

# Somerset's Covid-19 Weekly Update

Thursday 10 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.

While we await confirmation from the Government about what will happen to the roadmap out of lockdown on 21 June, it is vitally important that we all remain vigilant to the risk that Covid-19 still poses. Our case rate has risen slightly since last week's update, and with big sporting events to look forward to, and a Delta variant circulating that we believe to be around 40 per cent more transmissible, we ask you to help us remind everyone of the measures that will keep us all more safe.

If you're out and about visiting a pub or restaurant, then all individuals in your party must remember to check in to the venue using the NHS app, or register your details with the venue if you do not have a smartphone. Staff in hospitality venues should be ensuring compliance with this, and they should also be making sure that there is a good flow of air inside their venue. You can read more about the importance of this in the workplace section on page #

The Covid-19 vaccination programme continues at pace and has now been opened to those aged 25 and over. Also announced this week is an extension to the current UK approval of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine that allows its use for 12-15 year-olds. This was authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) following a rigorous review of the safety, quality and effectiveness of the vaccine in this age group.

The link below 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/>

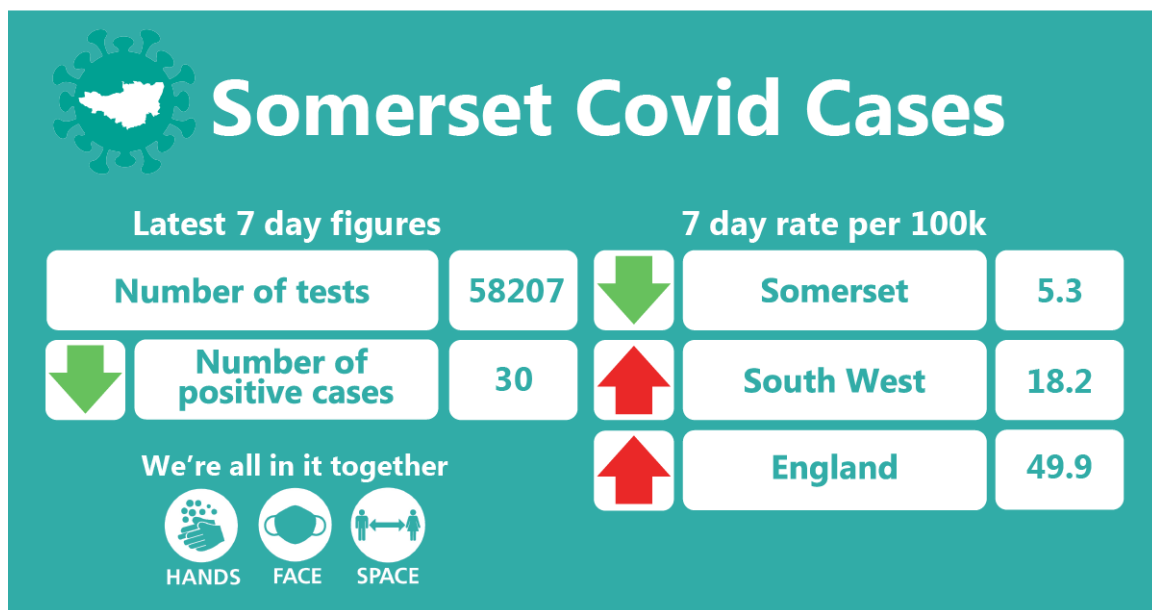
***'Remember, everyone can catch it, anyone can spread it'***



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In the week up to 5 June approximately 58207 tests were carried out across the county and there have been 30 new confirmed cases. The rates have increased since last week, however our rate of 5.3 is still lower than the South West rate of 18.2 which has nearly doubled in the same period.

### THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES:

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

- Workplace, care and school settings
- Vaccination update
- Testing Update
- Communications Focus
- Self-Isolation guidance
- Accessible resources

**Workplaces:** All workplaces need to be very aware of the need for good ventilation, to minimise the spread of Covid-19. It is also important for the required workplaces to make it clear and easy to customers about using QR codes when visiting premises, and the fact that each person in a group needs to register.

