Somerset's Covid-19 Weekly Update
Friday 30 October 2020

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.

Over-arching message: We are continuing to see a rise in positive Covid-19 cases across the county. The Somerset seven day rate is still lower (67.1 per 100,000 population) than the England rate (226.0 per 100,000) but the rise over the last few weeks is clear and continuing.

We are closely monitoring where our cases are, so that we can be quick to respond to any trends, clusters or outbreaks.

We have today, launched our online Somerset Covid-19 survey to understand the barriers people face doing the practical things we all need to do to stop the spread of the virus. Your support in helping us to promote the survey within your networks in much appreciated, more information on this later in the update.

In recent weeks, as well as working hard behind the scenes, we focussed some targeted communications in West Somerset due to a stark rise in positive cases. It has been really pleasing to see how the local response to our efforts has had a positive impact on the number of cases in the area. In the seven days (up to 29 October) there has been five cases of Covid-19 in West Somerset at a rate of 14 per 100,000 - this is in comparison to 17 cases at a rate of 48 per 100,000 in the week ending 4 October. This really shows how, by all working together, it really is achievable to bring our rates down – thanks to everyone that has played a part.

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

| David Fothergill Leader of Somerset County Council Twitter: @DJAFothergill | Trudi Grant Director of Public Health Twitter: @SomersetDPH | Clare Paul, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing Twitter: @Clarepaul_ |

Summary of cases: We are seeing a general trend of increased transmission in Somerset, across all age groups and within all districts. Catching the virus from someone within your household is one of the main ways people are becoming Covid positive. Everyone in the household needs to do all they can to try and reduce their risk

If someone gets symptoms – a fever, cough or loss of taste and/ or smell you and your household need to self-isolate immediately. The person with symptoms needs to get a test (you don't need a test if you are not experiencing symptoms even if you are living in the same household). To book a test at a local testing site go onto the national portal online at http://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or by phoning 119, sites are open 7 days a week. Order a home test kit if you cannot get to a test site.

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/

Testing and Cases: As of Friday 30 October, Somerset's seven day infection rate is 67.1 new cases per 100,000. Between 18 October and 25 October, 14950 tests were carried out in Somerset. During these dates, at the time of writing, there have been 381 new confirmed cases in the county. This week we can see an increase in the proportion of tests that are coming back positive, this shows us that the right people are getting a test but also that our infection rates are increasing

Somerset's infection rate is lower than both the England and South West seven-day averages, which at the time of writing stands at 226.0 per 100,000 for England and 130.7 per 100,000 for the South West. Despite our county's lower rate, we are seeing a sharp rise in the rates we are reporting week on week - we must stay vigilant and continue to adhere to the guidelines to start to bring these numbers back down.

We are working to increase the number of testing sites in the county and have a Mobile Testing Unit at RNAS Yeovilton that will be up and running by Tuesday 3 November.

A Local Testing Site at Bridgwater Town Hall is due to be up and running in November too - this is Somerset's very first walk in testing site, and is a welcome addition to testing sites currently available in Somerset

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 21-28 October, we have had 18 positive cases in 13 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 hope our schools and early years providers as well as parents, children and young people have enjoyed a well-deserved half-term; we continue to support all educational settings with both the prevention and mitigation of coronavirus within their school community. Since September, we have supported over 60 educational settings with a range of situations.

Between 21-28 October, there has been:
- 15 single cases in schools, 4 nurseries and one FE College
- 3 schools have had two or more positive cases linked to them (over the last 14-days).

More often than not, these cases are from one household or are as a result of social contact outside of school. These cases refer to both student and staff cases and do not always result in the identification of close contacts from the school community.

Information for parents, carers and guardians:
- New COVID Checker for parents: https://www.cypsomersethealth.org/resources/covidchecker-schools_V2.pdf
- Resources for parents to understand the difference between a cold and Covid-19: https://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/covid-19/info/ipc/
- School self-isolation guidance: https://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/School-Self-Isolation-Guidance-1.pdf

Workplaces and Events: We continue to see mainly single individual cases in workplaces however we are starting to see outbreaks and clusters too.

There is a change for employers on reporting cases to Public Health England (PHE). Until now, businesses have been asked to report all cases to PHE, but from now on, businesses only need to report **two or more cases** by calling 0300 303 8162 or emailing swhpt@phe.gov.uk. Single cases will be picked up by the Somerset County Council Public Health team from testing notifications that are received.

