

Covid-19 Weekly Update



This update is provided by the Somerset Covid-19 Engagement Board and is designed to provide a weekly update on the current Covid-19 situation in Somerset.

Summary of outbreaks: As of Friday 02 October, Somerset's infection 7-day rate is 12.5 new cases per 100,000. Between 22 and the 28 September, 3491 pillar 1 tests and 9864 pillar 2 tests were carried out.* During these dates there has been 71 new confirmed cases.

*Pillar 1 tests are those undertaken in Public Health England (PHE) labs and NHS hospitals for those with a clinical need, and health and care workers. Pillar 2 tests are for the wider population and include care homes.

While Somerset's infection rate is low compared to the UK 7-day average (approx. 60.1 per 100,000) we must stay vigilant and continue to adhere to the guidelines to keep cases low.

This week there has been an ongoing rise in positive cases across the country and across Somerset. However, Somerset infection rates remain lower than England and the South West but are continuing to rise steadily.

Care Homes: We are starting to see an increase in numbers of cases relating to care homes. These have been predominantly in staff and demonstrate the success of regular testing to protect care home residents. Public Health England, Somerset County Council and Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group are continuing to support the care homes by undertaking risk assessments, providing advice and giving support and guidance on infection prevention control and what to do if someone starts to show symptoms or tests positive.

We have written to all care homes to keep them updated on the current Covid-19 position. Visiting in care homes remains permitted; however, we have been preventing or restricting visiting if local outbreaks or infection rates suggest that this is a necessary measure. Visitors are reminded to help keep care home residents and staff safe by adhering to the guidelines set out by the care home; signing in and out accordingly.

For the latest known information and advice for adult care providers in Somerset visit:

<https://ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/covid19/>

Schools and early years settings: At the time of writing there have been:

- Three outbreaks (two or more positive cases in a single setting over a 14-day period) in three schools – NB. These cases are not always linked through the setting and may be sporadic community cases appearing in a single setting
- 12 single cases in 11 schools and one nursery

We understand that this is an anxious time for many parents. We have developed a clear flowchart and additional resources for schools should they have a suspected or confirmed case. All resources for schools are available on the [Support Services for Education website](#).

Somerset schools and early years settings have worked incredibly hard to put in place Covid-secure measures and we are continuing to support them through regular communications.

Workplaces and Events: We continue to see predominantly sporadic cases in workplaces. We have run several webinars for businesses with good feedback and have produced a number of useful leaflets and posters on what to do if staff or customers start to display symptoms. We will continue to support our business community as the epidemic continues.

A number of events continue to run in Somerset and the public health team at SCC is working closely with district councils and the police to manage these safely, where they go ahead. Some events have been asked to reinforce their Covid-19 security in order to go ahead while some organisers have taken the decision to cancel or postpone planned events. It continues to be a challenge to identify events early to ensure they can be run in a Covid-secure manner. We will continue to monitor local levels of Covid-19 infection rates to inform decision making on allowing events to go ahead.

Communications: The focus for communication and engagement this week has been on reinforcing the general infection control messaging - including the new 'rule of six', promoting the new schools Covid Checker for parents, reinforcing the need to self-isolate if you've booked a test until you receive your result, how to book a test and promotion of the NHS Covid-19 App.

The Covid-19 Engagement Board has agreed new branding as a way of ensuring people are receiving information from a trusted source; this will be used from now onwards – see logo and branding on this briefing.

Below is a summary of the key messaging that is informing our current campaigns. **Please use this messaging in your communications and share with your networks**, and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) for further updates. Let us know if you feel there is a gap in messaging, or a format or resource that the communities you work with or are part of would find useful. Your insights are valuable to us.

Over-arching: We are seeing a steady but ongoing rise in positive Covid-19 cases across the county. While Somerset's infection rate is low compared to the UK average, we must stay vigilant and continue to adhere to the guidelines to keep cases low – we are all in it together.

NHS Covid-19 App: The NHS COVID-19 app is part of the large-scale coronavirus (COVID-19) testing and contact tracing programme, NHS Test and Trace service in England. The app will be used, alongside traditional contact tracing, to help notify users if they have come into contact with someone who tests positive for coronavirus.

The app allows people to report symptoms, order a coronavirus test, check in to venues by scanning a QR code and it helps the NHS trace individuals that have coronavirus.

