

Somerset's Covid-19 Weekly Update

Friday 14 January 2022

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 case numbers in Somerset remain high with Omicron now clearly being the dominant strain in the South-West.

This week, changes in the testing mean no confirmatory PCR test will be required for asymptomatic cases identified on LFD. People with symptoms and certain other groups do still need to get a PCR test. Further details can be found later in this update.

On 13 January there was an announcement regarding the option from 17 January to reduce the mandatory self-isolation period to five days should there be a negative LFD taken on day five and six. Full details can be found [here](#).

The vaccine remains our best line of defence, so please do step forward whether it's for your first, second or booster jab. Full Somerset vaccination and booster information can be found [here](#).

Case rates remain very high due to the widespread transmission of the Omicron Variant, it is vital we take simple steps to help reduce the spread of Covid-19. So, even if fully vaccinated, we need to keep ourselves and each other safe. The main ways do this remain: wearing a well-fitting face-covering where required and in crowded and enclosed spaces, meeting outside, or ensuring there is good ventilation when meeting inside, keeping distance between people you meet, washing hands regularly and continuing to take lateral flow tests just before meeting other people.

Latest Covid-19 Dashboard: [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



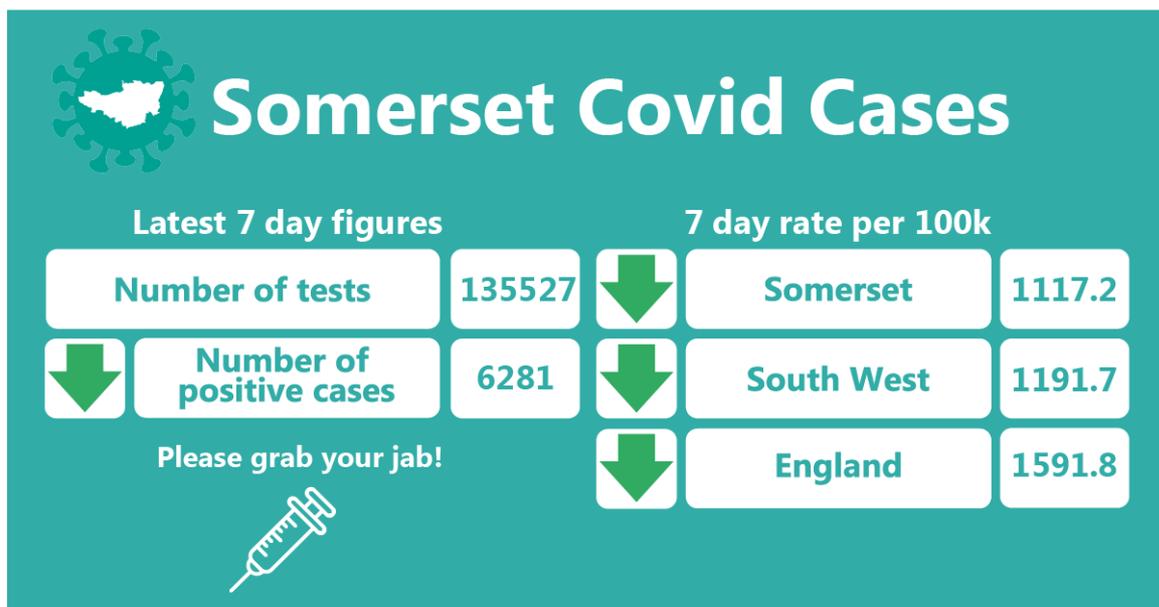
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Cabinet Member for Education and
Public Health

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In the week up to 9 January, approximately 135,527 tests were carried out across the county with 6,281 new confirmed cases. The rates have slightly decreased in the last reporting week to 1,117.2 per 100.000. This is below both the South-West average and the national average.

Hospitalisation data for Somerset has risen to around 75 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
- Vaccinations Update
- Testing Update
- Latest Covid Catch-up film
- Resources and further information

Workplaces: From 11 January in England people who do not have symptoms but receive a positive lateral flow test are required to self-isolate immediately but won't need to take a confirmatory PCR test.

