

SCC CORONAVIRUS BRIEFING FRIDAY 19TH JUNE 2020

There are no operational concerns in relation to SCC.

Multi-agency work is continuing, with numbers using the call service decreasing significantly.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The situation in Somerset remains calm and stable, with the number of cases continuing to decline, with just one new case reported this week, in a care home.

As of 17th June, there have been a total of 791 confirmed cases in Somerset.

Weston-Super-Mare hospital has re-opened.

The total number of deaths in Somerset to date is 193 (including 104 in hospitals)

The 'R' number is hovering at 0.8 – 1.1.

The CEO of Yeovil Hospital has reported zero cases this week.

It is hoped that a new testing centre will shortly be opened in Minehead.

Testing sites for the Yeovil and Ilminster areas are being considered by the military for accessibility.

There have been some issues in purchasing PPE in order to be able to re-open registration service centres, but this is in hand.

Work is being done with the CCG to consider the long-term view (total spend on PPE is now up to £6m., with 15m. items purchased/on order) – the cost of face masks has been reduced from £1.80 to 63p.

Much of the equipment is being purchased from China and Malaysia and 1,200 flights to/from Beijing were cancelled this week. The situation is being monitored, amid concerns raised over the issue of labour exploitation in some countries.

LIBRARIES – no decision on re-opening libraries has been made yet.

SCHOOLS - Hinton St. George School has been closed, and is due to re-open next Tuesday, as one member of staff has been tested positive, but this is an isolated case.

Laptop provision for vulnerable children– government laptops have now arrived, along with 4G dongles, which are being checked before being issued. 1,100 children and care leavers were initially identified as requiring this support; after eligibility checks through schools and social workers were made, this was reduced to 348 children but it is expected that additional children will continue to be identified as requiring support.

All laptops have been gifted to those needing them and will be distributed to schools by next week.

Redundant SCC laptops have been sold, and the money re-invested into providing laptops to local education providers e.g. colleges.

Years 10 and 12 have returned to school this week.

Secondary schools, and all primary schools, continue to provide support for vulnerable children in other years.

As of 15th June 45% of Year 6 cohorts were attending school and primary schools are at capacity in terms of the conditions required for social distancing and staffing.

Government advice is not to use other local provision because of the risk factor.

Home to school transport remains a challenge and parents are being asked to try to make their own arrangements for Sept.

Free school meals – clarification is still awaited, with some children being in receipt of vouchers.

An additional £1bn. catch up money has been provided by central government, largely to be used to enable pupils to access additional tuition and 1-to-1 support to be able to catch up. As yet no central government provision has been made for critical worker support during the school holidays, which is as expected.

Vulnerable children – teams have been set up on a rota basis to provide intensive support for those families that need it, and additional resources provided for safeguarding.

10 additional children have come into care, mainly teenagers (compared with a total of 500 across the county). It is expected that this will increase as a result of concerns over domestic abuse, with acknowledgement that we have been in a crisis situation.

Unlike other areas there has been no notable increase in child suicides.

There is a particular challenge around supporting teenagers, especially where their peers may not be in school, along with concern about the possibility of criminal exploitation e.g. county lines, where the police have been very active.

School 'Bubble' – this can consist of a maximum of 15 pupils = half the usual class size. Unless guidance changes significantly, it is unlikely that schools will be able to be fully operational by Sept.

TOWN CENTRES – concern has been raised about the lack of disabled parking facilities, particularly in Taunton, and this under review.

All pedestrianisation schemes in town centres, to enable social distancing, are now up and running.