

Somerset's Covid-19 Weekly Update

Thursday 19 August 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.

We have, unfortunately, seen our case numbers rise again over the last week, particularly in the Sedgemoor District. Our Public Health team are actively supporting some workplaces who have outbreaks, additionally we are boosting social media messages to postcode areas where we are seeing higher cases. In view of the rising case numbers and to keep yourself and those around you safe, we continue to strongly recommend you get both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine and get a PCR test if you have any symptoms, even if they are mild. You still need to self-isolate if you get a positive test result and are a case of Covid-19. While it is no longer a legal requirement, we also recommend you continue to wear a face covering, keep your distance, meet outdoors and let plenty of fresh air into indoor spaces.

Since Monday 16 August people who are under 18 or have received both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine will no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive Covid-19 case. In this week's [Covid Catch Up Film](#), Clinton clarifies this new advice. Further details can be found later in this update.

Finally, we have now launched the next phase of our campaign to keep Somerset safe over the coming weeks and months, particularly as we are seeing more visitors to the County. More details can be found later in this update.

Latest Covid-19 Dashboard: The following link will take you to our website: [Somerset Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). Then 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'.



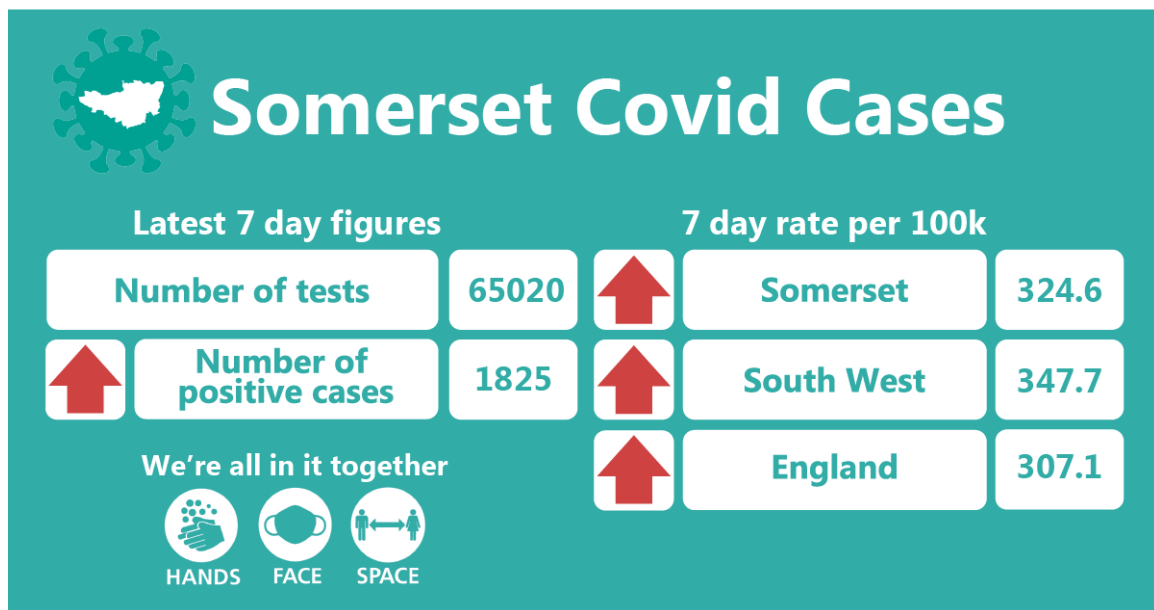
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In the week up to 14 August approximately 65020 tests were carried out across the county and there have been 1825 new confirmed cases. The rates have increased to 324.6 per 100,000. Although we still remain below the South-West rate, we are now higher than the national rate.

It is also worth noting there has been a rise in Covid-19 cases resulting in hospitalisation this week.