With Covid-19 rates so high, we are very confident that someone with a positive LFD result has Covid-19 and can act on this test result without needing confirmation from a PCR test too.

This will mean people get the advice they need as quickly as possible to help stop chains of transmission and are able to isolate as quickly as possible, whilst ensuring PCR tests remain available for those who need them.

Some people will still be advised to get a confirmatory PCR for example, those who want to apply for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment (TTSP) so please let your employees know they will need to take a confirmatory PCR if they receive a positive LFD result in order to claim this payment.

If people have any of the main symptoms of Covid-19, they must take a PCR test, not an LFD test

From 17 January, following the change in Self-Isolation guidance for employees who have tested positive, people now can stop self-isolating after 5 days provided they do another LFD test on both days 5 and 6 of self-isolation period (no earlier) and both tests are negative. Tests should be at least 24 hours apart.

If they do not take LFD tests on days 5 and 6 of their self-isolation period or the result of either test is positive, they should continue to self-isolate until they get negative results from two LFD tests on consecutive days or until they have completed 10 full days of self-isolation, whichever is earliest.

Those who leave self-isolation on or after day 5 are strongly advised to limit close contact with other people in crowded or poorly ventilated spaces, work from home if they can and minimise contact with anyone who is at higher risk of severe illness if infected with Covid-19. Employers need to consider this when updating their **Covid-19 Risk assessment** and ensure arrangements are made as necessary for individuals returning to work.

Care Sector: We continue to see single cases, clusters and outbreaks of Covid-19 in our care settings. The number of outbreaks in care homes have increased dramatically over the last two weeks, but we are only seeing a small number of Covid-19 admissions to hospital from care homes.

We are working closely with our partners in Infection, Prevention and Control, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Adult Social Care to support:

1. Vaccinations, ensuring boosters are provided and recorded on the Capacity Tracker
2. High quality Infection, Prevention and Control measures, including good ventilation
3. Identification, prompt action and reporting of cases of Covid-19 and other infections

Support for the care sector with Covid-19 cases

- All cases of Covid-19 in care settings are to be reported to our Health Protection Team (HPT) at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) on 0300 303 8162 (option 9 for a Covid call) and for more than one case or any residents, please report to swhpt@phe.gov.uk
- Do not delay contacting your HPT, interventions are more effective the earlier they are started.
- Any individual who tests positive for coronavirus with a PCR or rapid lateral flow test should follow the [management of exposed and residents guidance](#).
- You should also consider whether individuals may be eligible for Covid-19 treatments including antivirals or monoclonal antibodies (through the

PANORAMIC national study or through [direct access](#) for those at highest risk of becoming seriously ill from Covid-19).

- If there are any staff or resident positives, either from rapid lateral flow test or PCR, all staff should conduct a daily rapid lateral flow test before starting their shift if possible.
- Read more about [rapid response daily testing](#).
- If there is a delay in the HPT returning your call, in addition to starting rapid response daily staff testing, UKHSA and the Department of Health and Social Care recommend you ensure the case(s) are isolated and contacts identified and managed in line with current guidance whilst awaiting a response.
- Advice on [what to do in an outbreak situation](#)
- The Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) team will provide support to care homes with outbreaks at days 3 and days 7-10 and as required after this. They can be contacted on somccg.infectionpreventioncontrolteam@nhs.net

Latest guideline updates:

- [Covid-19: management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings](#) - updated 11 January 2022
- [Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) testing in adult care homes](#) - updated 12 January 2022

Care staff mental health and wellbeing: We are encouraging care staff to maintain their [wellbeing](#), model good self-care and be available to each other for everyday support and friendly conversation to support a culture of openness around good mental and emotional health. In addition, there are resources available to support our care sector during difficult times:

- [Somerset Emotional Wellbeing Staff Hub](#) – a dedicated online resource for all health and care workers in Somerset
- [Our Frontline](#) - mental health and bereavement support for care workers
- [Somerset Mindline](#) – open 24/7

Schools and Early Years settings: The SCC Public Health Team are committed to supporting all settings with measures to help control transmission and therefore protect face to face learning as much as possible, for all children and young people. In line with this and working again with Directors of Public Health (DsPH) across the South West [consensus](#) was reached to continue with enhanced Covid-19 control measures in place in educational settings.

