

Somerset's Covid-19 Weekly Update

Thursday 1st September 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.

With the school holiday season drawing to a close, it's time for our children and young people to return to education. We very much hope that their return to school will feel a little more 'normal' than previous terms have, but we do still need it to be safe. With the lifting of restrictions, one of the biggest changes they will experience is that the 'bubble' system will be gone. Group sport, drama and assemblies will all resume, and unless circumstances dictate otherwise, there will no longer be a requirement to wear face coverings while in school.

While some parents and students will be delighted that certain restrictions have gone, we understand that others will feel very anxious. Please be assured that we are continuing to work with our schools and still recommend enhanced cleaning, ventilation and regular handwashing as well as the wearing of face coverings on school transport. If our rates rise further, there might be the need for further measures on a short-term basis, but we will of course inform you about that if the need arises. The latest Covid Catch-up film presented by Clinton Rogers has lots more detail about what students and parents can expect, so please do watch it [here](#) and if you're on social media, share it with your family and friends.

Staying on the subject of our younger residents, we know that around two thirds of the cases we've had recently here are in young people (15-34). While many of the people in this age group will have had one vaccination, a lot of under 18s might not have yet. The NHS has released a video encouraging younger people to get vaccinated and it features several patients who have had serious symptoms or developed long-covid, as well as the doctors and frontline staff who treated them. It aims to remind young people that the virus can still be a serious problem for them, and to encourage them to come forward and be vaccinated. We are sharing it across our social media, or you can watch it [here](#).

As a reminder, all young people aged 16 and 17 years old in England are being offered the vaccine, along with all at-risk people aged 12 to 15. We encourage anyone who is eligible to take up the offer as soon as possible to build vital protection as soon as possible now that the return to education is starting.

Also on the subject of vaccinations, you will be hearing a lot of talk of a booster programme in the national media at the moment. We await a decision about this and a Government spokesperson said, **"We are preparing for a booster programme to ensure those most vulnerable to Covid-19 have protection extended ahead of winter and against new variants. Any booster programme will be based on the final advice of the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)."**

Latest Covid-19 Dashboard: The following link will take you to our website: [Somerset Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). Scroll down the page until you get to '**Covid-19 Dashboard**' in the list. Click on this and the dashboard will open.

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



We're all in it together



David Fothergill
Leader Somerset County Council

Twitter: @DJAFothergill



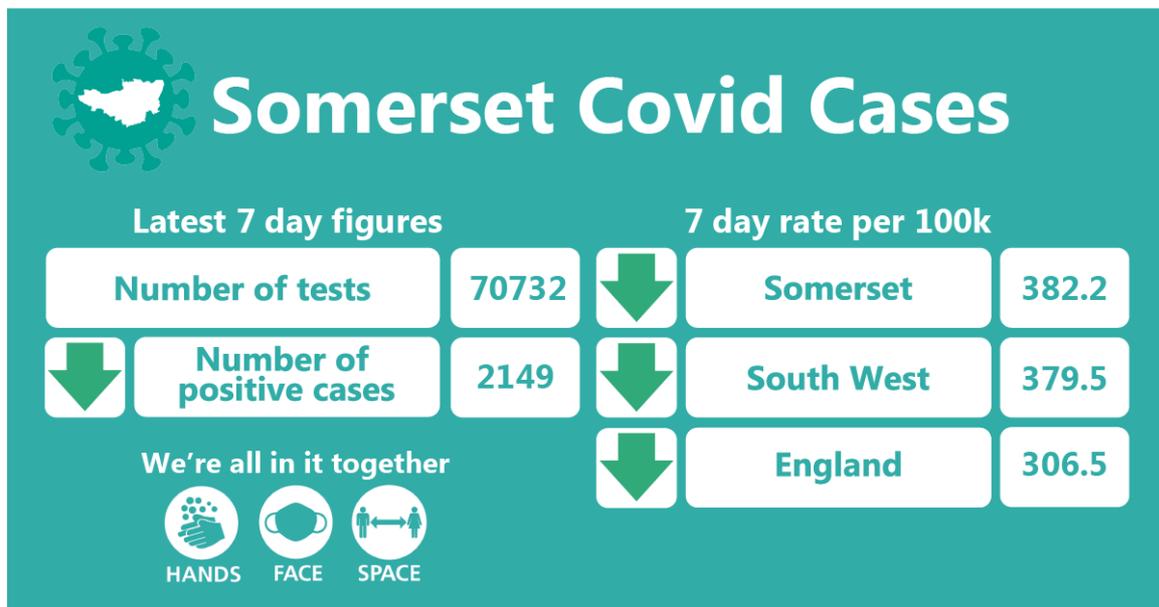
Professor Trudi Grant
Director of Public Health

Twitter: @SomersetDPH



Clare Paul
Cabinet Member for Education and
Public Health

Twitter: @Clarepaul_



In the week up to 28 August approximately 70732 tests were carried out across the county with 2149 new confirmed cases. The rates have decreased to 382.2 per 100,000. South-West rates are the highest in the country and Somerset is just above the regional South-West and national rates.

This Week's Headlines

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

- Workplace, care and school settings
- Vaccination update
- Testing Update
- Resources and further information

Workplaces: The 'Working Safely' guidance provides advice on sensible precautions employers can take to manage risk and support their staff and customers:

[Working safely during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19)

Businesses still have a legal duty to manage risks to those affected by their business and to their employees. The way to do this is to carry out a health and safety risk assessment, including the risk of Covid-19, and to take reasonable steps to mitigate the risks you identify. You should use the guidance to consider the risk within your premises and decide which mitigations are appropriate to adopt.

