

Somerset's Covid-19 Weekly Update

Friday 10th 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.

This week, the Health and Social Care Secretary announced he had accepted the recommendations from the Independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to offer a third vaccine dose to people aged 12 and over with severely weakened immune systems, as they are particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 and may have received less protection against the virus from two doses. The NHS will contact all people who fall into this category as soon as possible to discuss their individual needs.

The Government has stressed this is not the start of the booster programme and said it continues to plan for this to begin later this month to ensure the protection people have built from vaccines is maintained over time and ahead of the winter. It said priority will be given to those most at risk from Covid-19 and we will keep you updated as we receive more information on this.

At a local level, it was also announced this week that the large vaccination centre will move from its existing location at Taunton Racecourse to a new site at Firepool in Taunton in early October.

Pre-booked vaccination appointments and walk-ins will continue to run seven days a week until the new site is ready to open. People aged over 17 and three quarters can book a slot through the National Booking Service, or if aged 16 and over – you can walk-in to get a Pfizer jab every day between 8.30am and 7pm, without booking first. We will keep you updated as the move progresses.

Our case numbers in Somerset remain steady but, with the increase in testing due to schools returning, we are expecting case numbers to rise, and it is vital for secondary school and college aged children, households of all age school children and staff in schools to participate in asymptomatic testing, to identify children and staff who are infectious before they go back to school to stop the spread of the virus.

Finally, while it might seem early to be thinking about Remembrance Day, we would like to remind anyone who is planning for it of the guidance from last year. We will let you know as soon as this guidance is updated:

[Local authority preparations for Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day](#)

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. Please note that the data reported in this document may differ slightly from the data showing on the dashboard because of discrepancies in reporting periods.

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



David Fothergill
Leader Somerset County Council

Twitter: @DJAFothergill



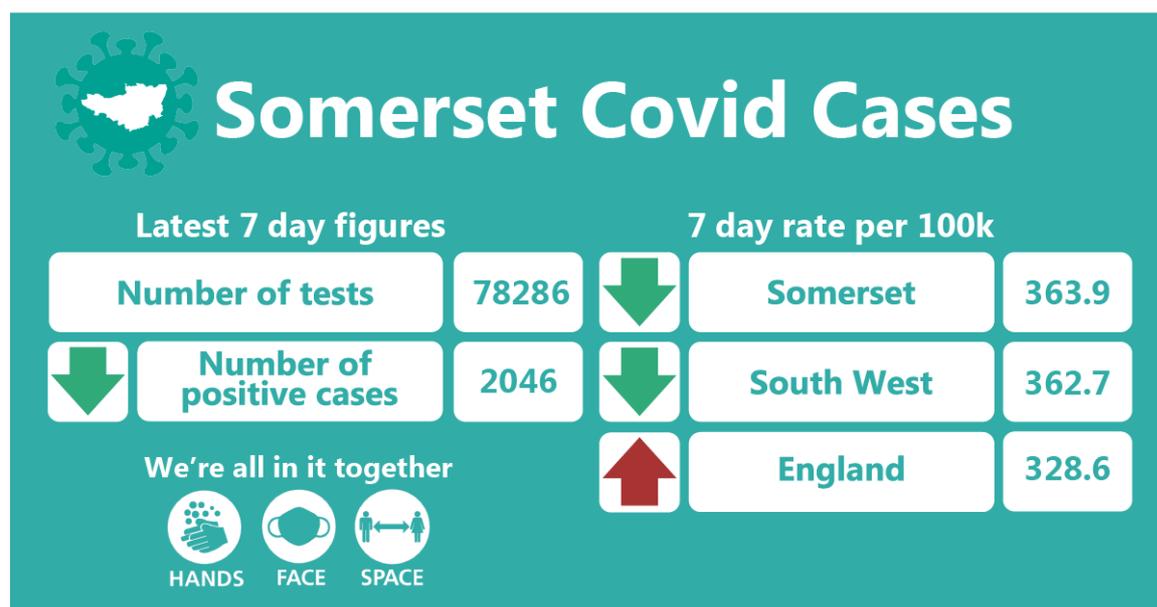
Professor Trudi Grant
Director of Public Health

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Clare Paul
Cabinet Member for Education and Public Health

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In the week up to 4 September approximately 78286 tests were carried out across the county with 2046 new confirmed cases. The rates have decreased slightly from 382.2 to 363.9 per 100,000, though we remain above the national average of 328.6 per 100,000.

