

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 44. Week ending 07/02/21

#StayAtHome #ProtectTheNHS #SaveLives

It is also important to remember the Coronavirus basics

- **Hands** – Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- **Face** – Cover your face in enclosed spaces
- **Space** – Keep 2m apart where possible

SWT Council priorities

Somerset West and Taunton Council's updated priorities during the Coronavirus pandemic are as follows:

- Preserve critical services;
- Safeguard the public;
- Ensure our most vulnerable residents are supported; and
- Planning economic resilience and recovery

The situation is being reviewed on a daily basis to ensure that the Council follows the [latest advice from Public Health England](#).

[Click here](#) to read up to date information on how SWT continues to respond to Coronavirus.

Key Messages this week

1. Community Transport Schemes

Somerset County Council (SCC) is joining forces with transport providers to help vulnerable residents get to their COVID-19 vaccination appointments. While many older and more vulnerable people will be able to attend a location close to their home, some will be relying on public transport. SCC is working with Community Transport and Slinky Demand Responsive services across Somerset to allow free travel for bus pass holders when attending vaccination appointments.

Community Transport schemes can offer transport for individuals and groups, with some offering door-to-door services. Community Transport services are provided by a number of independent, non-profit making groups and organisations, all with the purpose of helping community members access essential services. [Click here](#) for more information relating to the Community Transport Services on offer.

If you are still struggling to get to a medical appointment, including COVID-19 vaccinations and need help and support contact Somerset's Coronavirus Helpline on **0300 790 6275**.

2. Help for businesses seeking government grants

SWT has implemented a simplified application process to help businesses access the latest tranche of Government lockdown grants. The new process has been streamlined to accommodate two fundamental groups of applicants – **those who have received a support grant since 5 November 2020 and those who have not.**

The Council has already contacted the businesses that have previously applied for a support grant, inviting them to re-apply via a simple email process and where eligible, payment will be made as soon as possible. Previous applicants which have not been contacted, are advised to check their 'spam' or 'junk' folders along with their email security settings.

Businesses which have not received a support grant since 5 November, regardless of whether they pay business rates and including those who previously applied but did not meet the eligibility criteria, may now be entitled to support.

These applicants are encouraged to register their interest using a simple online form to determine their potential entitlement to the various schemes via the Council's website: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/business-rates/COVID-19-business-support-grants/>

Once registered, the Council's grants team will work out whether any support grants apply and where appropriate, the team will contact them to confirm some final eligibility details.

If you would like to be kept informed of regular COVID-19 business support grants please sign up for the SWT [business newsletter](#).

3. Democracy and Governance

Committee Meetings

You can search by Committee or by the monthly calendar for details of all [Committee meetings](#). Here you can find the agendas and minutes of all meetings, as well as which Councillors sit on each Committee.

A number of Committee meetings are scheduled to take place over the next few weeks, which are as follows:

- Tuesday 9 February – **Special Executive (Budget Setting)**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Thursday 4 February)
- Thursday 18 February – **Full Council (Budget Setting)**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 15 February)
- Tuesday 23 February – **Full Council**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Thursday 18 February)
- Wednesday 24 February – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 19 February)
- Thursday 25 February – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 22 February)

The meetings will all be live streamed so that members of the public can watch at home. To watch the live stream when the meeting commences please visit the SWT website by [clicking here](#). If you are not able to watch the meeting live, you can also watch it after the meeting.

Members of the public are still able to participate in the meeting by submitting their questions or statement to the Governance Team via governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk and these will be read out by an officer at the meeting. Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.

4. New social housing project completed

SWT's latest social housing development has been completed despite early setbacks and the impact from COVID-19. The new social rented housing scheme at Laxton Road, Taunton, promotes comfortable and healthy living through a mix of eight 2-person, 1-bedroom flats split across two 3-storey blocks.

The Council-owned site which was occupied by a number of disused garages, was identified as in need of regeneration prior to planning permission being granted in 2017. The building work started in November 2019 and was projected to finish in the autumn of 2020, however, appointed contractor, [Classic Builders](#), encountered a number of challenges over the course of the project.