For business continuity it is still an important control factor to identify the close contacts of cases that have been in the workplace setting, often by speaking to the case. Remember to ask about who they were with at break times and whether they car share. This exercise can help reduce the risk of onward transmission within the workplace. Contacts should be alert to signs and symptoms that could be early signs of covid-19, such as headache and fatigue, and take a home or workplace LFD test to check.

A contact is a person who has been close to someone who has tested positive for Covid-19. You can be a contact any time from two days before the person who tested positive developed their symptoms (or, if they did not have any symptoms, from two days before the date their positive test was taken), and up to 10 days after, as this is when they can pass the infection on to others. A risk assessment may be undertaken to determine this, but a contact can be anyone who has had any of the following types of contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19:

- face-to-face contact including being coughed on or having a face-to-face conversation within one metre
- been within one metre for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- been within two metres of someone for more than 15 minutes (either as a one-off contact, or added up together over one day)

A person may also be a close contact if they have travelled in the same vehicle as a person who has tested positive for Covid-19.

Cases of Covid-19 still need to isolate for 10 days, but if you are a close contact of a case and are fully vaccinated against covid-19 or younger than 18 years and 6 months you do not have to self-isolate.

[Guidance for contacts of people with confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection who do not live with the person - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Care Sector: We have seen an increase in cases of Covid-19 in social care settings and for the week ending 28 August have had 128 cases in 81 settings.

Care home workers and volunteers – mandatory vaccinations

It will be mandatory for care home workers and volunteers to have both Covid 19 vaccinations by 11 November 2021 unless they are exempt. This means that 16 September 2021 is the last date for care home workers to get their first dose to be fully vaccinated when regulations come into force.

[Vaccination of people working or deployed in care homes: operational guidance](#)

Latest testing guidelines

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing in adult care homes](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing for adult day care centre workers and service users](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing for homecare workers](#)

[Testing service for extra care and supported living settings](#)

More information

For information related to Covid 19 for adult care providers please visit [Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board](#) where you will find information on reporting cases of Covid 19, support helplines, webinars and links to guidance.

Schools and Early Years settings: Somerset County Council's Public Health team has been working closely with Public Health England and our education colleagues to prepare for the return of students to educational settings. As Covid-19 becomes a virus that we learn to live with, there is now an imperative to reduce the disruption to children's education - particularly given that the direct clinical risks to children are extremely low, and every adult has been offered a first vaccine and the opportunity for two doses by mid-September.

The evidence is clear that being out of education and childcare causes significant harm to educational attainment, life chances, mental and physical health. Educational settings are expected to have their own contingency plan or outbreak management plan as outlined by national guidance. This will guide staff

through situations where they have positive Covid-19 cases within their community. Our Public Health team has also revamped the notification process to align with national thresholds and guidance.

Secondary schools and colleges are offering two tests on-site at the start of term, followed by continued regular testing at home.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/back-to-school-campaign-launches>

Resources are being published on the SSE website as they become available:
[COVID-19 Guidance and information page | Support Services for Education](#)

Vaccination Update:

For the latest information about the Somerset vaccination programme follow this link: [Homepage - Somerset CCG T](#)

16 and 17 year olds are now able to go online to book their vaccinations. Alternatively, use the link below to find out more about where the local 'Grab a Jab' clinics are taking place this week. [Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#)

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has produced a toolkit to encourage COVID-19 vaccine uptake for young people and promote the benefits of the vaccine. **Resources including video, social, digital display and radio are all available to download now** [here](#)

[Young People Vaccines - Coronavirus Resource centre \(phe.gov.uk\)](#)

Do you have, or know someone who has concerns over receiving the Covid-19 Vaccine? We have a team of trained Vaccination buddies who are here to help! The programme 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.

We also have an excellent video introducing one of our Vaccination Buddies which can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/Ri1F2RZ1c1s>

Testing: A few weeks ago, we informed you that there would be two different lateral flow device kits in circulation - the Orient Gene kit and the Acon Flowflex kit – both nasal only kits that provide a result in 15 minutes. We have since been informed, that due to stock availability issues, the Innova nose and throat kits will be returning until at least mid-September. This kit requires swabbing of both the tonsils and nostrils and the result takes 30 minutes. Please be aware of this change, and make sure that you always read the kit instructions before you do your test, as they will differ slightly.

In light of children returning to school next week, we would also like to remind you that if you have previously received a positive Covid PCR test result, you should not re-test yourself by either using a rapid lateral flow kit or by having another PCR test within 90 days of the first positive result **unless** you develop any new symptoms of Covid-19.

For people who **do not** have symptoms of Covid-19, it remains very important to participate in twice weekly asymptomatic testing if you are out and about and meeting up with people. Please make sure that you take a test **before** you travel anywhere and if it is positive, stay at home and arrange a PCR test. If you would like more information about lateral flow testing, please look at our website: [Coronavirus – Get a test if you do not have symptoms](#)

You can call 119 or click on the following link to order [lateral flow tests online to be delivered to your home](#). You can also collect a kit at [a local pharmacy](#). For the time being, while pharmacies use up existing stock, you may still be given one of the old Innova test kits. Please remember to report your LFT result here [Report a COVID-19 rapid lateral flow test result](#)

If you have symptoms of Covid-19 it is important that you take a PCR test, which can be done by phoning 119 or ordering a test here: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

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 [LinkedIn](#) and share our posts with your networks to help us communicate these important messages.

Follow our Director of Public Health account [here](#).