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| **[Government urged to act now to help prevent the spread of coronavirus on the Isle of Wight](https://iow-newsroom.prgloo.com/news/government-urged-to-act-now-to-help-prevent-the-spread-of-coronavirus-on-the-isle-of-wight" \t "_blank)** |
| The government has been told it must act swiftly to help prevent the spread of coronavirus on the Isle of Wight following reports of people travelling on and off the Island for a Covid-19 test.  The Isle of Wight Council says it is unacceptable that people struggling to book a test, either at the testing site at Newclose Cricket Ground or via post, are being offered alternative appointments that require them to travel to and from the mainland for a swab.  With people being offered slots at venues up to 75 miles away, the council has called on health officials to adjust the national appointment system to take account of the Island's unique circumstances.  Council leader Dave Stewart said: “The Island has not been immune from the national challenges with the test and trace programme and we have seen reductions in the number of appointments available at our testing facility with people being offered alternative slots at venues many miles away.  “We are also seeing some people on the mainland being directed to the Isle of Wight for tests.  “This is not good as it means people are being expected to travel on ferries — in contravention of clear government guidance about using public transport whilst seeking a Covid-19 test — thereby putting themselves and others at unnecessary risk. This is unacceptable.  “I want to reassure residents that we, working closely with our MP, are in dialogue with senior health officials and have urged them to adjust the national appointment system to take account of our unique circumstances as quickly as possible."  As a result of these national pressures, the council said the Island had seen a significant increase in calls to NHS 111 from people wanting to book a Covid-19 test.  This approach does not give anyone access to the booking system for a Covid-19 test, it does however, tie up the call handlers that need to be available for people requiring other medical assistance.  Councillor Stewart added: "I also understand that some people are also calling the cricket ground directly, again this does not give them access to the appointments system for a test.  "Please only book a test by calling 119 or going online via nhs.uk/coronavirus."  Simon Bryant, the council's director of public health, said appointments for tests were made available on a daily basis; the evening before for the following morning and the morning before for later in the day.  "Therefore do not think that because there is no availability when you call or go online that means no availability at all for the foreseeable future. So please keep trying to get the test you need," he said.  "Residents should not travel to mainland testing sites when symptomatic. There should be sufficient test availability for you to be tested here and if the system only offers a mainland testing site, please retry or request a home test.  "Of most importance is to only book a test if you have the symptoms of the coronavirus (high temperature, new, persistent cough and/or loss of taste and smell); this is when the current type of test is most effective.  "A test at any time will only be as good as the day it is taken and it is not a predictor of future wellbeing." |