

URGENT MESSAGE

Today, the latest available data for Halton shows that in the last 7 days to 2nd January, there have been 1125 confirmed cases of Covid19 in the borough.

This means that our current rate per 100k population is **869/100,000** – or put more simply 1 in every 115 people in Halton currently have the virus.

There is no doubting that these figures are of serious concern.

The rise in recent weeks has been rapid – with a 463% increase from the middle of December to the first week in January). The cases in Halton have escalated more significantly than in other areas of Cheshire and the Liverpool City Region.

We believe there are a number of factors that have led to this rise:

- The new variant of the virus which now spreads 70% more quickly – this new variant has been identified in Chester and Wrexham, so we must assume that it has now reached Halton.
- More social gathering over Christmas, following the Government's easing of restrictions
- Poor behaviour and understanding of what social isolation actually means;
- Levels of deprivation hampering self-isolation and pressure from employers on workers to return to work quickly
- Rapidly changing national messages

This is a position we must address urgently and a plan is currently being developed by the Director of Public Health to do this.

As part of this, we will be releasing further data and supporting communications to the public to present the very concerning current position and ask for their help to tackle it.

This will be accompanied by

- a graphic depicting the rapid escalation of cases over the last few weeks.

- a video message from the Director of Public Health
- supporting messages setting out actions people must take to keep themselves and others safe

These will be shared over social media, online, via partner organisations and through the media – including an interview being given by Eileen O’Meara later today on Radio Merseyside.

We are also seeking the support of all members in cascading the following important key messages:

- **Stay at home**, as we have been instructed to do in the latest national lockdown.
- **Remember the basics** if we need to go to the shops for essentials – so wear a face covering; keeping a distance from others; use the sanitizers and cleaning products provided in shops and wash our hands as soon as we get home.
- And if you cannot work from home, **get a fast no-symptoms test every five days**, to help stop the spread of the virus within your workplace.
- No one should have to struggle through this situation on their own - help and support is available if it is needed. Our website www.halton.gov.uk is where information can be found or alternatively by calling our Covid Support Line: 0151 907 8363 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm)

Cllr Rob Polhill.
Leader

David Parr.
Chief Executive