The app will help the NHS understand if the virus is spreading in a particular area, so local authorities can respond quickly to stop it spreading further and save lives.

The app does this while protecting a user's anonymity. Nobody, including the government, will know who or where a particular user is.

Every person who downloads the app will be helping in the fight against Covid-19.

Hands, Face, Space:

- Protect yourself, your loved ones and the wider community by remembering 'Hands. Face. Space'
 - Hands - Wash your hands regularly
 - Face - Wear a face covering where rules apply - in shops, other indoor places and on public transport
 - Space - Staying at least 2 metres apart, or 1 metre with a face covering or other precautions
- Watch [this video](#) for further guidance.

Self-isolating and testing capacity:

- Anyone who has Covid-19 symptoms must self-isolate at home until they can get a test and then while they wait for their result.
- Isolating stops the spread of infection
- Self-isolating means you must not leave your home, whether that be for work, exercise or shopping. Visitors, except for those providing essential care, are also not allowed.
- We realise there are problems with the national system for booking a test, but please persevere. New slots are released daily
- You can book a test online or by ringing 119. Please do not ring 111 as this service does not provide Covid-19 tests

- You don't need a test unless you have symptoms: a new continuous cough, a high temperature and/or a loss of taste/smell
- There are many common colds circulating at the moment, so you only need a test if you have the specific Covid-19 symptoms. You don't need a test if:
 - your employer, school, or travel company has asked for a negative test
 - you have been in close contact with someone who has coronavirus
 - you have been abroad and are quarantining
- If you live with someone who is self-isolating as they have been identified as a close contact but does not have symptoms or has not tested positive, you do not need to isolate

Isolation payment Information: People will be required by law to self-isolate from 28 September. This will now be supported by payment of £500 for those on lower incomes who cannot work from home and have lost income as a result.

We are working quickly with our District colleagues to set up these self-isolation support schemes and we hope to have them in place in October. Those who start to self-isolate from 28 September will receive backdated payments once the scheme is set up in their Local Authority. Somerset County Council's [website](#) will be updated with further updates.

Rule of Six:

- A maximum of six people from multiple households can meet up both indoors and outdoors
 - in private homes, pubs, restaurants and parks
- All ages are included in the headcount
- There are some exceptions - for example when a single household has more than six occupants, you are supporting vulnerable people or for events such as weddings and funerals. More information on exemptions [here](#).

School outbreaks:

- Information for parents, carers and guardians:
 - new schools Covid Checker for parents: <https://www.cypsomersethealth.org/news&id=345>
 - Resources for parents to understand the difference between a cold and Covid-19: <https://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/covid-19/info/ipc/>
- Information for schools:

If a local school has a suspected Covid-19 case, they must notify the Department for Education on **0800 046 8687**.

Schools should also notify Somerset County Council by emailing publichealth@somerset.gov.uk

- A rapid risk assessment will be carried out with the school to confirm who has been in close contact with the person during the period that they were infectious, and ensure they are asked to self-isolate

- Schools will send home those people who have been in close contact with the person who has tested positive, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with that person when they were infectious

Engagement: To support and inform the Covid-19 Engagement board, a Health and Wellbeing Advisory Network is being developed to aid the management of the local epidemic and improve overall health and wellbeing. The network will provide a valuable two-way communication between settings and groups where an outbreak of Covid-19 is likely to have adverse health consequences. For example, homeless people, hostels, businesses that have a high proportion of workers who are not engaged with local health services, where social distancing is challenging, or where there are a number of vulnerable individuals. The Network will be made up of a wide range of community, public organisations and stakeholders, and key sectors including tourism, businesses.

This will help to shape outbreak prevention and communications activity and will remove barriers that communities and groups across the county may face.

Part of this engagement work is the development and recruitment of 'Covid Champions' to enable us to engage further with people across Somerset's communities. We are pleased to be working with Spark Somerset and Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership to use their existing health and wellbeing champions as well as recruiting new volunteers in communities that may be impacted by Covid-19 outbreaks. Covid Champions will give us eyes and ears in communities as well as help us to communicate more effectively. They will receive and provide information to and from their community / setting. They will also provide leadership within their community / setting to enact changes to prevent and control outbreaks if the needs arise.

For more information and to join the network and help to stop the spread of Covid-19, please contact Lisa Rogers: lzrogers@somerset.gov.uk