

SCC CORONAVIRUS BRIEFING FRIDAY 22ND MAY 2020

In Somerset so far there have been a cumulative total of 623 positive cases.

In total there have been 132 cumulative deaths - 74 in hospitals, 50 in care homes 8 in other settings

The number of care homes that have reported outbreaks is falling, to 48 in total, and overall numbers are decreasing.

Numbers falling in general

Since the beginning of March all deaths are in line with the usual 5 year average for this time of the year.

In some areas there have been a significant number of instances where social distancing has not been observed. There is concern that this will increase further in the coming weeks.

Consideration is being given to some road closures if necessary.

The 'R' number for the SW remains at 0.76 (below the government requirement of 1), but there is concern, as the total number of incidents in the area has been much lower than elsewhere where the pandemic has had more initial impact.

Increased testing will mean that we can expect to see an increase in positive results.

It has been reported that there has been an increase in cases at Yeovil Hospital. The virus is still around and there is no room for complacency.

Testing – the two major regional centres at Exeter and Bristol and are being supplemented by privately run sites more locally.

'Track and Trace' is to be up and running by the 1st June.

The Coronavirus helpline has received 4,500 calls relating to food parcels, prescriptions, shopping, financial support, re-cycling etc.

Mindline has received over 400 calls – mainly people with high levels anxiety and other stress related issues, especially overnight.

Domestic abuse is also an area of focus, with a specific helpline now in operation - **0800 6949 999**

1,700 people have been individually contacted by phone for welfare checks (including yours truly!)

Finance – the situation remains volatile and constantly changing. The SCC forecast spend on Covid-19 is £49.9m. (£28.29m. covered by government funding = shortfall of approx. £11.9m. this year and a further £8m. impact on budgets for next year).

Somerset was rapid and early in responding to care providers' needs for funding. Any recent negative news reports in relation to this have been refuted strongly.

Schools – re-opening of classrooms from 1st June is of concern, with some schools choosing not to do so at present. However, all schools are currently providing ongoing childcare/learning support for care/critical workers, and these children remain a priority. Only children who are fit and well should be sent to school.

At present plans are to 'extend the provision' not for classrooms to re-open in full.

It is accepted that larger schools have a greater capacity to ensure social distancing than small rural schools, which will impact on provision, including home to school transport.

Multi-agency working is supporting risk assessments, vulnerable children and others at risk, to ensure risk is at a minimum.

Police and child protection agencies are pro-actively identifying and working with vulnerable groups.

LA link workers are working with schools in relation to the provision of PPE, where this is required for use under normal circumstances. Additional emergency packs have been provided free of charge.

Parental and workplace anxiety about any relaxation of lockdown remains high.

Home tuition and online learning remain in place, with some reports of pupil preference for this method of tuition.

Guidance is awaited from central government over how school attendance is to be recorded.

There is concern over how staggered school attendance will work for families with more than one child, especially as many parents will now be required to return to work.

There has been a sharp increase (300+) in applications for free school meals.

A special edition of Your Somerset magazine is being circulated to all households.

Government funding has been received for 'Active Travel' activities e.g. promoting cycling/walking. It may be that in some instances high streets will be closed off to ensure social distancing. A number of popular tourist sites remain closed. An update on this should be available this coming week.

Speeding vehicles have been an issue in some areas.

Local communities are expecting planned highways works to continue – and an update on this will be available next week.