On digging the foundations, an unexpected service pipe was discovered causing an early delay. Further significant delays were incurred with the onset of the Coronavirus restrictions in March 2020, forcing work to be halted and closure of the entire site for approximately six weeks. [Classic Builders](#) worked hard to get the project back on track by implementing new safe working practices and working extended hours, including on Saturdays to complete in time for the New Year.

Please [click here](#) to read the full SWT press release.

5. Notice of De-Declaration of Part of Local Nature Reserve Part of the Children's Wood/Riverside Local Nature Reserve Section 19 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

Notice is hereby given that Somerset West and Taunton Council no longer intends to manage a parcel of land, the approximate area of which is 0.059 ha of local nature reserve.

[View a plan that identifies the location of the section of Open Space land,](#) shown edged red on the plan.

Objections to the proposed De-Declaration must be made in writing to Sally Stark, Assets Manager (Interim), Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE or via email s.stark@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk by no later than **19 February 2021** quoting the reference: Riverside/Hankridge LNR.

Please [click here](#) to view the SWT press release.

6. SWT Employment Hubs

Newly unemployed or out of work for a while? At risk of redundancy? Looking for new skills, career progression or starting your own business?

The Employment Hubs focus on offering one to one practical support such as CV writing, searching and applying for work, how to deal with online application forms, help with interviews and signposting to other agencies for further help and support.

For support, a chat and a virtual cup of tea, please [click here](#) or you can email: employmentsupport@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk. Please see attached flyer for ease of reference.

You can also find out more information on the [SWT website](#).

7. REMINDER- Redundancy support for employers and employees

SWT is fully committed to supporting businesses and their employees who are facing redundancy during this very challenging and difficult time. Working with partners including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus (JCP) and Somerset County Council (SCC), SWT can provide a package of support to help businesses looking to restructure and make redundancies in their workforce and for the employees directly affected by the changes. For further information please [click here](#).

8. The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

In Somerset, the Councils have responded to over 11,000 phone calls on the Coronavirus Support Helpline and have emailed or written to over 22,000 residents shielding to advise them of the helpline and to make contact if they need support.

This single phone number is available for anyone in Somerset who needs coronavirus-related support from their councils. The **0300 790 6275** number is available seven days per week 8am – 6pm.

Anyone who can't find help within their own local networks and volunteers, can use this number to get help and advice around:

- Personal care and support including food and delivery of prescriptions
- Support for the homeless
- Emotional support if you're feeling worried or anxious
- Transport to medical appointments including vaccinations
- Waste collection and disposal
- Financial support

This number won't cover medical advice, for which people will need to continue to use the 111 NHS phone number if they cannot get help online. If you would like to find out more about the Corona helpers, offer assistance, or need support please [click here](#).

9. REMINDER- Tenant Strategic Group Elections 2021

Election information packs are being sent to tenants containing information about how the Tenant's Strategic Group works, alongside an application form. To apply: simply complete and post your paper application form to SWT or use the online [form](#). Applications close on **8 February 2021**; and please note that applications received after this date will not be considered.

The election will be a combined postal and online ballot run by Civica who are very experienced in conducting elections. After the ballot closes on **30 March 2021** the votes will be counted and the ten candidates with the highest number of votes will be elected to serve on the Tenants' Strategic Group.

If you require another copy of the application form or are having any issues applying, please ring **0300 304 8000** and ask for a member of the Housing Performance Team or email housingperformance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

10. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Sorry; late or missed recycling in parts of the district

Coronavirus-related staff shortages are likely to lead to late or missed recycling collections in some areas of the district. Do not take containers in too early. If any collections are missed, SWP regret that crews cannot immediately return; please re-present recycling from 6am on your next collection date.

To find more space for recycling, flatten and tear up cardboard; rinse, squash and put tops back on plastic bottles; rinse and, if safe, crush cans. Stack boxes with locked food bin on top. If materials cannot be stored or would present a health or fire risk, nine recycling sites are open for essential visits only, and can take all kerbside materials for recycling.

The only exception is food waste, which should be double bagged and put in your rubbish, or added to the energy-from-waste skip at any recycling site. All recycle site details, including essential safety measures can be found [here](#). [Click here](#) for the recycling checklist.

If you need extra recycling containers, you can order them via [My Waste Services](#).

