

SCC CORONAVIRUS BRIEFING FRIDAY 12TH JUNE 2020

PUBLIC HEALTH

Most recent statistics show that there has been a total of 789 confirmed cases to date in Somerset, which remains the lowest region in the UK.

The total number of deaths due to Covid-19 in Somerset to date is 181, although there is usually a delay of up to three weeks for the data to be updated.

An update to the 'R' rate, which is a 'modelled' number, for Somerset is awaited. However, the Public Health England 'R' rate for Somerset is currently '1', which is considered acceptable due to the low numbers of people infected with Covid-19 overall.

A permanent testing site has now been established at Taunton racecourse, with a good uptake. Those wishing to be tested are permitted to attend the nearest centre. Pro-active testing in care homes is being carried out, and also for the wider care sector and hospitals.

The epidemic curve for Somerset has recently had a little bit of an upturn, then a reduction.

The upturn was identified in the last 10 days, and despite investigation there appeared to be no logical trend or reason for this. However, a few days ago, the local laboratory in Taunton noticed that there were far more positive testing results being produced (78), which turned out to be false positives. After a number of swabs were able to be retrieved and re-tested on a different machine, it was found that of those re-tested 27 of these cases were in fact negative. All those patients affected have been contacted. As a result of this action the number of recorded positive cases has now reduced to expected levels, to just a handful of positive cases.

Outbreak management plan – all local authorities are required to have one in order to accurately track any return of the epidemic, which is considered to be highly likely. The health and social care 'GOLD' is in place to rapidly mobilise appropriate teams should this be necessary.

The public message is still to continue social distancing and regular hand washing.

Visiting relatives in care homes – some have already opened up and are allowing relatives to meet in the gardens with social distancing, but at present the decision is entirely up to individual homes.

Track and Trace – although this is in general a nationally led initiative at a local level it continues to develop, and Somerset is already benefitting from it. Updates are received 3-4 times daily.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

National infection control funding – receipt of this is dependent on capacity tracking. In Somerset 100% of all 250 care homes have been participating and so far 68% have requested funding and have received it, largely for staffing. The criteria for receiving funds has been strict, for example it is not available for the provision of PPE. 25% of the fund remains available and will be used for smaller local providers, domiciliary care providers, supported living etc. Only 1 care home currently has a Covid-19 infection.

Vicarage House in Hambridge has gone into liquidation and is now closed. All residents have been re-homed.

NHS – has been providing support for 'discharge to assess' into people's own homes, and also in preventing admissions initially. The 'intermediate care system', supporting people in their own homes, through GPs etc. have been working closely with the NHS to ensure appropriate community support.

Hospitals are now able to provide improved advice and support to families to enable the discharge of people into their own homes.

Care Act Easement Powers are in force but in Somerset, the decision has been taken not to use these at present.

ACTIVE TRAVEL MONEY

Intended to be used to help to open up town centres – a series of schemes is being put in place in conjunction with district councils. The measures are intended to be temporary at present and include lines, signs, cones, plastic barriers etc. to enable social distancing. Work is due to start this week, resulting in some noise disturbance, and will include Yeovil and Chard. It is expected that once up and running some schemes will need tweaking and depending on effectiveness and response some may be considered for permanent installation. There has been considerable discussion with bus companies to consider the impact of any scheme on access to public transport.

COUNTY HALL

This is unlikely to re-open in the near future as social distancing is not felt to be feasible at present.

DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN – some funding has been provided for approx. 50 laptops so far. It is accepted that this needs to have progressed more quickly than has been the case so far.