

South Africa variant of Covid found in Essex - what we know



Essex County Council has set out answers to questions after the case was detected. Picture: PA

The South African variant of Covid-19 has been detected in one part of Essex.

As a result targeted testing will be offered to residents in the CM13 postcode in Brentwood.

People are “strongly encouraged” to accept the offer of a test, whether or not they have symptoms of the virus.

As it stands no other cases of the variant have been found elsewhere in Essex.

Surge testing has now been deployed in specific locations across numerous areas in England.

Sequencing of positive PCR tests – swabs that are processed in a laboratory – can take around two weeks, according to Public Health England.

Essex County Council has set out answers to questions after the case was detected.

This is what you need to know.

How many cases of the South African variant have been identified?

There has been just one case of the South African variant found in the CM13 area of Brentwood. As far as the council knows, it has not spread any further.

Where did this variant originate from in the area?

The council says they do not know how the individual contracted the South African variant, but it is not linked to international travel.

Will additional Covid-19 restrictions be introduced in the area?

No, the area will remain under the current national restrictions.

Is the South African variant more dangerous than other variants?

No, there is no evidence to show it is more dangerous. However, it is more transmissible. It is passed from person to person more easily, which is why we need to do targeted testing and prevent it from spreading.

Do I have to take part in the surge testing?

It is not compulsory but the council strongly encourages you to take part if you live or work in CM13.

The only people who do not need to take part are: children aged 15 or under; people who have tested positive in the last 90 days; people who currently have symptoms (but they should still book a test through Gov.uk).

Do I have to take part if I have had the Covid-19 vaccine?

Yes. While the vaccine will help prevent you from getting seriously ill, it is not known whether it prevents transmission. This means you could still carry the South African variant and pass it to others.

Is it safe to visit a testing centre or pick up a test?

Yes, the council has increased testing capacity and created designated pick-up and drop-off points for those who want home testing kits. The new capacity will safely meet the level of demand.

Source:

<https://www.thurrockgazette.co.uk/news/19106867.south-africa-variant-covid-found-essex-know/>

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