

Somerset's Covid-19 Weekly Update

Thursday 24 June 2021

Welcome to the latest edition of the weekly Somerset Covid-19 update for key stakeholders. This update is produced on behalf of the Somerset Covid-19 Engagement Board and is designed to provide a weekly update on the current Covid-19 situation in Somerset.

We are aware that we sound as if we're repeating ourselves with the basic messages each week, but that's because they are so important! Somerset remains in a relatively good position compared with many local authorities across the country, but our cases have doubled again this week and we urge everyone to continue to follow all guidance, particularly as the Delta variant is proving to be so much more easily transmitted.

Our NHS colleagues have organised a series of walk-in vaccination clinics and you can read more about that on page 6. We are promoting these clinics on our social media and we're also reminding everyone that a single dose will not give the maximum protection against the virus – the best protection comes after the second dose. So please do take advantage of these clinics if you've not had your first or second dose yet.

The following link shows the Somerset Dashboard which tracks our local epidemic from the start in March 2020, to the current time: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/covid-19-dashboard/>

'Remember, everyone can catch it, anyone can spread it'.



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Health
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Somerset Covid Cases

Latest 7 day figures

Number of tests

75138



Number of positive cases

233



7 day rate per 100k

Somerset

41.4

South West

88.4

England

100.4



We're all in it together



HANDS



FACE



SPACE

In the week up to 19 June approximately 75138 tests were carried out across the county and there have been 233 new confirmed cases which is just over double last week. The rate per 100k has also increased from 18.3 to 41.4, however we still remain well below the South West and England rates as you can see in this graphic.

THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES:

The main items featured in this week's update are:

- Workplace, care and school settings
- Vaccine Update
- Testing Update
- Communications Focus
- Self-Isolation guidance
- Access to GPs
- Accessible resources

Workplaces: As we all know Covid hasn't gone away. In fact, it has developed into a more transmissible variant, meaning if it gets into your workforce, it is much more likely to spread quickly. Are your business continuity plans in good shape if you lose a section of the workforce due to cases and close contacts isolating for 10 days? With more people socialising, be aware that a works social event, formal or informal, may result in an unwanted introduction of the virus, especially if people are not following the guidance. A leaving party might just result in more people being absent than you planned for! As always prevention is better than cure, so make sure that any works social that is taking place is in line with guidance - preferably outdoors or failing that in a well ventilated space.

Businesses can give confidence to customers by ensuring that staff without symptoms test regularly to identify if they are carrying the virus and support them to self isolate while they are still infectious. There are some very useful posters which can be downloaded from here which can show people your staff are testing regularly: [Posters - Coronavirus Resource centre](#)

Workplace Testing Extension: In line with the delay to Stage 4 of the Roadmap, workplace testing will continue into July for those businesses that registered for workplace testing by 12 April. Those businesses will be able to order free tests until 19 July.

Please also make sure that you are aware of the requirements to self-isolate if you are a close contact of a confirmed case of Covid-19, and from this week getting a PCR test if you are a non-household close contact of a case..

It is important for all business to be Covid-19 secure and there is some excellent guidance here: [Working-safely-during-covid-19](#)

Care Sector: Cases of Covid remain low in care settings across Somerset.

Care home visits: It is recognised that visits for care home residents are an important part of their life. Guidance has been updated this week which sets out the approach care homes should take to plan and support visits into and out of the home to be as safe as possible.

- Residents can nominate five named visitors each, with two visitors being able to visit each day subject to the visiting arrangements specific to each care home.
- For visits into care homes, all care home residents will be able to nominate an essential care giver. These essential care givers will be able to visit the care home resident, even if the resident is isolating.

- Visitors are required to show proof of a negative Covid 19 test before a visit and should follow local care home guidance on infection and prevention control measures when visiting a care home.

Most visits out of care homes (apart from overnight stays in hospital and other high-risk visits) should be supported without the need to isolate on return to the care home. Full details. Admission into care homes from the community are no longer required to isolate, See [Guidance on care home visiting](#)

Mandatory vaccinations for care staff: Consultation outcome: [Making vaccination a condition of deployment in older adult care homes](#)

- The new legislation means from October (subject to Parliamentary approval and a subsequent 16-week grace period) anyone working in a CQC registered care home in England for residents requiring nursing or personal care must have 2 doses of a Covid 19 vaccine unless they have a medical exemption.
- It will apply to all workers employed directly by the care home or care home provider (on a full-time or part-time basis), those employed by an agency and deployed by the care home and volunteers deployed in the care home.
- Those coming into care homes for other work, for example healthcare workers, tradespeople, hairdressers and beauticians, and CQC inspectors will also have to follow the new regulations, unless they have a medical exemption.

