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Somerset's Covid-19 Update

Friday 11 March 2022

Welcome to the latest edition of the weekly Somerset Covid-19 update for key stakeholders and subscribers. 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.

Please be aware you are receiving this email because you have previously subscribed to Covid-19 updates from SCC or were a part of the Stakeholder mailing list. If you no longer wish to receive these mails you can use the 'unsubscribe' link at the bottom of the update.



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The Current Picture



**Somerset
Coronavirus
Helpline**

(The helpline is available from **8am to 6pm** every day, including weekends).

The legal requirement to self-isolate has been removed in England and replaced with [guidance for living](#)

[safely with the virus.](#)

Case numbers remain high across the County and have increased in the last week so we should all continue to do all we can to help prevent the transmission of Covid-19, especially to the most vulnerable in our communities.



Although most of the legal restrictions have been lifted, the SCC Public Health team still advise that basic infection control measures should be followed, as these will help slow the transmission of many seasonal illnesses and have a positive impact on reducing sickness levels and improving business continuity. These include keeping occupied spaces well ventilated, regularly washing your hands and wearing a face covering in crowded or indoor spaces.

The Covid-19 vaccination remains the best form of defence that we have against the virus. Anyone who has not already booked their jab can do so quickly and easily at [Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#).

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



Top Headlines This Week

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

- Schools, Workplace and Care settings
- Vaccinations Update
- Testing Update
- Top tips for staying healthy this spring
- Covid Catch-up Film
- Resources and further information



Somerset Covid Cases



Somerset Covid Cases

Latest 7 day figures

Number of tests

111127



Number of positive cases

3338



Please grab your jab!



7 day rate per 100k

Somerset

593.7

South West

534.3

England

394.6

In the week ending 6 March, approximately 111,127 tests were carried out across the county. There were 3,338 new confirmed cases identified by these tests. The rates of Covid-19 in Somerset remain high and have increased in the last reporting week to 593.7 per 100,000. This is above both the South-West average and the national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset has **increased by a significant amount** over the last week to around 130 Covid-19 in-patients in Somerset hospitals.

[Covid-19 Dashboard](#)

Please note the Public Dashboard is being reviewed following changes to the national policy. This week, the Office for National Statistics shows that around one in every 30 people have coronavirus, and in Somerset, we

Setting Specific Updates



Schools & Early Years

Regular twice weekly LFD testing in mainstream education and childcare settings **has been stood down** as it is no longer proportionate, with the exception of special school settings. This is because we know that the risk of severe illness from Covid-19 in most children and most fully vaccinated adults is very low, and our successful vaccination programme has achieved a high rate of take-up.

Symptoms of Covid or a Positive Test: Children and young people who test positive for Covid-19 are advised not to attend their education setting while they are likely to be infectious. They should take an LFD test from 5 days after their symptoms started (or the day their test was taken if they did not have symptoms) followed by another one the next day. If both these test results are negative, they should return to their educational setting if they normally attend one, if they feel well enough to do so and do not have a temperature. They should continue to follow the guidance for their educational setting.

Welcoming children back to the setting: In most cases, parents and carers will agree a child with the key symptoms of Covid-19 (listed above) should not attend the setting, given the potential risk to others. If a parent or carer insists on a child attending your setting where they have a confirmed or suspected case of Covid-19, the school can take the decision to refuse the child if, in their reasonable judgement, it is necessary to protect other children and staff from possible infection of Covid-19.

Workplaces:

The updated guidance on working safely can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-Covid-19>

Covid sickness policies: With the requirement in law to isolate if you have Covid-19 now repealed, free LFD testing coming to an end for most workers from April, and a return to standard statutory sick pay rules coming later this month, you may be wondering what the implications for your business might be.

Do you want to reduce the number of staff absences from work?

Before Covid-19, people often went into work with cold and flu-like symptoms, inevitably spreading the cold virus to colleagues and customers and resulting in more staff off work or the virus affecting their work abilities.



What can we all do to change this?

As an employer you can make your policy clear, as the county council has done with its staff, that you should not come into the workplace with cold or flu-like symptoms, and work from home if you can. Let's start to change the presenteeism culture.

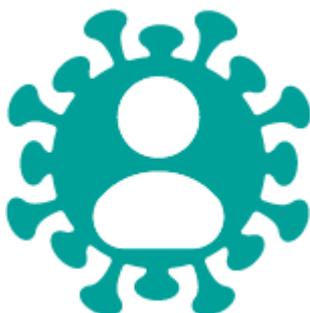
What should a sickness absence policy consider?

In addition to the policy line, we need to consider the implications of the wider sickness policies, for example, will workers be substantially out of pocket if they take a few days sickness absence to self-isolate to protect the wider workforce? Each employer will need to consider how best to support staff to do the right thing for themselves and the business, as passing on Covid-19 (or any other virus) to fellow workers may well have business continuity implications.

