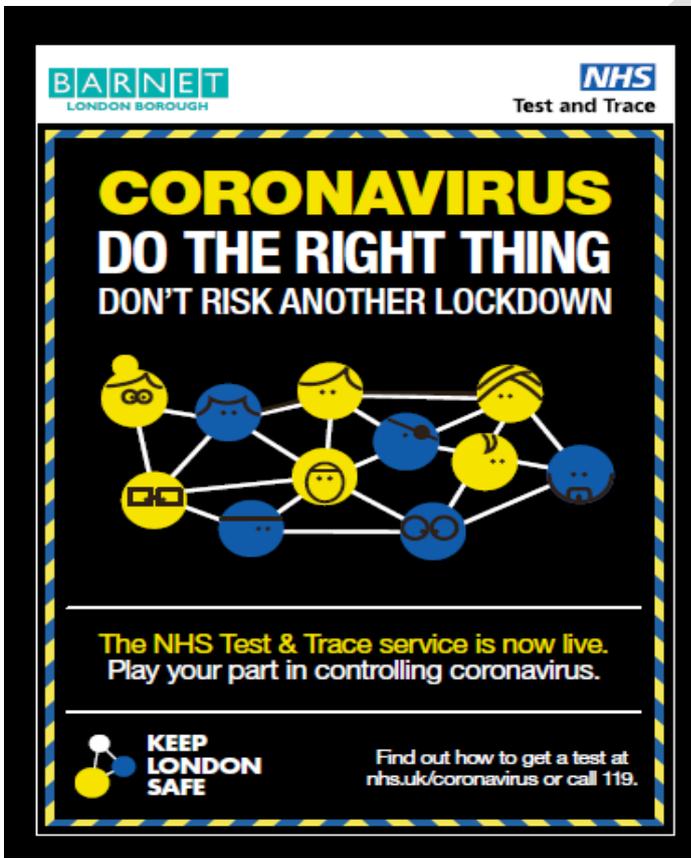
NHS Test and Trace

COVID SYMPTOMS? GET TESTED NOW.

nhs.uk/coronavirus OR CALL 119

Protect your friends and family

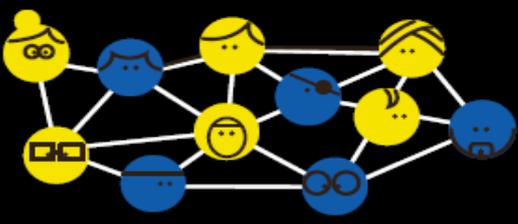
This poster features a white background with a colorful, multi-colored border. It includes the 'KEEP WALTHAM FOREST SAFE' logo on the top left, the Waltham Forest tree logo in the center, and the NHS Test and Trace logo on the top right. The main headline is in large, bold, black and blue letters. A yellow and black striped banner at the bottom left contains the website and phone number. The bottom right corner has the text 'Protect your friends and family'.



BARNET LONDON BOROUGH

NHS Test and Trace

CORONAVIRUS DO THE RIGHT THING DON'T RISK ANOTHER LOCKDOWN



The NHS Test & Trace service is now live.
Play your part in controlling coronavirus.

KEEP LONDON SAFE

Find out how to get a test at nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119.

This poster has a black background with a yellow and blue striped border. It features the Barnet London Borough logo at the top left and the NHS Test and Trace logo at the top right. The headline is in large, bold, yellow and white letters. Below the headline is a network diagram of yellow and blue circular icons representing people connected by lines. A white horizontal line separates the diagram from the text 'The NHS Test & Trace service is now live. Play your part in controlling coronavirus.' Another white horizontal line is below this text. At the bottom left is the 'KEEP LONDON SAFE' logo, and at the bottom right is the text 'Find out how to get a test at nhs.uk/coronavirus or call 119.'



**KEEP
LONDON
SAFE**

Covid symptoms?
Test and trace.
Protect your community.

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