



**SOMERSET**  
County Council

# Somerset's Public Health Update

7 July 2022



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## Keeping Well this Summer

Now summer is finally here, we look forward to doing more of what we enjoy. We all want to keep illness at bay so that we can carry on enjoying the longer days and better weather. There are some simple things we can all do to look after ourselves, family and friends.

Somerset, along with the rest of the country, is seeing an increase in Covid-19 cases. This is most likely being driven by the effects of Covid-19 restrictions ending and greater social mixing combined with the spread of the BA5 strain of the Omicron variant. The Omicron variant is highly infectious and this new strain appears to be causing some reinfections.

To protect yourself and others please ensure that you are up to date with your Covid-19 vaccinations and boosters. If you're aged 30-49 and have not yet had a covid jab, or you know anybody that has not yet stepped forward for theirs, please take advantage of the covid vaccine clinics which are [available across Somerset](#).

Be mindful of those who may be more at risk and continue to:

- Meet outside, or let fresh air in if meeting others indoors
- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly
- Wear a face covering or mask when in busy, indoor or enclosed spaces
- Cover your nose and mouth if you cough or sneeze

If you have symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as Covid-19, you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities, you are advised to try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.



## A word from Cllr Adam Dance, Elected Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity

Recently, we've seen an increase in respiratory infection across the South West, and indeed here in Somerset. The chances are you might know someone who has had Covid, flu or another respiratory infection in recent weeks. By choosing to take simple actions and recognising when you are unwell, you can do your bit to help all those in our community. I'd like to urge anyone who has not yet had all the vaccines they are eligible for, to make sure they take advantage of the walk-in clinics available over the summer.



## Take Advantage of Summer Covid Vaccine Clinics

Throughout the summer, Covid-19 vaccination appointments can be made by calling 119 or [booking online](#). Alternatively, you can visit a walk-in vaccination site without an appointment – see <https://bit.ly/CovidWalkInSomerset> which shows which sites offer what types of dose, and to which groups

[Find out more](#)

## What's been happening across Somerset?



[Find out more](#)

**Professor Sir Chris Whitty was interviewed by Clinton Rogers during his visit to Somerset**

## Professor Sir Chris Whitty Commends Somerset

We have been fortunate to have a visit by the Chief Medical Officer for England, Professor Sir Chris Whitty. He came down to Somerset at the invitation of the Public Health Team within Somerset County Council as we provided a West Somerset case study to the Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer, which focused on the [Health and Wellbeing of Coastal Communities](#). He met a wide variety of people within Cannington, Minehead and Porlock.

Professor Trudi Grant, Somerset County Council's Director of Public Health, said: "Professor Sir Chris was incredibly impressed with Somerset, the way organisations work together and the influence and reach of the Somerset Public Health Team. Our detailed understanding of our local community really came across well. I personally felt it was a huge honour to meet with him - he has provided such amazing leadership throughout the pandemic and has done so much for the people of our country."

[Find out more](#)

Applications are means-tested and can be made by anyone in urgent need of financial support.

[Find out more](#)



## Struggling with bills? Support is available...

Need help with buying food, paying for energy and water bills and other essential household items such as beds and white goods?

Somerset County Council Executive Lead Member for Children Services, Councillor Tessa Munt said: "The cost-of-living crisis affects us all. Inflation and rising energy prices are hitting households hard and adding a lot to our weekly bills so this help is well-timed, and no one in difficulty need feel left out.

"I'm pleased we can help families with children eligible for Free School Meals during the summer holidays. We know food vouchers make a big difference in combatting holiday hunger, but these funds also mean there's more support for families who need it, whether that's for energy and water bills, or other essentials."

[Find out more](#)



[Find out more](#)

Any families who think they might be eligible for the scheme who have not yet applied, [should look into applying online.](#)

## Healthy Start Vouchers

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk.

Check if you're eligible by applying today. If you're eligible, you'll be sent a Healthy Start card with money on it that you can use in some UK shops. Pre-payment will be uploaded onto this card every 4 weeks. You can use your card to buy:

- plain liquid cow's milk
- fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables
- fresh, dried, and tinned pulses
- infant formula milk based on cow's milk

You can also use your card to collect:

- Healthy Start vitamins – these support you during pregnancy and breastfeeding
- Vitamin drops for babies and young children – these are suitable from birth to 4 years old

Information on how to apply for the scheme and for anyone who wants to check if they're eligible to apply can be found at [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)

[Find out more](#)



[Find out more](#)

**A free cardiovascular health check is via the NHS Health Checks programme.**

Visit <https://somersethealthchecks.co.uk/> to check eligibility.