THIS WEEK'S HEADLINES:

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

- Change to self-isolation rules
- Workplace, care and school settings
- Summer Campaign
- Vaccination update
- Testing Update
- Late night entertainment settings
- Resources and further information

Change to self-isolation rules From Monday 16 August, changes were made to the self-isolation rules. People who have received both doses of the Covid-19 vaccine or are aged under 18 years and 6 months will no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact* of a positive Covid-19 case. It is however, advised and very important, if someone has been identified as a close contact of a positive case, they book a PCR test, even if not displaying symptoms; there will be no requirement to self-isolate while waiting for the results of the PCR test unless showing Covid-19 symptoms.

Anyone who tests positive following the follow up PCR test will still be legally required to self-isolate, irrespective of their vaccination status or age, in order to break onwards chains of transmission. Meanwhile anyone who develops Covid-19 symptoms should self-isolate and get a PCR test and remain in isolation until the result comes back.

With over 80 percent of people having received both doses of the vaccine, the majority of adults will no longer need to self-isolate if they are contacts. However, the following groups **will still be required to self-isolate**:

- Those who have not received their Covid-19 vaccination
- Those who have not received both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination
- Those who have received their second does within the last 14 days
- Those who have tested positive following a PCR test
- Those who have been fully vaccinated but are displaying symptoms of Covid (ahead of getting a PCR test)

People can order a PCR home test [online](#) or by calling 119 or going to a test site.

Of course, despite being vaccinated, those identified as close contacts are still at risk of being infected, so the Government continues to advise wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces and limiting contact with other people, especially with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable.

***Close contact is defined as:**

a) having face-to-face contact with someone at a distance of less than 1 metre.

b) spending more than 15 minutes within 2 metres of an individual.

c) travelling in a car or other small vehicle with an individual or in close proximity to an individual on an aeroplane.

Workplaces: Though, in the main, cases appear to be reflecting transmission in the wider community, rather than being outbreaks in the workplace itself, we have recently found situations where staff have travelled to other branches to cover for staff who are self-isolating or to have meetings. This has then resulted in transmission of Covid-19 back to their usual place of work and has put a strain on businesses when more than one setting has staff unable to come to work.

We would encourage businesses to think carefully before moving staff between settings and to re-visit risk assessments with regard to wearing of face coverings, social distancing and additional ventilation. Staff should also be advised to undertake regular Lateral flow testing especially if they have been visiting different workplaces.

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](#)

Care Sector: In the week up to 18 August 2021, Somerset has had 32 cases of Covid19 in 27 social care settings. Most of these cases have been single staff cases, although we have seen outbreaks within care settings.

In terms of the new self-isolation guidance; [most fully vaccinated care staff who are close contacts of COVID-19 cases can now routinely return to work](#), provided they have had a negative PCR test. Daily rapid lateral flow tests will need to be taken for 10 days as a precaution.

Staff working with clinically extremely vulnerable patients or service users will need a risk assessment carried out by a designated person in the workplace before they return to work

There have been updates to the latest care sector guidelines in line with recent Government changes:

[Coronavirus: admission and care of people in care homes](#) – updated on 17 August 2021

- Guidance on self-isolation for admissions into care homes
- Self-isolation for staff who have come into close contact with Covid-19 residents
- Self-isolation requirements for staff returning from international travel
- Updates to the symptoms of Covid-19.

[Covid 19: how to work safely in care homes](#) - updated 16 August 2021

- Including the updated isolation requirements for fully vaccinated people identified as a contact of a Covid 19 case
- Additional mitigation measures are required before a care staff member who has been a contact of a Covid 19 case returns to work

[Arrangements for visiting out of the care home](#) – updated on 17 August 2021

- Spending time outside of the care home is an important part of life for many people living in residential care
- Steps to manage and mitigate risks during visits are required despite increased vaccine coverage
- Care home residents will no longer be required to self-isolate following return from another care facility or a planned overnight stay, subject to risk assessments