This week, we'd like to consider how this works for our hospitality sector. Do you run a pub or restaurant or know someone who does? Our hospitality sector is now well versed in the 'hands, face, space' message that came in last year. But we now know that making sure there is plenty of fresh air circulating indoors is vitally important when people are spending several hours indoors without face coverings, such as when eating and drinking. Please think about the flow of air in your venue – does the air move through the space? This will reduce the chances of virus particles building up in enclosed spaces and make your venue safer for your staff and customers.

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

And please remember - businesses can give confidence to customers by ensuring that staff without symptoms test regularly to identify if they are carrying the virus. 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](#)

**Care Sector:** We are pleased that cases of Covid remain low in care settings across Somerset.

Emotional support for social care staff is available in our new hub, which includes a wellbeing podcast: [Somerset Emotional Wellbeing](#)

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

**Schools and Early Years settings:** We continue to see very little activity in terms of positive cases, however the number of tests being carried out has dropped considerably. As society slowly opens up, please do test twice a week every week if you are symptom free, as this will help to identify those people carrying the virus without being aware of it, and will help us to reduce the spread.

**Vaccination Update:** All people aged **25 and over** are now being offered the vaccine so please go [online](#) or phone 119 to book if you have not already done so and are in this age group.

And if you are offered your second dose – please do accept it at your earliest convenient date, or book it online if offered the chance whilst booking your first vaccine. The second dose has been found to be particularly important in ensuring improved protection.

The vaccine is our best defence against the virus and returning to a more normal way of life. And while the first dose gives some level of immunity against coronavirus, it is vital everyone goes on to receive a second dose – regardless which vaccine you receive.

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 send a powerful reminder for your immune system to attack when necessary.

Full information regarding the vaccination program can be found here:

[Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#)

**The importance of twice weekly testing to help contain the spread of Covid-19:** Case rates of Covid-19 in Somerset are still low, but as we mentioned in the introduction, they have risen slightly. We cannot express how important it is for everyone to use a lateral flow devices (LFD) twice a week when symptom free, and to report both negative and positive results [here](#). This will help us identify asymptomatic cases of the infection and stop transmission into the community.

If you get a positive result on your LFD or have symptoms of Covid-19, then you must get a PCR test. To find out about this, visit: [Coronavirus – Get a test if you have symptoms](#)

To find out more information on when and how to get lateral flow tests, visit:

[Coronavirus – Get a test if you do not have symptoms](#)

You may have noticed that in some of our communications about testing, we have mentioned that the process of testing helps with the identification of variants of the virus. Variants are discovered through ‘whole genome sequencing’, and this can only be

performed on positive PCR samples, which is why it is important to take a PCR test if you have symptoms of Covid-19 or if you have a positive lateral flow test.

**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..

**Communications Focus:** This week, football fans are looking forward to the start of the Euros. And during the course of the summer, many of us will be planning an indoor gathering to watch not only football, but cricket, tennis and attending or holding other events with friends and family.

At present, no more than six people – or two households can meet up indoors, while outdoors, the maximum number is 30. So, if you do plan to gather inside it's crucial to keep fresh air circulating by opening windows and doors, regardless of your vaccination status.

Covid is much easier to pass on indoors through airborne particles, and with the Delta variant estimated to be at least 40 per cent more transmissible than the previous Alpha variant, airflow is even more important than ever.

Last week, we told you that our GP practices have been experiencing a very busy period over the last few weeks and as a result there are a very high number of patients trying to contact them. This means there are currently longer waits for routine appointments than usual at some practices. The NHS in Somerset is doing all it can to reduce waiting times but know there are many people needing healthcare help.

This week's Clinton Covid Catch-up film looks at what this means for you and can be watched here: [https://youtu.be/\\_Pv9k7M4img](https://youtu.be/_Pv9k7M4img)

**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 organisations 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](#)

**Variant Naming Convention Change:** As a reminder, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recently announced a new naming system for the Covid-19 variants of concern which were first identified in various regions of the world to be based on the Greek alphabet.

This is because people often resort to calling the variants by the places where they are detected, which is stigmatizing and discriminatory. To avoid this and to simplify public communications, we encourage everyone to adopt these new labels.

More information can be found at this website: [Tracking SARS-CoV-2 variants](#)

**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](#).