In addition to the DfE guidance issued on the 2 January for face coverings to be worn in classrooms and teaching spaces where students in year 7 and above are educated, SCC Public Health advice is to remain with [enhanced/amber measures](#) in place as per the [contingency framework](#) flow chart which can be found here [Covid-19 School Toolkit | Support Services for Education](#).

Reporting Void, Negative or Positive LFDs: With the removal of confirmatory PCR test, it is vital all LFD test results are reported, whether positive, negative or void.

It remains vital for all pupils, students and education staff to report all tests results (positive, negative and void) to [Report a Covid-19 rapid lateral flow test result - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and the setting.

Thousands of parents, children and staff are conducting LFD tests regularly. The reporting of void, positive and negative tests is important to help us understand the spread of the virus and inform the local Covid response. LFD tests are very good at identifying infectious individuals when prevalence is this high. Identifying asymptomatic infectious cases, helps us to stop the spread of infection within schools

Even if someone has tested positive for Covid-19 within the last 90 days, they are strongly encouraged to take part in LFD testing on-site or at home once they have completed their isolation period. Pupils and staff are therefore able to return to regular twice weekly testing, or daily close contact testing after the 10 day isolation period has ended for their current infection.

Access to LFDs and PCRs: Due to the increase in people with Covid-19 symptoms, some have experienced delays when [booking an onsite PCR test](#). Availability is temporarily reduced in some areas to ensure labs can meet

processing demand. Availability is refreshed very regularly, so check back every 30 minutes and you'll find a slot.

Please also remember you can [order a PCR test kit](#) to be delivered to your home. Again, availability will be refreshed regularly, so continue to check the site throughout the day to make sure you receive your test promptly.

Elected Member Cllr Clare Paul has been lobbying in support of the Public Health team's advice to directly supply Primary Schools with LFDs, rather than relying on availability through usual ordering channels. As a result of this work, MP Rebecca Pow is now engaged with moving this issue forward.

Until this is resolved, Primary school students and parents are expected to access tests via community routes (collection at [local participating pharmacy](#)) or via the [online ordering service](#).

E-bug Teaching Resources for educational settings: [E-Bug](#) is a free educational resource for classroom and home use and makes learning about micro-organisms, the spread, prevention and treatment of infection, fun and accessible for all teachers and students.

You can find the resources [here](#) and can also access these on the [E-Bug](#) website.

All activities and lesson plans have been designed to complement the National Curriculum eg. RSHE, Science. You will also find a range of interactive activities to complement learning, including games, quizzes, and debate kits. These resources have been developed by the Primary Care and Interventions Unit within UKHSA to educate students aged 3-16 about infection prevention, control, and treatment.

Please promote the use of these resources amongst teachers as critical resources for supporting infection prevention and control within the school environment. These are our key mitigation measure to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and other infectious disease in education settings.

Somerset Emotional Wellbeing Website for Education Staff: The SCC Public Health team are aware of the stress and pressures being felt throughout the

education system. Whilst our mental health changes throughout our lives, it is important to not just put up with poor mental health, there are services available which can help.

The Somerset emotional well-being staff hub can now be searched via education in your role/organisation (simply type 'education' or 'school') or how you are feeling, to view relevant support resources including podcasts which are available in Somerset.

[Somerset Emotional Wellbeing – Somerset Emotional Wellbeing Staff Hub](#)

Symptomatic and Asymptomatic Testing: For Somerset schools from the 1st – 7th Jan 30,601 tests were completed, 979 of these were positive, giving a positivity rate of 3.2%.

SCC PH advice remains consistent with national guidance:

- Only use twice weekly LFD testing for asymptomatic cases
- Make sure you do an LFD according to the instructions and at least 30 minutes after eating or drinking or vaping
- If you have symptoms get a PCR and use the supervised PCR testing route at test centre to get the best quality test
- If you are asymptomatic and receive a positive LFD test, there is no need to seek a confirmatory PCR test and self-isolation can begin from the date of the positive LFD result
- There is no need for primary age pupils (those in year 6 and below) to regularly test, unless they have been identified as a contact for someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 and therefore advised to take lateral flow tests every day for 7 days.

