

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 48. Week ending 07/03/2021

#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. NHS invites people aged 60 plus to get life-saving COVID-19 vaccination

Almost two million people aged 60 to 63 will be invited to book a COVID-19 jab this week as the NHS vaccination programme, the biggest in health service history, gains fresh momentum. The letters will start landing on doormats this week explaining how you can make an appointment to get jabbed through the [national booking service](#). More than three in four people aged 65 to 70 took up the offer of a vaccination.

In all, more than 16.5 million people across England, over a third of the adult population, have received the life-saving jab. People are being invited to be vaccinated in order of risk, which increases with age. The latest batch of invites arriving this week will mean everyone in the first seven priority groups will have been offered a jab, with people aged between 50 and 60 set to be invited shortly.

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

2. 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 couple of weeks, which are as follows:

- Monday 8 March – **Audit, Governance and Standards Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Wednesday 3 March)
- Monday 15 March – **Licensing Committee, CANCELLED**
- Wednesday 17 March – **Executive**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 12 March)

Thursday 18 March – **Planning Committee**, 1pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 15 March)

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.

3. The Marine Group acquires Watchet Marina

The Marine & Property Group Ltd (The Marine Group) has acquired Watchet Marina. The harbour will be operated by the company from **1 April 2021**.

The Marine Group will immediately commence a major programme of works to upgrade the harbour and ultimately deliver a first-class marina matching the very best in the UK. Please [click here](#) to read the full SWT press release.

4. Council passes motion supporting the CEE Bill

At the SWT Council meeting on the 23 February 2021, the Council agreed to support the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill.

The Bill was drafted by expert scientists, lawyers and academics, and sets a viable pathway for the UK to follow by:

- Requiring the Government to ensure that the UK reduces greenhouse gas emissions in line with its legally-binding international obligations to limit global heating to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels
- Requiring the Government to protect and restore habitats, woodlands, wetlands and the wider natural world
- Establishing a representative Citizens' Assembly to involve people from all parts of the UK in deciding which policies are needed to avoid irreversible environmental damage.

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

5. SWT Customer Survey

SWT is carrying out a piece of market research across the district. The aim is to find out how you feel about SWT as a council and how you view SWT support to your organisation.

The results of the survey will help SWT to shape the way services are provided and engagement with you in the future. SWT would be grateful if your parish council could complete the survey by **Monday 12 April 2021**.

All answers are completely anonymous and confidential, and you will not be asked for any personal data.

The survey can be found by clicking [here](#).

6. Somerset West Lottery spring prize draw

Following on from the success of previous initiatives, the Somerset West Lottery is taking part in the spring 2021 bolt-on prize draw. Everyone who signs up to purchase one or more tickets between 1 March and 24 April 2021 will be in with the chance to win a £1000 Curry's PC World Gift Voucher. All tickets bought during this timeframe will automatically be entered in to the bonus prize draw as well as being in with a chance to win up to £25,000 in the weekly lottery run by Somerset West and Taunton Council.

If you know of a good cause wishing to raise funds or would like to buy a ticket contact the Somerset West Lottery on **0300 3020666**; support@somersetwestlottery.co.uk or visit the [Somerset West Lottery website](#).

To read the full press release please [click here](#).

7. Minehead Gift Card gets the go-ahead

Businesses in Minehead are being encouraged to register for the new Minehead Gift Card, which has been given the go-ahead as part of town centre recovery plans. All types of businesses from across Minehead are eligible to be a part of the new, free gift card programme, including retail, leisure, hospitality and services.

The Minehead Gift Card will be available for people to buy online from **Monday 12 April 2021**, in values from £5 to £500. Each gift card works like a regular store gift card, but can be spent at participating businesses across the whole of Minehead, keeping money locked into the town and making local shopping simple for both residents and tourists.

Minehead was awarded £100,000 by SWT as part of a £500,000 Emergency Town Centre Recovery Fund in October. The Minehead Gift Card is the latest initiative from the steering group set up by Minehead Business Improvement District (BID) to lead on projects through the fund, and will work alongside regular BID activities.

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

8. Recognition for Minehead Open Spaces Team

The Minehead Open Spaces team has received recognition and thanks in relation to their work planting trees in the Minehead area including **Parks Walk, Woodcombe Walk and Bratton Walk**.

