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.

Friday 20 November 2020

**Somerset’s Covid-19 Weekly Update**

**Over-arching message:** We continue to see cases across all parts of Somerset rising, and we must continue to do all that we possibly can to bring the numbers back down. We do not know what restrictions will be in place after 2 December and we certainly must not look at this date as the end of restrictions. It is a stark reality that we all must face, that our lives will continue to be impacted until a vaccine is available and rolled out. We are seeing signs of encouragement in the development of a vaccine however until then, we must all play our part in helping to reduce the spread of the virus. We are encouraging you to stay home and make these last few weeks of lockdown really count.

The data we are currently seeing generally reflects the period just before new national lockdown restrictions started, so we are hopeful that we will start to see these numbers decrease in the coming weeks, but it is our collective efforts that are needed to achieve this – we must remember, we are in it together.

 ***‘Remember, everyone can catch it, anyone can spread it’.***





Clare Paul, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing

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Director of Public Health

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**Testing and cases:** We are seeing a general trend of increased transmission in Somerset, across all age groups and within all districts. There have been several incidents and outbreaks in our care homes and schools however whilst the virus is circulating in the community at higher levels, we can generally expect to see cases in these settings

Our [Covid-19 dashboard](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/covid-19-dashboard/) provides the latest published figures for Somerset. We have seen a sharp rise in our Covid-19 cases over recent weeks. As of 20November, Somerset’s seven-day infection rate is 134.3 new cases per 100,000. Between 8 – 14 November, 18,189 tests were carried out and during these dates, at the time of writing, there have been 755 new confirmed cases in the county.

At the time of writing, rates are currently highest in Sedgemoor (174.5 cases per 100,000) and South Somerset (153.9 cases per 100,000).

The link below shows the Somerset Dashboard which tracks our local epidemic from the start in March, to the current time:

[https://www.somerset.gov.uk/covid-19-dashboard/](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.somerset.gov.uk%2Fcovid-19-dashboard%2F&data=02%7C01%7CJBurns%40somerset.gov.uk%7Ccfcf3ed6d80e405e3f0408d8598e1004%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C637357813970250291&sdata=pyXi5t%2Bj5VZp8Zn3so8jybA7z7FMf1Z0otwSpx07qoM%3D&reserved=0)

**Workplaces:** We continue to see outbreaks occurring as people socialise in and around the workplace (where people cannot work from home).  While colleagues are typically following all the rules around social distancing, face coverings and handwashing at work, we have now seen multiple instances where colleagues are infected.  This is happening because people are understandably relaxed when in the company of colleagues, often friends, and having lunch or a break together, but not distancing.

Chatting together over a table or in a group while you eat with people from outside your household or household bubble and not distancing is a risk, because you cannot know if someone has Covid-19 – they could be either asymptomatic (not displaying symptoms) or pre-symptomatic (about to become show symptoms).   People who are pre-symptomatic are highly infectious for about 48 hours (2 days) before they show symptoms.  The risks are considerably higher in enclosed rooms with poor ventilation.

So, our advice is to treat anyone from outside your household as potentially infected with Covid-19 and keep your distance.

**Care Sector:** Somerset County Council Public Health and Adult Social Care, Public Health England and Somerset CCG are supporting staff across the care sector to keep some of our most vulnerable residents protected from the virus.

Between 13 – 19 November, we had 146 positive cases in 37 care settings in Somerset.

Most of these cases are relating to staff employed at the care home rather than residents and involve single cases being identified through routine asymptomatic testing.

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:** We continue to support all educational settings with both the prevention and mitigation of coronavirus within their school community.

Between 13 – 19 November, there has been:

•          62 cases in 41 schools and 6 nurseries

•          17 schools have had 2 or more positive cases linked to them over the last 14-days.

We are starting to see an increase in the number of staff and students testing positive for coronavirus. It is important that we all continue to follow the guidance and national restrictions. This will help us to keep as many children and young people in school for as long as possible and as safely as possible.