Bulk upload spreadsheet for coronavirus tests: From 1 July 2021, all Adult Social Care settings, along with care homes will be able to use the bulk upload spreadsheet process for registration of test results. A webinar on 23 June 2021 will run through this process. [Sign up to bulk uploading of test results webinar](#)

Somerset Adult Social Care Provider Survey: There is a week left for care providers to provide feedback in this survey about how supported you have felt during the pandemic, what you consider is important for the people you care for, your staff and your business or organisation as we recover from the pandemic. The survey shouldn't take long to complete. Closing date is 30 June [Complete the Somerset Adult Social Care Provider Survey](#)

Shiny Mind app: Shiny Mind is a free Resilience and Wellbeing App designed specifically for Health and Care staff, where the very nature of the job can expose the staff to daily stress and pressure. [Find out more about Shiny Mind](#)

Further information: Information and guidance related to Covid 19 within Adult Social Care settings is updated regularly, including guidance on PPE, testing, vaccinations, visiting and working safely within care homes, home care and day care – please visit [Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

Schools and Early Years settings: We are seeing a number of cases in schools and other education settings and have seen a number of children who are close contacts who need to self-isolate as a result. This is very disruptive to education and we need to all continue to do our best to try and keep Covid-19 infections out of education settings.

There are several ways we can do this.

- We would advise that all educational staff, pupils aged over 11 years and the parents/carers of school aged children continue to take part in twice weekly asymptomatic testing.
- If anyone in the household is experiencing any of the symptoms of Covid-19, please continue to isolate, seek a PCR test and await the result.
- If you are asked to self-isolate as a close contact of someone with Covid-19, we are now asking you to get a PCR test – this is called case finding and will help us to identify cases of Covid-19. You need to complete the full 10 days of isolation, even if that PCR result is negative.

Vaccination Update: The local NHS is setting up a series of walk-in vaccination centres to make it easier for everyone to get either their first or second dose.



Covid vaccination drop-ins available!

NHS
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Please check on social media for any updates, but at present, the dates we've been given are as follows:

Friday 25 June

Taunton Racecourse: 10am – 6pm for second dose AstraZeneca

The Bath and West Showground: 10am – 6pm for first dose Pfizer

Saturday 26 June

Yeovil Gateway Centre: for first dose Pfizer 12.00 – 4pm

Day Lewis Pharmacy, Burnham-on-Sea Rugby Football Club: 5.00pm – 7.00pm for first dose Pfizer and second dose AstraZeneca

Taunton Racecourse: 8am – 8pm for second dose AstraZeneca

Sunday 27 June

Taunton Racecourse: 8am – 8pm for second dose AstraZeneca

The Bath and West Showground: 10am – 5pm for second dose AstraZeneca

Vaccinations also continue to be available for anyone in priority groups 1-12 who have not yet taken up the offer of a vaccine, by booking an appointment through the National Booking Service, or using one of the walk-in clinics. JCVI are advising a preference for a vaccine other than AstraZeneca to be offered to healthy people under 40 years of age. This is being delivered at all Somerset vaccination sites.

And as more people are now being offered their second dose, we urge you to please accept it at your earliest convenient date, 8 weeks after your first dose. A single jab will not give the maximum protection against the virus – the best protection comes after the second. All three vaccines, Pfizer, Oxford AstraZeneca and Moderna are up to 90 per cent effective after two doses. Getting the second dose will boost your immune response and ensure you are better protected from the virus should you be exposed.

This week's Covid Catch up film presented by former BBC news correspondent Clinton Rogers focuses on the vaccination roll out. He interviews some of our younger residents who were keen to receive their first dose, and reminds us all of the importance of getting

our second dose for maximum protection. You can watch it here: [Somerset Covid Catch up - Week 29, 23 June 2021 - YouTube](#)

Do you have, or know someone who has concerns over receiving the Covid-19 Vaccine? Our team of trained Vaccination buddies are here to help! The programme, in partnership with Spark Somerset, enables people to be offered support via a 'buddy' who can help them to make informed decisions about having the Covid-19 vaccination.

People can be [referred \(or self-refer\)](#) to the scheme and a Vaccination Buddy will contact them by phone to discuss their concerns and offer information and reassurance. Vaccination Buddies come from all walks of life and have the necessary skills and knowledge to support people in a friendly, non-judgemental way.