Please observe all usual Coronavirus safety advice for kerbside collections, including washing/sanitising hands before and after handling waste containers, disinfecting handles, and maintaining social distance from waste staff.

For an explanation of Coronavirus safety measures and this month's change to 6am starts, see: [facebook.com/SomersetWaste/posts/3741870462515672](https://www.facebook.com/SomersetWaste/posts/3741870462515672)
SWP would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused to you.

To keep up to date with recycling sites, sign up for the SWP e-newsletter at www.somersetwaste.gov.uk and follow @Somersetwaste on Facebook or Twitter

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC) Highway Maintenance Report

Despite the poor weather and difficult ground conditions, work on repairing the collapsed highway verge/embankment at **A358 Minehead Road, Combe Florey** has been progressing quite well. Work will continue over the weekend with the aim of getting the road closure lifted and the A358 re-opened to all traffic on the evening of **Sunday 7 February**, albeit under the control of temporary traffic signals. The contractors have built up the gabion baskets (wire cages filled with hand placed stones), to road level and have started the process of back filling and repairing the road sub-structure, before the final phase of restoring the drainage grips and making good the embankment and fencing. SCC Highways would like to thank the residents and road users of Somerset West and Taunton for their patience and support whilst this important piece of repair work on a key part of the highway network is carried out.

As regards to other highway maintenance works, carriageway resurfacing is underway at **Showell Park, Staplegrove**, with the timing of evening road closures agreed with the Nuffield Hospital, for which this is also their access road. Also, drainage improvement work continues at **Chilcombe Lane, Bicknoller**.

On the emergency front, the two roads across **Curry Moor**, on the Somerset Levels and Moors, remain closed due to flooding. These are **Cuts Road** between **East Lyng** and **Athelney** and **New Road/Moor Lane** between **West Lyng** and **North Curry**. As regards winter, we are once again entering a cold spell with strong and persistent winds from the east, with the ever-present risk of snow. Over the last

couple of weeks SCC Highways have been restocking their salt barns across the county in readiness for this.

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit the website www.travelsomerset.co.uk or follow @TravelSomerset on Twitter.

Useful links to report faults

Throughout winter, there are more queries about overgrown trees, verges or hedges, blocked drains and street lights that don't work. To report faults in the following areas, please click on the relevant link:-

[Dangerous/Overgrown Tree alongside the public highway](#)

[Report an overgrown verge or hedge on the road](#)

[Street light not working](#)

[Blocked surface water drain on the highway.](#)

M5 Junction 25 Improvement Scheme

Toneway

Since December, the verges have been dressed with topsoil, concrete watersheds have been installed to the lighting columns on the outbound carriageway and traffic signal works have been completed.

Upcoming works:

- Install watersheds on columns on inbound carriageway
- Finish dressing the verges
- Final street lighting works

New Link Road

Crash barriers have been installed on the central reservation and around the new bridge whilst the contractor continues to trim and dress the verges. Traffic signs and lighting columns are now installed along the new Link Road including new electric supplies for CCTV, lighting and Highways England communications.

J25 Gyrotory

Verges on the roundabout have now been dressed and the footpath on the south inner roundabout has now been completed. The contractor continues to undertake traffic signal works and have completed fitting the crash barriers along with high friction surfacing, to reduce the risk of skidding. White road markings have been laid.

Please [click here](#) to read the latest project bulletin and to see the latest drone footage of the area.

REMINDER- First Bus Somerset A358 Combe Florey – Service Update

For three weeks from **Monday 25 January 2021** the **A358 between Combe Florey and Williton** will be closed to allow Highways to rectify the issues along that stretch of road. This means buses will divert via Raleigh's Cross as this is the prescribed diversionary route.

In partnership with Somerset County Council, First Bus will operate a shuttle service for the areas who will be left without a service. **This will operate between Williton and West Bagborough.** The diversion is likely to cause delays of up to 20 minutes. To read the full press release and the timetable for the shuttle bus, please [click here](#).

BREXIT

EU Settlement Scheme Deadline – have all your staff and service users applied?

Most EU citizens living in the UK (as well as those from the EEA and Switzerland) need to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme to gain Settled Status so they can continue to live and work in the UK after **30 June 2021**.