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

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

Workplaces: There has been a rise in case numbers amongst working age people therefore it important for everyone to continue to follow the guidance and retain their regular testing routines.

As we discussed last week, businesses still have a legal duty to manage the risks to those affected by their business and to their employees by carrying out a Covid-19 risk assessment and to take reasonable steps to mitigate the risks identified.

With the school-aged children returning to education this week, risk assessments need to be reviewed regularly in view of the numbers of cases within your local community. To protect your business continuity and staff, you may wish to upgrade your infection control measures, such as increased ventilation and re-instigating mask wearing/social distancing, if cases rise significantly.

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

Parents/Carers of all school age children are asked to continue to undertake twice weekly lateral flow testing. For employers of these parents/carers, establishing a culture of testing, encouraging testing and making it a normal part of the week can go a long way to prevent asymptomatic individuals coming to their

workplace during their infectious period. There will be times when your employees are living with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 but are exempt from self-isolating. Even if they are fully vaccinated, they can still be infected with Covid-19 and pass it on to others. Staff may choose not to share this information with you, therefore promoting messages about how they can help protect others will be key.

The general government guidance for close contacts of cases of Covid-19, who are exempt from self-isolation, includes getting a PCR test and also considering:

- limiting close contact with other people outside your household, especially in enclosed spaces
- wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces and where you are unable to maintain social distancing
- limiting contact with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable
- taking part in twice weekly [LFD testing](#)

[Guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread](#)

Care Sector: We continue to see cases of Covid-19 in social care settings and for the week ending 4 September 2021 there have been 63 cases at 51 settings across Somerset. We are seeing slight rises in both resident and staff cases in care homes in Somerset, however they are notably lower than other areas in the South-West. This shows the importance of following the guidance for good infection prevention controls when visiting care homes.

Care home workers and volunteers – mandatory vaccinations

The deadline for care staff to receive their first dose of the Covid-19 vaccination (unless exempt) is **16 September 2021**.

This will allow them the time to be fully vaccinated when it will be mandatory for care home workers and volunteers to have had both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination. The deadline for this is by **11 November 2021** unless they are exempt.

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

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 guidelines.

Schools and Early Years settings: In the week up to 4 September, school testing was still in the process of being established and cases identified through return to school testing are as a result of community transmission, not school or early years setting transmission.

Between 28 August and 4 September, students took a total of 15,484 tests and of those there were 77 positive results. This equates to a 0.5% positivity rate. Many schools started their testing programme on 6 September, so the true figure across Somerset will be clear in a week's time.

Students should be taking two lateral flow tests at school in their first week back, three days apart. In following weeks, this should be repeated every week at home. As a reminder, anyone with a positive result on a lateral flow test should book a PCR test and self-isolate until receiving a negative test result, and anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 should not attend school and again, should book a PCR test and self-isolate until receiving a negative result. Please advise schools if your child is absent for any reason, including due to Covid-19

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>

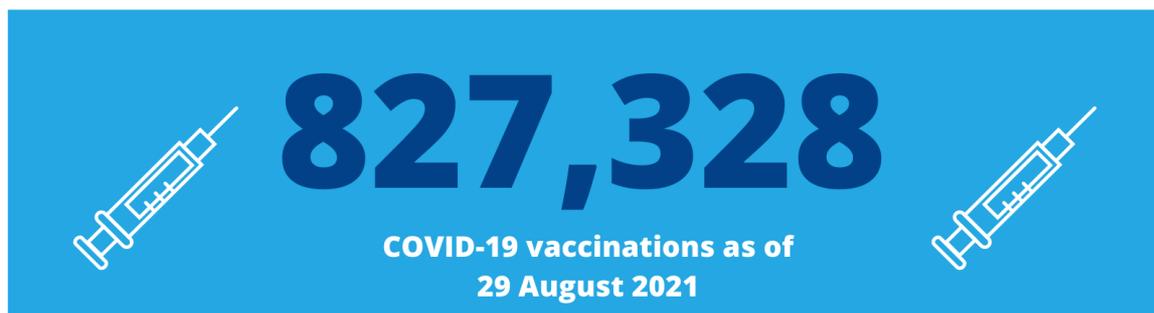
Additionally, we are asking household members of all nursery, school and college age children to get tested twice a week using LFDs to identify if they have the virus.