Childhood Immunisation Programme: The Somerset Foundation Trust manage the childhood immunisation programme with SAINT (School Age Immunisation Nursing Team, part of the NHS). SAINT deliver the nasal flu vaccination to all schools in Somerset.

All schools that were cancelled prior to Christmas due to team redeployment have now been rebooked and SAINT aim to complete the school flu programme delivery by the end of January.

Appointment only FLU clinics: To attend a clinic requiring an appointment please email Somersetsaint@somersetft.nhs.uk

[Flu vaccination programme - SAINTS \(School Age Immunisation Teams\) \(somersetft.nhs.uk\)](#)

Covid-19 Vaccine Programme: There is a continued offer for all eligible young people to access their first dose via vaccination sites in Somerset for those who may have missed their school session.

Bookings can be made through the [National Booking Service online](#) or by calling 119.

There are new clinics starting regularly in other areas in the coming weeks. Please encourage parents/guardians to [check the NHS walk in site for up to date information](#).

Vaccination Centre	Dates	Timings	Location
Haynes Motor Museum	Mon - Fri	09.00 – 17.00	Sparkford, Yeovil, BA22 7LH
Firepool, Taunton	Mon - Sun	09.00 – 17.00	Canal Road, Taunton, TA1 1NY
Bridgwater Town Hall	Fridays in Jan	09.00 – 17.00	High St, Bridgwater, TA6 3BL
Cheese and Grain	Saturday 15 th Jan	10.00 – 17.00	Market Yard, Justice Lane, Frome BA11 1BE
Alfred Gillett Trust, Clarks Village	Sunday 16 th Jan	10.00 – 16.00	The Grange, Farm Rd, Street BA16 0BQ (Access via Grange Car Park 2 then follow the path to the right-hand side of Clarks Village Entrance.)

Please note: If a child has tested positive for Covid-19 and is not at high risk from Covid-19, they need to wait 12 weeks before they can have a Covid-19 vaccine. This starts from the date they had symptoms, or the date of the positive test if they did not have symptoms.

Vaccination Update: All eligible adults in England aged 18 and over have been offered a Covid-19 booster vaccine.



In terms of booking vaccinations this should continue to be done via our local NHS website [Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#) this gives local information but also leads into the National Booking Service. Depending on your location, circumstances and availability this system will then show you when and where there are available appointments for vaccination. This may or may not be within Somerset but will give the best options available for vaccination as quickly as possible.

To get your vaccine visit www.nhs.uk/Covid-Vaccination or call 119 for an appointment. There are also convenient walk-in options across the country, which you can find on www.nhs.uk/grab-a-jab.

Testing Update: Guidance has been updated to reflect [changes in testing for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(Covid-19\) infection](#). From 11 January people who receive a positive lateral flow test will be required to self-isolate immediately but won't need to take a confirmatory PCR test.

LFD testing is aimed at asymptomatic individuals, and you should only test using an LFD test if you do not have symptoms. However, for those who have symptoms and have tested using an LFD and received a positive test result, there is no need to take a confirmatory PCR test.

It is still recommended to have a PCR test, rather than an LFD test, if you have symptoms, and you should [follow the advice for people who have Covid-19](#) if your PCR result is positive.

The only circumstances where a confirmatory PCR test is needed following a positive LFD result applies to people who:

- wish to claim the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment (TTSP)
- have a health condition which means they may be suitable for new coronavirus (Covid-19) treatments – people identified should have received [an email or letter](#) from the NHS, and will be receiving a PCR test kit at home by mid-January.
- are taking LFD tests as part of research or surveillance programmes, and the programme asks them to do so
- have a positive day 2 LFD test after arriving in England

It is important to [report your LFD test results](#) after taking each test - reporting positive LFD test results means NHS Test and Trace can get in touch with your contacts and advise them on what to do; reporting negative LFD test results helps us understand more about the spread of Covid-19.

There is separate [guidance if you have had contact with someone outside of your household who has tested positive](#).

Covid Catch-up Film: This week Clinton clarifies the recent changes to the testing rules and advice.

The film can be viewed [here](#).

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](#).