COVID-19 is having an impact on application times to the EU Settlement Scheme, so it's vital that people apply as soon as possible. Although there is no obligation for employers to remind staff to apply, it's worth considering that despite COVID-19, the Scheme will not be extended. You should consider the impact on your organisation or business if staff do not have Status, as they will not be able to work after June 2021. You can also play an important role by sign posting your service users to the Scheme, as some people in our community may not be aware of the need to apply or may need help.

Local charity Diversity Voice, in partnership with Somerset County Council are working with the Home Office to provide help from regulated advisors for those who need it, including vulnerable people and employers. They can provide posters, hand-outs for service users and one to one help for applicants in any language. There's no charge for this service. Contact euss@diversityvoice.org.uk, or phone **0300 075 0105**.

REMINDER- Idverde Community Investment Fund

The [Idverde Community Investment Fund](#) aims to empower local people to deliver sought after projects that improve their local green space or the public realm, enhance the local environment, and boost the wellbeing of local people.

Funding can be granted for a variety of projects and activities, including promotion, marketing, and education, as well as practical equipment and running costs.

The fund is open for applications from formally constituted, not for profit groups, such as charities, volunteer groups, forums, sports teams, societies and schools. Your project must be based in areas where Idverde currently operates a contract – [check out the main contract locations here](#), but if you've seen the Idverde vans driving around, you're in luck!

To find out more about the Community Investment Fund please [click here](#).

REMINDER- Somerset Skills and Learning (SSL)

Free Online Workshops - For February 2021

SSL are offering **Community Learning Courses** and workshops designed to support and develop new skills, build confidence, motivation and resilience. The Community Learning Workshops and Courses are free for anybody aged 19+, who live in Somerset and lived in the UK for the last three years.

SSL's goal is to support health and wellbeing and to develop stronger communities.

This February the focus is on health & wellbeing, self-development and career support, so treat yourself to some self-care and take steps towards a better future. To find out more about the range of courses on offer please [click here](#).

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service

Scam Alert

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service has been made aware of a possible scam where people impersonating the fire service are offering home safety visits.

Please [click here](#) to read more about what you can expect if Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue were to visit your home and how you can check it is a legitimate visit.

Electrical Fire Safety Awareness

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service recently attended a fire caused by a laptop on a carpet. Take care when charging devices - they can get hot.

Always charge your device on a hard, safe surface, and never on a carpet or bed.

You can [click here](#) to read the full story about the lap top fire.

REMINDER- Public Consultation

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service is redesigning their website and would welcome feedback to improve the site in the future. Please [click here](#) to take the short survey.

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Open Consultation

Disposal of pleasure vessel marine flares

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has provided a free disposal service to all pleasure vessel owners for a number of years through 17 of their current Coastguard stations around the UK.

These arrangements are subject to review and an opportunity now presents itself to consider whether alternative arrangements ought to be explored to dispose of expired, damaged or redundant pyrotechnics from service in a more effective and efficient way, while also ensuring that pleasure vessel owners can meet their own legal obligations more easily and conveniently.

This consultation has identified four possible options for dealing with pyrotechnics from the pleasure vessel sector. Whether you are a boat-owner, a business, a trade

association or if you have some other interest in this part of the marine sector, please consider each carefully and respond accordingly.

The consultation is inviting comments on four suggested options for disposal of marine flares on pleasure vessels. If you wish to find out more, please [click here](#).

Community Support – What help is out there? Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Wivey Link Services from 1 February 2021 Vaccination Appointments

Wivey Link Services can now provide **FREE** transport to vaccination appointments in Taunton, Wellington or any other locally nominated venues for passengers who have a bus pass. Please contact Wivey Link Services on **01984 624777** for details and availability.

Other Essential Medical Appointments

Wivey Link registered passengers who have a bus pass can now travel at concessionary fare rates at any time of day.

If you require transport please call **01984 624777** between 9.30am and 1.00pm. Monday to Friday and Wivey Link will see how they can help. You can leave a message outside of these times and they will get back to you on the next working day. Services are provided in accordance with government guidance.

Children's Mental Health Week 2021

Children's Mental Health Week is taking place on 1-7 February 2021. This year's theme is Express Yourself. [Place2Be](#) is a children's mental health charity that provides counselling and mental health support and training in UK schools, using tried and tested methods backed by research. Children from Place2Be partner schools have taken the opportunity to explain how they like to express themselves, and how it makes them feel when they share their thoughts or feelings creatively. Please [click here](#) to read more and hear what they have to say.