Businesses should also take the following actions:

1. Make sure that any positive case is isolating for 10 days and identify any close contacts in the workplace who will need to isolate for 14 days.

2. Make sure that the environment where the case has been present has been thoroughly [cleaned](#), paying special attention to hand contact surfaces, such as door handles, keyboards etc.
3. DO NOT close unless advised to do so by public health or because you are unable to operate safely due to the number of staff in isolation.
4. Staff should not be sent for testing unless they become symptomatic. Those who have close contact without symptoms must still isolate for 14 days, even if they go for a test and have a negative result.
5. Only close contacts of the case need to isolate. NB a close contact is defined as having had face-to-face contact with someone less than a metre away (even if a face-covering or face-mask is worn) or being within 2 metres of an infected person for 15 minutes or more

Detailed guidance is available here https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-workplace-guidance

It is really important to continue to adhere to the social distancing guidelines in the workplace, to stop the spread of the virus but also to limit the number of 'close contacts' that would need to isolate if a positive case was identified.

Communications: In the next week as we see case numbers rise, we will continue to reinforce the key HANDS FACE SPACE message as well as the importance of face coverings in reducing the spread of coronavirus.

We will be promoting and encouraging participation in our Somerset Covid-19 survey as well as reminding people to stay safe and continue to adhere to Covid-19 guidance on Halloween and Bonfire night.

Information on how to stay safe and reduce the spread of infection and focussing targeted communications will be shared in areas within SWAT and Sedgemoor as, although still comparatively low compared to the national average, their rates are currently the highest in Somerset.

Take our Covid-19 Survey: The Somerset Covid-19 Survey has been set up to understand the barriers people face doing the practical things we all need to do to stop the spread of the virus. We want to hear from as many people as possible across Somerset.

This survey aims to:
- Obtain feedback from Somerset residents about how Covid-19 has impacted their lives, to enable Somerset's Public Health to respond and act accordingly
- Obtain views from individuals from wide ranging social, economic and cultural circumstances, to ensure their diverse perspectives, ideas and priorities are heard

- Make residents and communities feel valued and empowered that their voices are heard and trust in the local response to Covid-19

The survey covers:
- Covid-19 testing
- How isolation due to Covid-19 might affect residents
- Understanding the guidance, including local alert levels and Hands, Face, Space
- View's on how others are adhering to the guidance

To response to the survey, click here. With this update, please find a communications toolkit with information on how you can share the survey.

Bonfire night: With many of the usual public firework displays cancelled this year because of the pandemic, we may see an increase in the number of private bonfire night parties. If you do decide to hold or attend one, it is really important that you stick to the current guidelines to make sure that you and your loved ones stay safe. In particular, please remember the rule of six which applies outdoors as well as indoors!

While the number of Covid-19 cases in Somerset remains low compared to the rest of the UK, local rates are rising and we can't afford to be complacent. Remember, the easiest way to stop the spread of the virus here is to keep following the guidance:

- Wash hands – keep washing hands regularly
- Wear face coverings in enclosed spaces
- Make space – stay at least two metres apart
- Follow the Rule of Six

And while Covid-19 is at the forefront of our minds when we talk about staying safe at the moment, please also remember the basics of firework safety:

- Make sure children stand at a safe distance from the bonfire
- Keep everyone well back from the display
- Never return to a lit firework
- Make sure children stand at a safe distance from the bonfire
- Keep fireworks in a closed metal box
- Always follow the instructions when using fireworks

The Child Accident Prevention Trust has loads more information about firework safety – click here to see it.

Be Spooky but stay Safe this Halloween: With Halloween on Saturday, many of us would now be planning fun (and spooky) things to do with our families

however with increasing rates of coronavirus in our county, we need to approach our celebrations differently this year.

Please avoid Trick or Treating if possible, and at all times follow the rule of six as well as the 'hands, face and space' guidance. Knocking on doors and picking up sweets can increase the risk of catching and spreading the virus through touch and close contact. Instead why not use the opportunity to be creative and find alternative Halloween activities within your own home. Organise a Halloween themed treasure hunt around your house and garden and hide the trick or treat sweets to be found in the safety of your home! Or decorate your doorstep and share your pictures with us on social media, we would love to see them.

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Finally, please share the information and particularly the key messages that are informing our current campaigns with your networks. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter 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.