Have you considered funding Covid-19 tests? People with the Omicron strain may show no symptoms, or if they do show symptoms, they are often just like other respiratory diseases

People with the Omicron strain may show no symptoms, or, if they do show symptoms, they are often just like other respiratory diseases such as the common cold and flu. The most common symptoms experienced are runny nose, sore throat, headache and fatigue, so without testing it is impossible to know if you have Covid-19 or a cold or flu. Some employers may choose to continue funding LFD tests, which will help them to stop Covid-19 spreading amongst their workforce and reduce further absences.

We encourage all businesses to consider their sickness absence policies and, very importantly, the culture they wish to have in place for how staff behave if they develop respiratory symptoms.



Care Settings

Despite the national removal of the legal requirement for people with Covid-19 to self-isolate, due to the higher risk nature of health and social care settings, the advice for residents and staff members working in these settings has not changed. **Health and social care staff are required to follow the specific guidance for this sector and not guidance for the general population.**

The key guidance documents that care settings are required to follow are:

- [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): admission and care of people in care homes](#) - updated 9 March 2022
- [Covid-19: management of staff and exposed patients and residents in health and social care settings](#) - updated 24 February 2022
- For all care setting testing requirements, please refer to [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) testing for adult social care services](#) – updated 16 February 2022

It remains crucial to adhere to strict Infection Prevention and Control and continuing use of PPE, ensuring adequate ventilation, regular testing and ensuring staff, including any new personnel, take up the offer of vaccination, including boosters. It is also important for visitors and essential care givers to follow good IPC measures and test prior to entering care settings to keep their loved ones free of Covid-19 and other infections.

Vaccinations & Boosters



There are bookings and walk-in clinics available **NOW** across Somerset.

Book yours here!

As legally mandated restrictions are being lifted, our first lines of defence (like vaccination) become even more vital. Vaccines remain our primary mitigating measure against severe disease and illness from Covid-19 and it is because of the success of the vaccination programme that we have been able to move into the next phase of living safely with Covid-19.

Over 80% of eligible residents have received two doses of the vaccination.

The Vaccination Programme is working with health and community partners to identify locations for mobile vaccination pop-up clinics. By localising the offer, the programme aims to reduce barriers to access and better understand community needs.

Plenty of walk-in appointments are available across the county. Please check our local NHS website [Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#) to find clinics in your area or use the national portal to find a clinic: www.nhs.uk/grab-a-jab.

You can also pre-book an appointment. To do this, visit www.nhs.uk/Covid-Vaccination or call 119 for an appointment. The helpline has over 200 languages available if you or someone you know requires an interpreter.

NHS staff are ready to welcome you whether it's for your first, second, or third dose.

Area	Vaccination Centre	Dates	Timings	Location	
South Somerset	Haynes Motor Museum	Mon - Fri	09.00 – 17.00	Sparkford, Yeovil, BA22 7LH	Walk in & bookable
South Somerset	Dillington House	Weekly on Weds & Thurs	16.00 – 20.00	Illminster, TA19 9DT	Bookable
SWAT	Firepool, Taunton	Mon - Thurs	09.00 – 17.00	Canal Road, Taunton, TA1 1NY	Walk in & bookable
SWAT	Wellington Community Hospital	Mondays in March	09.00 – 13.00	Bulford Lane, Wellington, TA21 8QQ	Walk in
Sedgemoor	Bridgwater Town Hall	Fridays in March	09.00 – 17.00	High St, Bridgwater, TA6 3BL	Walk in
Sedgemoor	Jhoots Pharmacy	Mon - Fri	09.00 – 17.00	Victoria Park Drive, Bridgwater TA6 7AS	Walk in and Bookable
Sedgemoor	Bridgwater And Albion Rfc	Sundays	09.00 – 11.00 and 15.00 – 17.00	Bridgwater And Albion RFC (Cranleigh Gardens Pharmacy)	Walk in and Bookable
Sedgemoor	Auction / Market at Junction 24	Saturday 12 th & 26 th March	08.00 – 15.00	Market Way, North Petherton TA6 6DF	Walk in
Sedgemoor	Sydenham Pantry	Weds 16 th & Weds 30 th March	13.00 – 18.00	Community Hub, Fairfax Road, Bridgwater, TA6 4HX	Walk in
Sedgemoor	Hamp Pantry	Thurs 31 st March	13.00 – 18.00	Grenville House, Rhode Lane, TA6 6JE	Walk in
SWAT	Priorswood Community Centre	Saturday 12 th & Saturday 19 th March	09.00 – 15.00 14.00 – 18.00	Priorswood Community Centre 13-14 Priorswood Place, Taunton, TA2 7JW	Walk in
SWAT	Wiveliscombe Community Hall	Weds 16 th & Weds 30 th Mar	14.00 – 18.00	West St, Wiveliscombe, Taunton TA4 2JP	Walk in

Local walk in centres can be found [here](#).

Bookings can be made through [the national booking service](#) or by calling 119.