Trees have also been planted in the Award winning **Blenheim Gardens**. Some of the many trees planted are *Crab Apple, Fox Glove Chestnut, Lime, Tulip Tree, London Plane, Acer, Sorbus and Larch*.

More are due to be planted in the coming weeks and the benefits are many including carbon storage benefiting the environment, adding biodiversity value with pollinators and berries for birds and other wildlife. The aesthetic value in many cases of these newly planted trees, is on a like for like replacement basis for those that have died off, or have been removed.

9. REMINDER- Temporary repair works to the Crescent Car Park

SWT will be carrying out temporary repair works to the [Crescent Car Park](#) in Taunton from **Monday 1 March**. Sections of the car park will be repaired along with the filling-in of potholes which have accumulated during winter.

The work will take approximately two to three weeks, completing around **20 March**. SWT wishes to reassure the public that the Crescent Car Park will remain open for customer use during this period. The repairs team will follow COVID-secure working practices and cordon off areas to work in isolation.

10. REMINDER- Notice of Intended Disposal of Open Space Land Land at Rear of Wellington Sports Centre, Cormans Lane, Wellington Section 123 (2a) Local Government Act 1972

Notice of Intended Disposal of Open Space Land

Notice is hereby given that Somerset West and Taunton Council intends to dispose of a parcel of land, which for identification purposes are described in the Schedule to this Notice, which consists of Open Space Land.

See plan that identifies the [location of the parcel of Open Space land](#), shown outlined in red on the plan.

Objections to the proposed disposal must be made in writing to Sally Stark, Assets Manager (Interim), Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE or via email to s.stark@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk by no later than **18 March 2021** quoting the reference: Rugby Club/Beech Grove

Please [click here](#) to read the full notice.

11. REMINDER - Unitary Somerset Public Consultation launched

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP launched the consultation on the evening of Monday 22 February. The consultation period will run for 8 weeks until **Monday 19 April**.

To respond to the Government's consultation, go to <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/governance-reform-and-democracy/somerset/>. You can also respond by email or post.

Please [click here](#) for more information on the Stronger Somerset proposal. You can also [click here](#) to read the latest press release.

The Government is also consulting on Somerset County Council's alternative proposal, One Somerset. [Click here](#) to find out more.

12. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Why recycle food waste?

Somerset already recycles a lot, but food waste is still 25% of the average rubbish bin so SWP could easily recycle far more of it into a valuable resource. Somerset's anaerobic digestion plant transforms all your food waste into electricity to power your home and a nutrient-rich farm compost to grow more crops.

What are the benefits of recycling food waste?

It helps the environment by reducing rubbish being sent to landfill. Landfilled food waste produces a biogas that goes straight into the atmosphere and contributes to climate change. Recycling reduces disposal costs. By recycling all our food waste, we would all save nearly £1 million a year to go on other vital local services. Your household waste bin will be cleaner, less smelly, and it gives you the opportunity to recycle even more!

For more information, please [click here](#).

For the latest information, check somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus

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

Weather conditions are generally good at the moment which is of great assistance to the highway maintenance teams. The main focus of SCC Highways' work at the moment is the repair of safety defects; generally potholes that have been generated by the wet and cold conditions of the winter months.

SCC Highways are also in the process of closing their minor works programme for the financial year. Small drainage schemes are scheduled for: **Lower Knapp Lane, North Curry** (temporary road closure, 1 - 12 March); **Back Lane, Bradford-on-Tone** (temporary road closure, 8 - 10 March); and **Honiton Road, Churchstanton** (temporary road closure, 22 - 26 March).

There is also a SCC Flood & Water Management Team scheme being delivered at **Fairgarden Road, Wootton Courtenay** (temporary road closure, 1 - 12 March).

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit 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.](#)

Shuttle bus boost for county vaccination programme

A free Somerset County Council Taunton town centre shuttle service has been launched to get people straight to their vital vaccination slot. The COVID-19 vaccination shuttle bus service started on **Monday 1 March**, following feedback, and will run every 30 minutes from **Castle Way** in Taunton town centre to Taunton Racecourse – one of Somerset's large vaccination centres.