Parents and carers play an important role in their child's mental health. Please [click here](#) to access Place2Be's free resources.

Supporting your child during the coronavirus pandemic

Tips, advice and where to get support for your child's mental health during the Coronavirus pandemic can be found [here](#).

REMINDER- Healthy Start – Food Vouchers

Healthy Start is a Government scheme to improve the health of low-income pregnant women and families on benefits and tax credits.

Vouchers are posted out every four weeks. They can be spent on milk, fresh, frozen, and tinned fruit and vegetables, fresh, dried, and tinned pulses, or infant formula milk in a wide variety of local shops and supermarkets, and with milkmen that have registered to take part in the scheme. Please [click here](#) for further information and to find out if you qualify.

Simple steps for safer shopping

Supermarkets have put many measures in place throughout the pandemic but everyone can play their part to minimise the spread of COVID-19 by taking a few simple actions:

- Arrange a click and collect or delivery
- Make a list – this will help reduce the amount of time spent in store
- Shop alone if possible
- Avoid shopping at busy times.
- Wear a face covering, unless exempt, at all times. It must cover your nose and mouth
- Sanitise your trolley or basket before using
- Sanitise your hands when you enter and leave the store
- Keep your distance from others

Trading Standards Farming Partnership

Mental Health and Wellbeing in Farming

Tuesday 23 February, online from 6pm

Join Trading Standards Farming Partnership for an evening of talks about mental health, wellbeing and support for the farming community. Farming can be a challenging way of life. Find out how you can support your wellbeing and get the right help when you need it.

There's no requirement to contribute – join online, engage or just listen. Can't make it? Register anyway and you will receive a recording after the event. Register for the event: www.mhwinfarming2.eventbrite.co.uk

Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

The latest Somerset Carers Newsletter is out now!

You can read the latest copy of the carers' newsletter online or download a copy [here](#). The New Year edition is packed with useful news and information for unpaid Carers in Somerset.

Examples of items covered in this edition:

- Increased Support in Somerset Carers
- Rapid COVID-19 Testing for unpaid Carers
- Vaccinations for unpaid Carers
- Spark's NEW Carers Groups
- 5 Ways to Stay Well & Connected
- How can a Village Agent help you?

For support at any stage of your caring journey please call the Advice Line on **0800 3168600** or email carers@somersetccc.org.uk [#Carers](#) [#Somerset](#) [#WhoCaresfortheCarers](#)

SWT Voluntary and Community Sector Support Newsletter

This week, SWT has published an e-newsletter to support the work of the voluntary and community sector across our district. To sign up for future updates or for an e-copy of the newsletter, please [click here](#) and enter your email address.

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)

Surviving Winter: Appeal raises an incredible, record-breaking £150,000 so far this winter

Somerset Community Foundation is absolutely delighted to announce that this year's [Surviving Winter appeal](#) has raised an incredible £150,000 so far. Surviving Winter encourages people who can afford it to donate some or all of their Winter Fuel Payment to help local people who are unable to afford to heat their homes. And this year the need has been greater than ever before, as more pensioners have had to stay at home and shield during the Coronavirus pandemic.

If you can afford to, please [click here](#) to donate some or all of your Winter Fuel Payment to help support those living in fuel poverty.

If you wish to subscribe to the latest updates from SCF please [click here](#).

REMINDER- Advice for people struggling to pay essential bills

The Government has updated the advice for those in difficulty with utility bills, or repayment commitments on credit cards, loans and mortgages, as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

The guidance sets out what people should do if they are struggling to pay bills and sets out the action the Government has taken with different utility providers, as well as loan, credit card, insurance and mortgage providers.

The Government has extended the deadline for applying for a mortgage payment holiday to 31 March 2021. Please [click here](#) for more information and further advice.

Health and Welfare

UK Government secures additional 40 million doses of Valneva vaccine

The UK Government has signed a deal for a further 40 million doses of Valneva's promising vaccine candidate. The latest deal will bolster long-term vaccine production in Scotland and brings the total UK vaccine portfolio to 407 million doses over the next two years.