Spring Covid-19 vaccine for most vulnerable

The UK Health Security Agency has published guidance on the spring Covid-19 booster offer for those aged 75 years, older residents in care homes and those aged 12 years and over with a weakened immune

system. Further info can be found [here](#). Appointments will be available through the national vaccination booking service shortly <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

Vaccination for 5 -11 year olds

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has now advised a non-urgent offer of two 10 mcg doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine to children aged 5 to 11 years of age who are not in a clinical risk group.

The NHS will prepare to extend this non-urgent offer to all children during April. Further details are expected in the coming weeks.



Please note: If a child has tested positive for Covid-19 and is not at high risk from Covid-19, they need to wait 12 weeks before they can have a Covid-19 vaccine. This starts from the date they had symptoms, or the date of the positive test if they did not have symptoms.

Information for parents and carers on Covid-19 vaccination for at risk 5 to 11 year olds: Children aged five to 11 years old who are clinically at risk from coronavirus, or who live with someone who is immunosuppressed, are now eligible for a lower, paediatric dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. All eligible children will have been contacted by their GP or local NHS inviting them to book an appointment through a local booking system at their GP practice or a nearby vaccination centre. Currently this group will not be able to book through the national booking system.

Further information is available in the [guide for parents of children aged 5 to 11 years](#) published by UKHSA along with some [frequently asked questions](#) on the vaccination programme including information on eligibility, accessibility and advice for parents of children at high risk from Covid-19.

Please note: If a child has tested positive for Covid-19 and is not at high risk from Covid-19, they need to wait 12 weeks before they can have a Covid-19 vaccine. This starts from the date they had symptoms, or the date of the positive test if they did not have symptoms.

There are new clinics starting regularly in other areas in the coming weeks. Please [check Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG for up to date information](#)

NHS

COVID 19 protection for

YOU

Your family & friends



BRIDGWATER



The Covid-19 vaccination is the first line of defence against the coronavirus.

Most people in your area have had their jabs, but if you are one of the few that hasn't you can easily find a walk-in clinic or make an appointment near you.

<https://bit.ly/CovidInfoSomerset>

Covid-19 Testing



Order lateral flow tests

Free testing in England will come to an end on 31 March, with most people having to pay for PCR and lateral flow tests from 1 April.

In the meantime, free [Lateral Flow Tests are still available to order online](#). You can order one pack online every 3 days. A pack contains 7 tests.

You can also call 119 free from mobiles and landlines. Lines are open every day, 7am to 11pm. 119 provides support in 200 languages. [SignVideo](#) is a free online British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter service for 119.

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Although the Test and Trace Support Payment ended on 24 February 2022, anyone who was required to self-isolate on or before 23 February 2022, will have 42 days from the first day of their self-isolation period to submit a claim. For those applying, you check whether you are eligible for a support payment here: [Claiming financial support under the Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#).

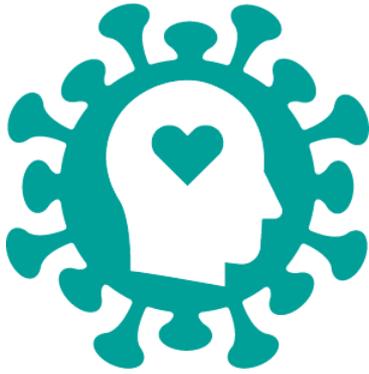
From 24 February 2022, if you stayed at home due to a positive result for Covid-19 or because you are displaying Covid-19 symptoms, you may be eligible for other government support, such as Universal Credit and Employment and Support Allowance. More information can be seen at: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>.

Free Health Checks

You may be eligible for a free NHS health check. Health checks are offered for free to all 40-74 year olds with no pre-existing health conditions.

Health checks are designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. As we get older we have a higher risk of developing one of these conditions. During the pandemic Health Checks were put on hold but they're now up and running again! Head to www.somersethealthchecks.co.uk for more information.





Want to take control of your own health and wellbeing?

While some may be relieved to see the end of Covid restrictions, please consider that others may feel significant stress and anxiety. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and remind each other that staying healthy is as much about your mind as it is about your body.

Mindline Somerset is a confidential listening service, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Their volunteers offer a friendly ear, and can provide help or support with emotional health and wellbeing. The number to call is **01823 276 892**.

Everyone's mental wellbeing changes throughout their life, but it's important not to just put up with poor mental health. If you're concerned about how you are feeling, please speak to your GP or visit [Every Mind Matters – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/everymind).

Covid Catch Up Film

This week Clinton discusses the importance of ensuring children receive their MMR vaccination as national figures have shown a decline since the beginning of the pandemic.

Please click the image below to watch.



Resources & 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](#).

Please like us on [Facebook](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and share our posts with your networks to help us communicate these important messages.

We would really welcome your feedback on this email update, so please email any comments to the team using GHaslock@somerset.gov.uk.

Finally, please follow Trudi Grant, our Director of Public Health's Twitter account [here](#).

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**We're all in it together**



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