**Information for parents, carers and guardians:**

* New COVID Checker for parents: [https://www.cypsomersethealth.org/resources/covidchecker-schools\_V2.pdf](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cypsomersethealth.org%2Fresources%2Fcovidchecker-schools_V2.pdf&data=02%7C01%7CEMcKee%40somerset.gov.uk%7C8e0a2d4312db494df78a08d870375786%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C637382730283090119&sdata=cVaAlHomZUZvOzJQgvh2MLRXAPyjGWLwXRERuhX5VBI%3D&reserved=0)
* Resources for parents to understand the difference between a cold and Covid-19: [https://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/covid-19/info/ipc/](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.healthysomerset.co.uk%2Fcovid-19%2Finfo%2Fipc%2F&data=02%7C01%7CEMcKee%40somerset.gov.uk%7C8e0a2d4312db494df78a08d870375786%7Cb524f606f77a4aa28da2fe70343b0cce%7C0%7C0%7C637382730283090119&sdata=Hl%2Fd3KpmuxQ4FAdKJPftwg4pzauyw%2Bd5vlg73nOSgQQ%3D&reserved=0)
* School self-isolation guidance:

<https://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/School-Self-Isolation-Guidance-1.pdf>

**Communications:** Our focus on communications is on ensuring that people are aware exactly what is required as part of self-isolation guidelines. The covid-19 incubation period is so important, because you can be contagious for up to 48 hours before your symptoms have developed - and for some, days after. Therefore, it is vital that the full isolation period is followed – however tough it might feel to do so.

We will be preparing our residents for what might come after 2 December. It is clear, that there will still be strict restrictions in place and when this information comes through, we communicate this local information to our residents and communities in a way that makes sense to them. Our Covid Champions will play a really important role in disseminating this information.

**Let them know...** If you test positive for Covid-19, it would help the NHS and our own tracing service if you could ‘let them know’ by telling anyone that you can remember being in close contact with straight away. Examples of close contact include:

* Close face to face contact (less than one metre apart) for any length of time. This includes talking to them or coughing on/near them
* Being within one to two metres of each other for more than 15 minutes, including in a car.
* Spending lots of time in your home, for example, carrying out work such as cleaning it.

Your close contacts **must** then self-isolate and get a test. You can book a test online at

<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by phoning 119.

**Enhanced Contact Tracing:** As well as the National Test and Trace service, you may not know that our Public Health Team, with the backup of local Environmental Health Officers, have been doing what’s called ‘Enhanced contact tracing’.  We are proud to be one of a small number of local authorities in the South West currently delivering this additional service. This work is really important, because as well as providing support to people locally, this contact tracing gives us valuable information about how local people are catching the virus so that we can target our messaging and actions accordingly.  We have also been able to make links between cases that would not have been possible without the local knowledge that we have.

**#MakeLockdownCountSomerset:** Our #StayHomeForSomerset campaign gained some great momentum and now in the last couple of weeks of ‘lockdown’ it is more important than ever, the need to hang in there and make this action count for our communities in Somerset and across the country.  That’s why we and our health colleagues are launching **#MakeLockdownCountSomerset –** a social media campaign to spread the message and work together to ensure we make the lockdown count. With cases rising in all areas across the county it’s vital we do this and keep following the guidelines to stay safe, keep our loved ones safe and keep pushing that infection rate down.

What we are asking for is a selfie/image of you holding your home-made sign carrying the hashtag – **#MakeLockdownCountSomerset** and upload it to our [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/somersetcountycouncil/) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/SomersetCouncil) pages. We’re asking health colleagues at Somerset CCG and our hospitals to do the same.

Finally, please share the information and particularly our current campaignswith your networks. Follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/somersetcountycouncil), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/somersetcouncil/?hl=en) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/SomersetCouncil?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) for further updates.

Let us know if you feel there is a gap in our 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. Please email any feedback you have, to: lzrogers@somerset.gov.uk

**Resources and Further Information:** For the latest local information as well as digital resources, posters and flyers please visit: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

For information and resources on staying healthy happy and safe at the time please visit: <https://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/covid-19/>

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.](http://docs.somerset.gov.uk/wl/?id=AngmvRQOShl4iql1idAed0SOiZlXnioy)