The decision to purchase 40 million extra doses is based on the UK's strategy to take a wide approach, using different technologies and viral targets to ensure the UK has the best chance of securing access to successful vaccines as quickly as possible. It will also give the UK future flexibility should we need to revaccinate any of the population. For more information please [click here](#).

One million COVID-19 first vaccine doses for people in the South West

A 'major milestone' has been met this week as the number of first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine offered to people in the south west topped one million. Staff across the NHS have been supporting the roll-out of the vaccination programme in the areas, with people most at-risk of COVID-19 being prioritised, in line with expert guidance.

The regional milestone is being celebrated at the vaccination centre at the Taunton Racecourse in Somerset, one of seven health and care systems in the South West delivering the vaccination programme. For more information please [click here](#).

Please don't drop your guard once vaccinated

Somerset residents who have received their vaccine jabs are being urged to keep following the "stay safe" guidance. Somerset now has two large vaccination centres in operation, as well as 13 GP-led community sites and two hospital hubs, enabling thousands of vaccinations to be administered. Trudi Grant, Somerset County Council's Director of Public Health, said the NHS and partners had worked round the clock to get the centres up and running – but warned the virus risk was still high.

While there are many things that we are still discovering about COVID-19, one thing that we know for certain is that it can be destroyed with simple soap and hot water. That's the reason that the 'hands' part of the 'Hands, Face, Space' message is such an important part of our 'toolkit' for tackling the virus and preventing its spread."

The golden rules are: wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water; wear a face covering when required and keeping a social distance of at least two metres
Please [click here](#) for more information.

REMINDER- Vaccinations: Please be patient

NHS staff and partners are doing an incredible job delivering what it is the largest vaccination programme in our history, at the same time as dealing with a new admission for COVID-19 every 30 seconds, but they need the public to play their part too:

- please don't contact the NHS to seek a vaccine, they will contact you;
- when they do contact you, please attend your booked appointments at exactly the time you're asked to, so that queues in this cold weather can be avoided;
- and please continue to follow all the guidance in place to control the virus and save lives, even if you have already had your vaccine.

For regular updates and further information please [click here](#).

REMINDER- Latest Vaccination data for Somerset

You can now check Somerset's vaccination data on the Coronavirus dashboard. The information provided by the NHS will be added every Friday. Please [click here](#) to view the latest figures relating to doses that have been administered in Somerset. The dashboard provides an overview of Coronavirus cases, a map, the R number and more detailed district-level information.

Urgent plea for vulnerable groups to have flu vaccine

Somerset County Council is urging people with underlying health conditions to take up the free offer of a flu vaccination if they haven't already. Flu can affect anyone, but for those living with a long-term health condition the effects of catching the flu can make it worse, even if the condition is well managed and they normally feel well.

People with chronic liver disease, a problem with their spleen or are seriously overweight (BMI of 40 and above) are at risk, and uptake in these groups is low this year.

A list of all people that are eligible for the free flu vaccination can be found at: <https://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/flu/>

To make an appointment to receive the free flu jab you can contact your local pharmacy. Strict social distancing and hygiene practices are in place to protect both the public and staff at vaccination clinics and Government restrictions do allow you to leave your home to attend as it is a medical appointment.

HIV Prevention England National HIV Testing Week

National HIV Testing Week (NHTW) runs until Sunday of this week and is HIV Prevention England's flagship annual event which seeks to promote regular testing among key populations. It aims to reduce the numbers of undiagnosed people and those diagnosed late. HIV is a virus that damages your immune system.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, NHTW 2021 will have a strong focus on promoting HIV testing at home. The home test kit enables you to provide a small blood sample, collected from a finger prick. Some samples will be tested for both HIV and syphilis, and others for HIV only, check the lab card that comes with your kit to see which tests we can run on your sample. You will not need to write your name on your sample. The kit will arrive pre-labelled with a unique code. This is to ensure your testing experience is as easy and discreet as possible.

Please [click here](#) to read about the virus, testing, prevention, symptoms, treatment options and to order a home testing kit.

Public Health England (PHE) Health and Wellbeing Advisory Network

As COVID-19 is still circulating in our communities and the country remains under national lockdown, we need to do all we can to communicate important COVID-19 messages to our communities across the county. PHE really need to get key information out to as many residents as possible and it will require a collective effort.

