

CEM/CMO/2020/043

24th December

Immediate Actions in response to SARS-CoV-2 virus new variants of concerns

1. UK VOC122020/01, lineage B1.1.7, first identified in Kent on 20/09/2020
2. UK VOC122020/02, lineage B1.351 or 501Y.V2 first identified in South Africa in October 2020

Immediate Actions for the NHS:

- All NHS organisations and staff should ensure that they are fully implementing and have systems in place to monitor adherence to the current IPC guidance in relation to COVID-19, that PPE is available and in supply, and that all staff training is up to date. COVID-safe control measures for social distancing in the workplace should be robustly implemented and adhered to, including reinforcing greater patient mask use and frequent decontamination of high touch surfaces and items, including cleaning or enhanced cleaning of communal toilets after each use.
- The current advice is that the mechanisms of transmission of both the novel variants of concern are the same as the wild-type SARS-CoV-2 and other variants in circulation. Therefore, it is extremely important that healthcare settings ensure that all current infection prevention and control measures are fully implemented, that appropriate personal protective equipment is readily available and worn by staff at all times, cleaning and ventilation protocols are followed and optimised, particularly in communal areas such as toilets, and that patients and visitors wear masks at all times unless clinically impossible to do so.

In order to slow transmission of UK VOC122020/02, lineage B1.351 or 501Y.V2 first identified in South Africa in October 2020, further specific actions are recommended for individuals admitted to hospital with relevant travel or contact exposure

- Individuals should not be seeking routine outpatient, ambulatory or primary care, elective treatment while in their 10 days of isolation after return from South Africa. Primary and secondary care organisations should assess that an individual has returned from South Africa and delay elective and non-urgent treatment until after the 10 days of isolation.
- Any individual with a travel history from South Africa in the preceding 10 days OR contact with an individual with a travel history to South Africa in the previous 10 days who requires emergency assessment or admission to hospital should be managed in isolation in a single room with en-suite bathroom facilities.
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn as recommended in the IPC guidance.
- These individuals should be tested on admission and according to NHS testing regimes while in hospital. Standard PCR assays used in South Africa detected these individuals. Current PCR assays in use should be effective and used for testing.
- If they test positive, further risk assessment and discussion with your local/ regional specialist infectious diseases centre should occur for further management by immediately contacting one of the Specialist Infectious Disease Centres (List provided in Annex 1) who can arrange discussion with the local or regional infectious diseases specialists.

- Hospitals should contact their local Health Protection Team with the details of individuals who test positive who have returned from South Africa or been in contact with someone who has returned from South Africa.
- Positive samples in individuals who have returned from South Africa or have a contact with an individual who has returned from South Africa in the previous 10 days should immediately be send to Public Health England, Colindale for whole genome sequencing.

It is important to highlight that both of these variants have been risk assessed by the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group. The risk assessments and technical data are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/new-sars-cov-2-variant>. Mutations and new variants will continue to emerge, and we will continue to share new information as it becomes available.

Prior to reporting of the new variant South Africa was not on the UK travel corridors list so all returners would have been expected to self-isolate for 10 days according to the national guidance and legislation <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control/self-isolating-when-you-arrive>. Due to the new variant as of 9:00 24 December visitors from or transiting through South Africa in the last 10 days will be denied entry and there is a prohibition on the arrival in England of all flights transporting passengers from South Africa. Individuals who have arrived from South Africa are also recommended to have a COVID PCR test immediately if they develop symptoms or on day 7/8 if they have not developed symptoms. Anyone who shares a household with somebody self-isolating since their return from South Africa will also have to self-isolate for 10 days.

We thank you for your ongoing work in this pandemic.



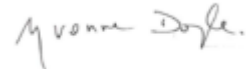
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Annex 1. List of Specialist Infectious Diseases Centres and Contact Details

Region	ID unit	Adults/paediatrics	Contact details
East of England	Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Adults	01223 245151: ID consultant on call
London	Barts Health NHS Trust	Adults	0207 3777 000: ID consultant on call
	Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust	Adults & paediatrics	0207 188 7188: ID consultant on call
	Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust (St Mary's)	Paediatrics	0203 312 6666: paediatric ID consultant on call
	London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust (Northwick Park and Ealing)	Adults	0208 864 3232: ID consultant on call
	Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust	Adults	0207 794 0500: ID consultant on call
	St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Adults & paediatrics	0208 672 1255: clinical infection consultant on call
	University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Adults	07908 250924 (ID SpR on call)
Midlands	University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust	Adults & paediatrics	0121 424 2000: ID consultant on call
	University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust	Adults	0300 303 1573: ID consultant on call
	University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust	Adults	01782 672904
North East & Yorkshire	Hull & East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust	Adults	01482 875875: ID consultant on call
	Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Adults	0114 271 1900: ID consultant on call
	The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Adults & paediatrics	0191 233 6161: ID consultant on call (adult or paediatrics)
North West	Alder Hey Children's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Paediatrics (with Liverpool)	0151 228 4811: ID consultant on call
	Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Adults & paediatrics (with Alder Hey)	0151 709 0141: ID consultant on call
	Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	Adults	07966 621211 (ID SpR on call)
South East	Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust	Adults	01273 696955: ID consultant on call
	Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Adults & paediatrics	0300 304 7777: ID consultant on call
South West	Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation Trust	Adults	01392 411611: microbiologist on call