

Somerset's Covid-19 Weekly Update

Friday 8 October 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.

Covid-19 cases have risen 20 percent since last week and rates in educational settings remain on the increase across Somerset and the South-West. In fact, cases in educational settings now represent approximately 60 percent of all Somerset cases at present. It is vital anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 takes a PCR test. If positive, you must self-isolate.

In this week's Covid Catch Up film, Clinton Rogers discusses the national vaccination programme for 12-15 year olds and the importance it plays in protecting young people and keeping their education moving forwards. He chats to Dr Emma Kain, Immunisation Lead at NHS SW and Matthew Hibbert, Public Health Consultant about the benefits of vaccinations as a whole and why we advise pupils and parents to accept the invitation when they are offered it. We should stress that a consent form and information leaflet provided by the SAINT team will be used to seek parental consent from the parent or person with parental responsibility in the same way as for any other school vaccination programme. Watch the film [here](#).

Latest Covid-19 Dashboard: The following link will take you to our website: [Somerset Coronavirus \(Covid-19\)](#) Scroll down the page until you get to 'Covid-19 Dashboard' in the list. Click on this and the dashboard will open. Please note the data reported in this document may differ slightly from the data showing on the dashboard because of discrepancies in reporting periods.

'Remember, everyone can catch it, anyone can spread it.'



David Fothergill
Leader Somerset County Council

Twitter: @DJAFothergill



Professor Trudi Grant
Director of Public Health

Twitter: @SomersetDPH



Clare Paul
Cabinet Member for Education and
Public Health

Twitter: @Clarepaul_

We're all in it together



Somerset Covid Cases

Latest 7 day figures

Number of tests

84827



Number of positive cases

2210



Please grab your jab!



7 day rate per 100k

Somerset

393.1

South West

294.7

England

331.5



In the week up to 2 October, approximately 84,827 tests were carried out across the county with 2,210 new confirmed cases. The rates have increased to 393.1 per 100,000, which is above both the South-West and national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset continues to show improvement on previous weeks with just over 20 Covid-19 in-patients in Somerset hospitals.

This Week's Headlines

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

- Workplace, Care and School settings
- Vaccination and Covid Booster update
- Testing Update
- Resources and further information

Workplaces: With so many cases being seen in our education settings, it's worth reminding staff who have a child in education to do a twice weekly lateral flow test. While we encourage everyone to do this, business continuity may be affected if parents/carers become infected. See the section on testing for more information.

Find out more about what you can do to keep [working safely to reduce the risk of transmission](#).

Care Sector: We continue to see cases and outbreaks of Covid-19 in social care settings across Somerset with 91 cases at 59 social care settings in the week to 2 October 2021. This highlights the importance of maintaining high Infection Prevention Control measures, regular testing, vaccination promotion, ventilation, monitoring and prompt reporting of cases of Covid-19 as well as promotion of health and wellbeing in our care sector.

Care recruitment campaign

A recruitment campaign was launched this week to raise awareness of the opportunities in care. Look out for videos, newspaper articles, radio adverts and leaflets to be published over the coming weeks and months. The campaign has been supported by Glastonbury Festival founder Michael Eavis, who has described Somerset's carers as 'absolutely brilliant people' for their work during the pandemic. Take a look at the [new Proud to Care website](#).

If you have any questions or comments, please get in touch with Sarah and Rose via proudtocare@somerset.gov.uk

Booster vaccinations

The Covid-19 vaccination national booking service is now open for frontline health and social care staff to book a booster vaccine appointment through self-referral for those who had their 2nd dose at least 6 months ago. Book online via [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination - NHS](#) or phone 119.

Covid-19 medical exemptions from vaccination:

- Individuals who work in a CQC regulated care home from 11 November 2021 and who are not fully vaccinated will need to show their Covid status.
- Exemptions from self-isolation and requirements to complete vaccination (or in some cases testing) are being introduced to reduce transmission of Covid-19 whilst limiting onerous restrictions on individuals lives.

- Latest guidance published on 1 October 2021 on how to apply for official proof that for medical reasons individuals are unable to be vaccinated and/or tested for Covid 19 [COVID-19 medical exemptions: proving you are unable to get vaccinated](#)

Testing

Please continue to follow the updated guidance on testing for your setting: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) testing for adult social care settings](#)

Adult care home testing guidelines have changed, and include:

- Where there is one case of Covid 19 in a care home
- LFT testing frequency
- Where there are 2 or more cases of Covid-19 in a care home
- Ending outbreak restrictions, when they can be lifted and ongoing testing after this.

See this website for full details:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-in-adult-care-homes>

It's also important to make sure all test kits are within one week of their expiry date before using. If they have expired, please dispose of them in clinical waste in a care setting or general waste if at home.

Finally, please encourage all care staff to provide their full contact details (the carer's own phone number and email address) so that prompt contact tracing can take place.

More information

For information related to Covid-19 for adult care providers please visit [Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board](#) where you will find information on reporting cases of Covid 19, support helplines, webinars and links to guidelines.

Schools and Early Years settings: Covid-19 case rates in educational settings continue to rise across Somerset and the South-West; there were 1289 cases at 165 school settings and 23 cases at 19 nursery settings in the week to 2 October 2021.

It is understood that revisions to the Contingency Framework for managing Covid-19 cases in schools are being considered at national level, although details of the outcome have not yet been released. We will update and communicate the latest guidance as soon as more is known.