## Get Your Blood Pressure Checked

Did you know that you can now rent a blood pressure monitor from your local library? Two hundred blood pressure monitor kits have been provided by Somerset County Council as part of an initiative to encourage everyone to check their blood pressure.

Professor Trudi Grant, Somerset County Council's Director of Public Health, said: "High blood pressure usually has no symptoms which is why many people don't know they have it. The only way to find out is to have regular blood pressure checks and that is why we are making them as widely accessible as possible. The good news is if you know you have high blood pressure, some small lifestyle changes combined with medication where necessary can help lower high blood pressure and in turn lower the risk of stroke and heart attack."

*For anyone who is not a library member it is really easy to join, either call into your local branch or go online at: <https://lwc.ent.sirsidynix.net.uk/custom/web/registration/>*

[Find out more](#)

## Monkeypox

Recently across the UK, there have been multiple cases of monkeypox, a rare viral infection. Symptoms include a rash, headache and a high temperature. It is mainly spread between direct (skin-to-skin) contact, or coughs and sneezes, but can also be spread by touching clothing, bedding or towels used by someone with the monkeypox rash. Monkeypox usually resolves itself without treatment, with most people recovering within a few weeks. However, severe disease can occur in those who are immunosuppressed, pregnant, or young children. The risk to the UK population is low, however, gay, bisexual or men who have sex with men are at higher risk of becoming infected in this current outbreak. Some of this population will be eligible for a [free vaccine](#).

Local health protection teams are notified if a patient is suspected to have monkeypox. If you are concerned you might have monkeypox, please stay at home and call your local sexual health clinic or 111 for advice.

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[Find out more](#)





## Taunton Pride

We're looking forward to Taunton Pride in Vivary Park, on **Saturday 16 July**. It's a free event, part of Taunton Live Arts Festival. The Festival theme is **Celebrate Educate #IntersectionalALL** – book your free tickets and find details of the day's events at [tauntonpride.co.uk](http://tauntonpride.co.uk).

[Find out more](#)



**This animation explains the 'nicotine monster's' hold and how with support like free Nicotine Replacement Therapy you can break free and quit smoking for good.**

## Smoke Free Life Somerset

Are you in the grip of the Nicotine Monster? Do you want to break free? The My Quit Route App has gone live with an animation, developed by the Smoke Free Life service and Somerset County Council.

Get help today to quit smoking call: 01823 356222 or go to: [Smokefreelife Somerset – Smokefreelife Somerset \(healthysomerset.co.uk\)](http://Smokefreelife Somerset – Smokefreelife Somerset (healthysomerset.co.uk))

[Find out more](#)



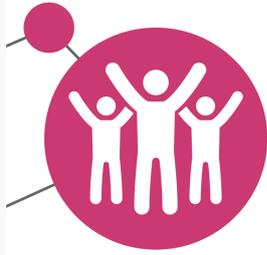
## Mums2Be: Let's Kick it Together

Mothers who smoke during pregnancy will be given incentives to "kick the habit" as part of a package of increased support launched by Somerset County Council.

Let's Kick It Together, a campaign from the Mums2Be Smokefree Service and the NHS, aims to reduce smoking before, during and after pregnancy.

It provides expectant parents and their significant others with support and financial incentives to kick the habit, including a personal Stop Smoking Practitioner, free support and treatment when needed. Additionally, the new [My Quit Route App](#) in a drive to reduce the percentage of people who smoke during pregnancy in the county.

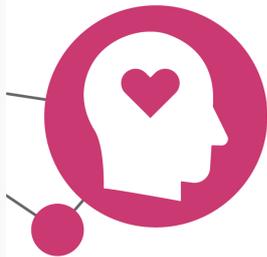
[Find out more](#)



## Infant Feeding and Breastfeeding

The Public Health Nursing service is working with UNICEF as part of the [Baby Friendly Initiative \(BFI\)](#), to achieve Level 3 accredited status, ensuring the highest quality, evidenced based support is provided to parents in relation to **Infant Feeding and Breastfeeding**. Following a recent inspection from UNICEF, the service received positive feedback recommending the service go for the GOLD UNICEF award following reaccreditation status being completed later this year.

[Find out more](#)



## Bereavement Support

We have published an updated version of the Somerset Bereavement Support Booklet, originally published in 2021 during the peak of the pandemic. The booklet has been updated to reflect changes in guidelines and procedures and offers practical help, local contacts and guidance to help you if a loved one has died.

The booklet is available to view here: [Bereavement in Somerset 2022 \(pubhtml5.com\)](#).

[Find out more](#)

Want to take control of your own health and well-being?