Please note there is now a schools toolkit for staff in settings to use to manage Covid-19, with the support of SCC Public health and PHE. This is available via the SSE website which can be found using this link: [Covid-19 School Toolkit | Support Services for Education](#)

Vaccination Update:



Together we have given:



Thank you to the thousands of people who are helping to deliver Somerset's COVID-19 vaccination programme

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

You can go online and phone 119 to book your vaccination appointment, or alternatively, use this link to find out more about where the local 'Grab a Jab' clinics are taking place this week. [Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#)

Clinically extremely vulnerable 12-17 year old children update

Vaccinations have been taking place for eligible children and young people and the Somerset CCG has added this statement to its website: 'The JCVI has advised that "persons aged 12–15 years with specific underlying health conditions that put them at risk of severe Covid-19 should be offered two doses of Pfizer vaccine with an interval of eight weeks between doses." This includes children aged 12 to 15 with severe neuro-disabilities, Down syndrome, immunosuppression and multiple or severe learning disabilities, as well as children and young people aged 12 to 17 who live with an immunosuppressed person.'

In Somerset, GP practices, hospitals, and local authority partners have supported local searches to ensure that eligible children and young people in this group are offered the opportunity to receive their vaccination as soon as possible. The families of children identified have been contacted as per the government guidance to offer their first vaccine. The first vaccination clinics for this group of children took place during August at Yeovil District Hospital and Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton. We are continuing to work closely with GP practices, hospitals and local authority partners to identify any additional children who may meet the specific criteria within this identified group and will contact eligible families directly. Further information can be found here: [JCVI statement on Covid-19 vaccination of children and young people aged 12 to 17 years: 4 August 2021](#)

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

On 6 September, the UK Health Security Agency updated the guides providing information on Covid-19 and vaccination to add new information for women who might get pregnant, who are pregnant or are breastfeeding their baby.

[Covid-19 vaccination: easy-read leaflets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

NHS COVID Pass

On 7 September, the government updated the guidance on how to get the NHS COVID Pass and demonstrate Covid-19 status when travelling abroad and domestically at events and venues in England.

The update includes information highlighting that children under 18 do not have to demonstrate their Covid-19 status for entry to domestic events or venues in England. It also confirms that young people aged 16 or over can get an NHS COVID Pass for travel but should follow the entry requirements of the country they are travelling to.

Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-covid-pass>

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:

Testing at Universities: Students should test **before** they travel back to university, by ordering a free test online or by collection from their local pharmacy (see below). On arrival at university, students should take two lateral flow tests (three to four days apart) using home test kits or at an on-site testing facility. All universities have been offered a supply of test kits and provided with information on how to set up test sites, should they wish to participate. Students and staff should test twice each week using home test kits or at an on-site testing facility until the end of September, when this will be reviewed.

Asymptomatic testing: 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, isolating until receiving a negative test result. 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](#). 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 don't take a lateral flow test but ensure 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 \(Covid-19\)](#)

Finally, we would also like to remind you that if you have previously received a positive 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.

We have been provided with a simple graphic which shows the differences between lateral flow tests (rapid Covid-19 test) and PCR tests which can be seen below:

Which Covid-19 test should you use?		Rapid Covid-19 test	PCR test
 Who it's for		People with no Covid-19 symptoms	People with Covid-19 symptoms
 Sent away for processing		X	✓
 Results received		in up to 30 minutes	in up to 72 hours
 Tells you if you have 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](#).