The requirement for children aged 11+ to complete lateral flow tests twice a week at home remains. From the 25 September – 1 October there were 22,251 tests recorded with 423 positives, bringing the positivity rate up to 1.9%; an increase on the previous week. We are reminding people to please record their LFD results – even if they are negative.

As of 5 October, there are currently 15 educational settings in Somerset with enhanced measures in place and 33 with additional control measures. This is across all ages and stages and all funded sectors.

'Amber' measures for Somerset schools include the cancellation of school trips, reintroduction of face coverings in communal areas and social distancing measures, such as staggered lunch breaks.

Twice Weekly LFD Testing: Please remember to carefully read the instructions that come with your kit, as there are several kits available and they differ slightly. See the section below on Testing for more detailed information. Anyone with a positive result on a lateral flow test should book a confirmatory PCR test. You can book a test here <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by calling 119.

Anyone who is symptomatic should book a PCR. Do not take an LFD if symptomatic.

We advise all parents or carers of a school or college age child, health, care or education staff to do the supervised PCR testing route at the test centre,

not the self-test. This is to get the best quality test possible. When you arrive at the PCR testing site, ask for someone to do the test for you.

If the LFD test gives a positive result, but then the confirmatory PCR provides a negative, the negative PCR result should be considered as an indication you do not have the virus. If you have a negative PCR test and you don't have the primary symptoms (cough, fever loss of taste or smell, high temperature) then you can return to normal activities. But be aware you might be infectious with other illnesses such as colds and therefore it may be worth considering staying at home to stop any potential spreading of these illnesses.

[Reporting test results](#) is just as important as taking the test, as this allows us to understand the virus and take additional action when needed. Please remind staff and students to report their result on [NHS Test and Trace](#).

Factual information for schools on 12-15 year old Covid-19 vaccination

On Thursday 7 October at 15:00-16:00 the NHS England Vaccine Deployment Programme hosted a clinician-led webinar for education leaders on the vaccination programme.

This webinar included information on:

- the clinical decision to vaccinate this age group
- the vaccination programme and the role of schools in it
- resources and support available for schools

A recording of this webinar is available on [the document sharing platform](#).

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

Rollout of Covid Booster Vaccination in Somerset

Last week we told you that the booster programme has started in Somerset. As a reminder, please do not contact your GP about this, you will be contacted when you become eligible for the jab, which is six months after your second dose.

You will get a call, text or letter from your local GP led site to get the jab or will be invited by the National Booking Service.

Care home residents and staff are being prioritised ensuring they are offered a vaccine by the beginning of November. Those who are eligible for the Covid booster jabs include:

- those living in residential care homes for older adults
- all adults aged 50 years or over
- frontline health and social care workers
- all those aged 16 to 49 years with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19 (as set out in the green book), and adult carers
- adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals

Visit [Somerset CCG Covid vaccination programme](#) for more information on the Somerset Covid Vaccination programme.

It remains very important for anyone who has not had their first or second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, to do so as soon as possible. While the first dose starts to provide some immunity, it is only two weeks after the second dose when you are considered to be 'fully vaccinated'.

Testing: Now we are in Autumn, we've seen an increase in people with upper respiratory virus symptoms. If these symptoms include a new and continuous cough and/or a high temperature and/or change or loss to your sense of smell or taste, please order a PCR test by calling 119 or ordering online here: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Please do not take a rapid lateral flow test (LFT) if you experience any of these symptoms, as these tests are designed to be used in those who do not have any symptoms of Covid-19 infection. If you are asymptomatic, and wish to test yourself by lateral flow test twice weekly, you can collect these tests by ordering [online](#) or collecting at a [local pharmacy](#). There are currently three different brands of lateral flow test available, which differ in the type of sample required and the method, so please be sure to read the instructions for use in the box prior to

performing the test. Please do not eat, drink or smoke/vape before taking a lateral flow test, please wait for 30 minutes.

The table below illustrates the different types of tests:

Test kit	Innova	Orient Gene	Acon Flowflex
Package colour	Blue and white	Green and white	Blue with brown
Nasal swab	Yes	Yes	Yes
Throat swab	Yes	No	No
Resting time	None	1 Minute	None
Wait time	30mins	15-20mins	15-30mins

At the start of this month, changes were made to the pharmacy collect service to improve traceability of lateral flow test kits. The main changes you will notice are:

- You are now only allowed to collect two packs of LFT kits, rather than four.
- You will need to register for a 16 digit collect code on [Get a collect code to pick up coronavirus \(COVID-19\) rapid lateral flow tests - Get a coronavirus test - GOV.UK \(test-for-coronavirus.service.gov.uk\)](#) or by calling 119 prior to making a collection from a pharmacy. If you do not wish to register for this collect code, a supply can still be made as an anonymous collection, but we encourage everyone to use collect codes wherever possible.

If you have symptoms of Covid-19, but receive a negative PCR result, you do not need to self-isolate. However, it is advised that you do not go into work or school if feeling unwell to reduce the spread of the infection that you have. If you receive a positive PCR test, you do need to continue to self isolate until the date told to you by NHS test and trace.

It is worth mentioning the guidance states, if you get a positive Covid-19 test result, you should not be re-tested within 90 days of that test, unless you develop any new symptoms of Covid-19.

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 [LinkedIn](#) and share our posts with your networks to help us communicate these important messages.

Follow our Director of Public Health account [here](#).