Full information regarding the vaccination program can be found here: [Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#)

Testing for coronavirus: In a PHE technical briefing published on 18 June (found here: [SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern and variants under investigation \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)) it states that over 80 per cent of cases in England now have a variant test performed on them, and the most recent data shows that the Delta variant comprises 91 per cent of sequenced cases. Whilst evidence suggests the vaccine effectiveness against hospitalisation is maintained for the Delta variant – cases are rising. Unfortunately, the Delta variant is even more transmissible than previous strains that have circulated.

We say this each week, but identification of cases through testing is the cornerstone for being able to break transmission and reduce the spread of the infection. Lateral flow tests are extremely good at identifying when people have a lot of the virus in their system but are not displaying symptoms. To be able to see friends and family and keep them as safe as possible, testing yourself twice a week by lateral flow test is just as important as it's always been. You can order [lateral flow tests online to be delivered to your home](#), call 119 to have a kit home delivered through the post, or collect a kit at [a local pharmacy](#). For further information on lateral flow tests, including a video showing how to perform one, you can visit our website [here](#). Just to note: now that we are in summer, take care to store your supply of lateral flow tests somewhere cool, as the kits

need to remain between 15-30 degrees Celsius.

The advice is to seek a PCR test if:

- You have symptoms of COVID-19 infection
- You have had a positive lateral flow test
- You have been identified as being a close contact to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. You are advised to get a PCR test as soon as you are notified as being a close contact. Whilst this does not remove the need for self isolation, it helps identify cases sooner and contact tracing can commence more quickly.

You can order a PCR test at a test site, or order a home testing PCR kit by calling 119 or [ordering online](#).



Finally, please watch out for some new graphics and animated 'gifs' encouraging residents to test twice a week. Aimed particularly at our younger residents, they will start appearing as adverts and on our social media pages from this weekend. Please look out for them and share them with your followers.

Communications Focus: In the last week, in partnership with Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor, we launched a new campaign thanking Somerset residents and visitors for adhering to the Covid-19 guidance and encouraging them to keep on doing so.



Even with the latest government announcement to the delay in the roadmap, people are continuing to travel around and into the county and it is of utmost importance to communicate safety messages to people in a way they will respond and resonate with – especially in light of rising cases of the delta variant.

We know some people are experiencing fatigue with current messaging having lived with Covid-19 for so long; so by taking a fresh approach seen to be led locally by Public Health at Somerset County Council, we hope to engage on a different level, encouraging people to enjoy the summer and new freedoms but remembering the all-important actions we all must take to truly combat Covid-19, avoiding further pressures on the system and future lockdowns.

If you would like the full communications toolkit please email ghaslock@somerset.gov.uk

Self-Isolation guidance: If someone tests positive for Covid-19 it is vital they self-isolate to prevent the spread. By doing this as quickly as possible it helps to protect friends, family and the local community.

Those isolating may be eligible to access the test and trace support payment scheme, which provides a £500 payment to help during their isolation.

If they do not meet the eligibility criteria for the test and trace support payment, there are other local organisation such as the [Village Agents](#) who will explore what other support options are available based on the individual needs.

Full information, including how to apply for the £500 grant can be found here: [Self Isolating Guidance](#)

Access to GP Services: We are hoping the people of Somerset will continue to be patient and perhaps consider one of the alternatives to using a GP. These include:

Pharmacy - As lockdown eases, don't forget your local high-street [pharmacist](#) can provide health advice and help with minor illnesses like coughs and colds, sunburn, hay fever and diarrhoea. You don't need an appointment and they can even provide you with the right medicines at the same time.

Mindline - if you, or someone you know, is struggling with their mental wellbeing, our 24/7 [Mindline](#) is open to people of all ages. Just ring 01823 276 892.

111 First - The 111 service is available 24/7 to provide advice, treatment and care. Just ring 111 or visit <https://111.nhs.uk/> and the service will provide advice and refer you to another service if you need it; if you need to be seen in person they can book you a time slot.

Minor injury units - Don't forget - A&E is for life-threatening emergencies. There's also a network of [Minor Injury Units](#) to provide the treatment you need – often they'll see you quicker and closer to home.

You can read an open letter from the NHS regarding this by following this link: [Please support our GP practices - open letter to everyone in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#)

Resources and further information: Please do keep an eye on our Healthy Somerset website, which has a huge amount of information and resources to help keep everyone healthy happy and safe at this time: <https://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/covid-19/>

For the latest local information as well as digital resources, posters and flyers please visit: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

The Somerset Local Outbreak Management Plan outlines how we, the council, will work with the NHS Test and Trace Service, PHE, the NHS and other partners to ensure a whole system approach to preventing and managing local outbreaks. This can be found [here](#).

Finally, please like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and share our posts with your networks to help us in communicating these important messages. Follow our Director of Public Health account too [here](#).