

SCC CORONAVIRUS BRIEFING - TUESDAY 21ST APRIL 2020

- In Somerset there have now been 54 Covid-19 related deaths (up from 49 last week). Up to date data for new cases will be available at the end of this week. There appears to be no discernible pattern in relation to possible 'hot spots', or cases linked to specific demographics.
- The death rate in the SW is beginning to slow down. It is felt that the peak was around a week ago, but caution is urged in case there is another rise in cases.
- Across the county 33 care homes have cases of the Covid-19 virus (around 15% of all Somerset care homes) – testing is being carried out in those homes with positive or suspected cases.
- The need for social distancing enforcement remains very low, and domestic violence cases remain stable.
- There are still around 900 people per day contacting SCC.
- At least another 2½ weeks of lockdown is expected.
- Community resilience – effort is being made to identify vulnerable groups and individuals at risk. SCC is working closely with districts and the Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that community groups are aware of those needing support, both in terms of medical and other needs.
- Data is now in a common format to aid with sharing information where required. This could include drug and alcohol dependent groups and those requiring help with waste collection. All of those identified as requiring support have been contacted.
- There is awareness of GDPR in relation to data sharing. Anyone with concerns over data sharing protocols should feel free to raise them.
- There are now four district distribution hubs across the county and 150 food parcels have been delivered, mainly across South Somerset.
- SCC is working closely with Spark Somerset and the 'coronahelpers' website, in addition to linking in with national schemes.
- A joint Coronavirus helpline has now been established, receiving 1,000 calls in the last week. The main issues are personal care support and financial assistance. Focus also on emotional wellbeing and mental health and directing those requiring support in the right direction. Village agents are being used in addition to volunteers.
- There is an awareness that the longer the situation continues the more likely it is that others will become vulnerable.
- Financial management - payments to suppliers are being made early (7 days instead of 30 days) In the first three weeks £11m. of payments was made to around 3,000 suppliers.
- Plans are in place to support districts in the cost of necessary activities and in supporting business through recovery groups.
- Budget monitoring is constant, to manage cash flow (to the end of June), monitor disruption to normal business.
- The closing of SCC's annual accounts is in process. Central government has extended the deadline, and it is expected that they will be ready to sign off by the end of June.
- Debt recovery work has been reduced for the time being.
- SCC has won the contract to provide treasury management for Avon & Somerset Police, which will run until Mar. 2023.
- The audit function is continuous as there is an awareness that at the moment there is the potential for higher levels of fraud.

- Testing is being offered at Yeovil Hospital (in addition to other sites), for social care and care home staff, subject to referrals. So far 300 tests have been carried out.
- Work is being done on a new audit plan for 2021.
- Support is being provided to district council in relation to business rates and advice on grants that are available.
- There are likely to be some additional audit issues this year, as will be the case for all local authorities.
- Section 151 officers are meeting weekly to gain understanding of the ongoing impact Covid-19 will have on council tax and business rates going forward.
- In addition to the initial £15.68m. of Covid-19 funding received, last month an additional £1.6b. was announced to help with cash flow. The amount allocated to SCC will be known at the end of this month, and the money will not be ring-fenced.
- Covid-19 monies are also being used for additional premiums to care providers, nursery fees and supporting district homeless programmes.
- Talks are ongoing with the CCG to establish the arrangement for the allocation of funding for functions such as early discharge and PPE.
- In-depth budget monitoring is taking place to identify the longer-term financial impact, including the loss of income on business rates.
- Consideration is being given to post lockdown actions to revive the economy and resume normal SCC activities.
- SCC virtual meetings are starting this week.