[Visiting arrangements in care homes](#) - updated 16 August 2021

- Visiting to be supported and enabled wherever and whenever it is possible and safe to do so but comply with arrangements for testing, PPE and limiting close contact
- Close contacts of Covid 19 cases are advised not to visit care homes

[How to work safely in domiciliary care in England](#) – updated 17 August 2021

- Information on the use of PPE

[Supported living services during coronavirus](#) – updated 17 August 2021

- Clarification of visiting arrangements, lateral flow testing support, revised infection prevention control measures, visits in and out of supported living and requirements in the event of Covid 19 outbreaks

Vaccinations

Mandatory vaccinations for care workers and volunteers are coming into force shortly. The last date for care home workers and volunteers to get their first dose to be fully vaccinated when the regulations come into force is **16 September 2021**.

- Support and advice is available for care workers with concerns about pregnancy and vaccinations – please refer to [COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for all women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding](#)

Schools and Early Years settings: Due to the summer holidays we are seeing very little transmission within secondary schools and age 16+ settings, as they are closed. As you will see below, the cases we do have are attributed to either residential settings or summer workshops.

In the week ending 14 August there were 33 cases at 24 nursery settings who remain open year round.

Summer campaign: Today we have launched Phase 2 of our Summer Safety campaign encouraging residents and visitors to commit to keeping our county safe this summer.

Following the easing of many Covid-19 restrictions, people are returning to a more normal way of life. However, coronavirus is still very much in circulation and our numbers are rising. The latest phase of the campaign, which is in partnership with Visit Somerset and Visit Exmoor, has launched via the following website: www.somerset.gov.uk/stay-safe

The campaign aims to keep visitors and residents as safe as possible whilst enjoying everything Somerset has to offer by recommending they continue to follow key advice including

- Wearing a mask in crowded indoor areas
- Continuing to test regularly
- Continuing to keep distance from others
- Getting a PCR test if showing Covid-19 symptoms
- Self-isolating as required by the latest guidelines
- Taking up the offer to get vaccinated

So we are encouraging everyone to support their messaging and the campaign by posting on their social media channels with the hashtag #SomersetInItTogether. In return, they are offering free entry into their competition to win Love2shop vouchers.

The webpage will allow local business and community settings to download or request to be posted, promotional material which can be displayed in their settings to help promote and show support for the campaign. The site also includes key information and guidance for hospitality settings and visitors alike to help them to stay safe whilst they enjoy their stay.

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

The government has announced, from next week, 16 and 17 year olds will be able to go online to book their vaccinations. Locally, this age group have been able to turn up to one of the 'Grab a Jab' clinics to receive the vaccine, but this move will enable them to book online using the portal. We have seen a great uptake in this age group in the walk-in centres and they will now be able to book their own appointments.

Drop-In Clinics continue to be available. For the latest information about vaccination clinics and walk-in centres across the county, please look here: [Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#)

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>

Businesses offer incentives to vaccinated customers:

On 16 August the Department of Health and Social Care announced that Asda, lastminute.com, National Express, FREE NOW taxis and Better leisure centres will be offering discounts to people who get a COVID-19 vaccine.

The companies will be joining businesses including Uber, Bolt and Deliveroo which have already committed to backing the vaccination programme by providing exclusive offers to those who have received a jab.

Teenagers within three months of turning 18 can now book their vaccine appointment online through the National Booking Service or by calling 119.

Announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-leading-businesses-join-vaccine-uptake-drive>

Testing: 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 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Late night entertainment settings: We have identified significant numbers of cases linked to nightclubs. Please take an LFD test before going on a night out and stay home if the result is positive.



We welcome people to copy this image and share on their social media platforms to help us amplify the message.

While currently there are no restrictions, we recommend caution whilst in crowded areas. Nationally there are plans in place to require night-clubs to see proof of double vaccination prior to entry. This should happen by the end of September. See: [Covid: Two jobs needed to enter nightclubs from September - BBC News](#)

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 share our posts with your networks to help us in communicating these important messages. Follow our Director of Public Health account too [here](#).