If you haven't signed up to be part of the Health and Wellbeing Advisory Network yet, please do. The Network will help PHE to understand the COVID-19 related communication and engagement needs of communities across Somerset, especially the more vulnerable groups. The Network will provide a platform for a two way dialogue that can be fed back to the COVID-19 Engagement Board to help shape the response to the pandemic. The idea is to make communicating and engaging with groups and settings more targeted, simpler and with a joined up approach.

By joining, you can expect to receive regular up to date information on COVID-19 and health impacts across Somerset, opportunities to feedback to PHE via surveys as well as exclusive access to webinars and communications materials to address specific issues and barriers locally. PHE currently have a live survey and they would

really appreciate you taking the time to respond; it should only take a few minutes of your time.

To sign up simply [click here](#) and enter your name and email address and someone will be in touch soon.

Clinton catch-up focuses on mental health

It's not always easy to talk about mental health but there are useful ideas [here](#). And in this week's COVID-19 Catch up, Clinton Rogers talks about the importance of looking after our mental health at this difficult time.

It's not surprising that people may feel low, isolated or simply fed up with trying to juggle work, children, home schooling, health and other caring responsibilities.

Clinton Rogers talks about support available and highlights the importance of talking and checking in on family friends and colleagues. A small conversation about mental health has the power to make a big difference.

Please find a few minutes to watch – and do share with others who may benefit: [Somerset COVID-19 Catch-up Week 9 – 03 February 2021 – YouTube](#)

Every Mind Matters

You might feel like there's been lots to worry about recently. It's normal to feel anxious at times, but there are lots of ways to manage. For advice on understanding, challenging and dealing with anxious thoughts, please [click here](#).

Need to seek help during these tough times?

If you, or someone you know are feeling like things are too much, please know that you / they don't have to be alone. Here are some numbers of organisations that can help in these tough times:

- Samaritans - 116 123
- CALM - 0800 58 58 58
- ChildLine - 0800 1111
- Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
- Mind - 0300 123 3393
- National Domestic Abuse helpline - 0808 2000 247

Please refer to the websites below for the latest advice, help and guidance:

Links to the most up to date COVID-19 guidance can be found here

[Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

[Public Health England](#)

[NHS – Help and Advice](#)

FAQS

Q. I haven't had a vaccination call or letter yet and I am in a priority group– who do I speak to?

A. While the NHS appreciate it is an incredibly worrying time for everyone at the moment and everyone is anxious to know when they or their loved ones will be vaccinated – the NHS need to ask everyone to wait to be contacted. Now there are more vaccination centres across the county, the NHS can provide more vaccinations to those who need it more quickly.
The NHS will continue to work through the priority lists as identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisations and are working hard to get to as many as possible with each group as quickly as they can. NHS teams are incredibly busy at the moment booking appointments in and vaccinating those in the most vulnerable groups. Calling your local GP to find out when you are going to be vaccinated may prevent the NHS from helping those who need urgent care.

Q. I am worried about how I will get to my COVID-19 vaccine appointment. What can I do?

A. The NHS know that many of you are anxiously waiting for that vaccination call. They understand it's a worrying time. It's never too early to get prepared. One important thing to think about in advance is how you will get to your appointment when the time comes. If you aren't able to drive yourself, but you have a family member or friend who might be able to support you – it's always worth having that conversation now.

In addition, the Community Transport schedules can offer transport for individuals and groups, with some offering door-to-door services. Community Transport services are provided by a number of independent, non-profit making groups and organisations, all with the purpose of helping community members access essential services. To find out more about these services please [click here](#).

Crime / Safeguarding

How to spot a scam and what to do

Top four Vaccine Scams

Sadly, criminals are using the Coronavirus vaccine as a way to target the public by tricking them to hand over cash or financial details. They are sending convincing-looking text messages telling people they are eligible for the vaccine or are phoning people directly pretending to be the from the NHS or their local pharmacy.

Please [click here](#) for more information about the top four vaccine scams, how to spot a scam and what to do about it.

Remember, **the vaccine is free of charge**. At no point will you be asked to pay.

- The NHS will never ask you for your bank account or card details.
- The NHS will never ask you for your PIN or banking password.
- The NHS will never arrive unannounced at your home to administer the vaccine.
- The NHS will never ask you to prove your identity by sending copies of personal documents such as your passport, driving licence, bills or pay slips.

Somerset COVID-19 Catch-up

Catch up with Clinton about vaccination safety and scams

In this Somerset COVID-19 catch up video, it's Somerset's Director of Public Health Trudi Grant's mum's turn for the COVID-19 vaccine. Clinton Rogers interviews Trudi around the safety of the vaccine and speaks with Ashley Jones, from the Fraud Protect Unit, to find out how we can all be alert to vaccine scams that are circulating. You can watch the interviews [here](#).

Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness week

This week is Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness week. The police are urging victims and survivors to reach out and get the help they so desperately need. The police and support services are here to help, if needed.

Remember: Lockdown and isolation rules do not apply if you need to escape a dangerous situation or relationship.

Please [click here](#) for more information.

Domestic Abuse

Ask for ANI – Action Needed Immediately

Since January, local people and families have been asked to stay at home again to stop the transmission of the coronavirus. However, as with the other two lockdowns, restrictions do not apply if victims or survivors need to leave their home to protect themselves or their family against domestic violence.

The Government is supporting a new scheme [Ask for ANI](#), which allows those at risk or suffering from abuse to go into pharmacies and discreetly signal that they need support. By asking for ANI, which stands for Action Needed Immediately, a trained pharmacy worker will offer a private space where they can gain a better understanding, if the victim needs to speak to the police or access a support service such as a national or local domestic abuse helpline. As an essential retailer based on high streets across the country, and with specifically trained staff, pharmacies can provide a safe space for victims to sound an alarm if they are isolated at home with their abuser and unable to get help in another way.

The codeword scheme will be promoted using discreet social media adverts and paid search. Pharmacies will be given promotional material to display in store to signal to victims that they are participating. Health professionals, social workers and Job Centres will also be asked to promote the scheme, alongside police, local authorities and specialist support services for victims.

The scheme will be initially available through the 2,300 Boots stores across the UK as well as 255 independent pharmacies. There will be an [on-going sign-up process open to all pharmacies](#).

To read more on this initiative please [click here](#).

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Public warned over COVID-19 vaccine scams

Following an increasing number of reports around scams asking people to wrongly pay for COVID-19 vaccinations, Avon and Somerset Police are reminding people to be wary and to report any suspected cases to Action Fraud.

Action Fraud revealed last week it recorded more than 1,000 reports nationally of phishing emails and text messages connected to the vaccine roll-out in just one day. The scams fraudulently claim to be from the NHS and ask the recipient to click on a link to accept or decline an invitation to receive the Coronavirus vaccine. If they click accept, they are asked to input personal information and their bank card details.

In the UK, Coronavirus vaccines will only be available via the National Health Services of England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. You can be contacted by the NHS, your employer, a GP surgery or pharmacy local to you, to receive your vaccine. The vaccine is therefore **free** and at no point will people be asked to pay for one.

Latest Facebook Live

During the latest Facebook Live, PCC Sue Mountstevens and Chief Constable Andy Marsh answered your questions on police funding, fraudsters and sexual violence. Please [click here](#) to watch the replay of the video.

#StayHomeSaveLives

Is your trip out really necessary? Bending the rules costs lives. Your local neighbourhood teams have been out spreading this very important message. "Stay at home and play your part. Protect the NHS. Save lives".

[#COVID-19](#) [#stayhomesavelives](#) [#yourcommunity](#)

Finally

The below link may be useful to you, should there be a requirement to convert files to jpg format: <https://www.adobe.com/uk/acrobat/online/pdf-to-jpg.html>

It is important to keep up to date with the latest [information and advice from the government](#).

For quick up to date information regarding SWT services please follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/SWTCouncil/ or Twitter [@swtcouncil](https://twitter.com/swtcouncil)
Please see our dedicated [webpage](#) for updates.

If you have concerns about your own health and Coronavirus please visit the [NHS](#) website.

#StayAtHome

#ProtectTheNHS

#SaveLives

Attachment:

SWT Community Employment Hub Flyer