The seven-day a week service uses one of the Council's fleet of minibuses and will help to support those who don't drive and will link easily with other operators coming into the town centre. The new Taunton service starts at 8.20am each day, and will also serve bus stops along **South Road** and **Shoreditch Road on route to the Racecourse**. The last bus each day is 6.05pm from the Racecourse. There will be

capacity for a maximum of four passengers on each journey due to the need for social distancing.

The service is reserved for those who have a pre-booked vaccination appointment at the Racecourse and this will be verified before passengers board the bus. It's recommended those using the service catch a bus to arrive approximately 10 minutes before their vaccination slot.

Community Transport Schemes

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.

Somerset County Council is working with bus operators and [community transport providers](#) to make it as easy as possible for those people to get to appointments by:

- Suspending current concessionary bus pass rules so these can be used on all public services before 9.30am.
- Working with Community Transport and Slinky Demand Responsive services across Somerset to allow free travel for bus pass holders when attending vaccination appointments. [Follow link](#) to see options.

If you are still experiencing a problem getting to your appointment call the Coronavirus Helpline on **0300 790 6275**. Lines are open seven days a week, 8am - 6pm.

Guidance for parents

Schools and Early Years settings from 8 March 2021

Following the announcement made by the Prime Minister, all schools and colleges will be welcoming students back to face to face education from **8 March 2021**.

In order to help keep schools and other educational settings as safe as possible, all education staff now have access to regular testing which they can do at home. Students attending secondary schools, FE Colleges and special schools will also have access to testing on their return to school and then on an ongoing basis at home. This is a really important step forward to keep community rates of the virus low and keep as many children and young people as possible in face to face learning. Further information on the return to school is available [here](#).

Young Minds

Coping with anxiety about going back to school

After so long off school, it is completely natural to feel anxious about returning. Two of our bloggers share their worries and what's helping them cope. Please [click here](#) for further information.

If you are a parent or carer, have a look at the [Parents Helpline advice](#) for supporting a child returning to school after lockdown.

New campaign encourages us all to keep going and stay at home

The Government has launched a new campaign encouraging people to keep going and stay at home. It aims to remind people everything they're doing is helping stop the spread of the virus.

The campaign will run across TV, radio, out-of-home advertising and on social media, reminding people that everything they've done – working from home, washing their hands, wearing a mask, maintaining social distancing and video calling – is helping stop the spread of Coronavirus and new variants. Please [click here](#) to read more.

Clinton's catch-up focuses on back to school

It is welcome news for many that from **Monday 8 March** all students in Somerset will be able to return to school, college and university. Although this will come with its own challenges, work is underway to make sure teachers, support staff, children and young people are kept as safe as possible. This will include regular testing and a number of different social distancing and safety measures depending on the set-up of each individual school.

In this week's Somerset Covid Catch Up, former BBC Correspondent Clinton Rogers visits Willowdown Primary School in Bridgwater to see what safety measures they have put in place. Watch the video in full by [clicking here](#).

Next week's film will focus on the return of Secondary schools and Further Education settings. For more information, please visit gov.uk/backtoschool.

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP)

REMINDER- Live Longer Better Conference

SASP (Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership) in association with Age UK Somerset are very excited to bring you the first **Live Longer Better conference** for Somerset on **Thursday 11 March 2021 from 10.30am - 12.30pm**.

For further information or to book, please visit:

<https://www.sasp.co.uk/events/2021/03/live-longer-better-conference> and add the Zoom link to your calendar.

Somerset Arts Business Cultural Alliance (SABCA)

REMINDER- The Search is on for Somerset's Creative People & Places

Are you an artist, musician, band, gallery, theatre, venue, tutor or community group that contributes to the creativity of Somerset? If so, not-for-profit organisation 'Somerset Arts Business Cultural Alliance' (SABCA) is mapping all arts, culture, heritage and creative industries in Somerset and needs your help.

The county wide mapping, supported by all Somerset local authorities, is designed to paint a picture of the creative sector and how it contributes to those who live, work and play in the county. With the addition of sharing your work and services to the public for free, Somerset's creative people and places can make an impact locally while encouraging others to join, partake or visit in creative arts and culture activity.

Please [click here](#) for further details.

Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Swaling

Heathland is one of the rarest habitats in Europe. The Quantock Hills heathland is designated by Natural England as 'lowland' heath as the majority is below 300metres in altitude. The Quantock Hills have 12% of the SW region's lowland heath (3% of the UK's lowland heathland). Of this lowland heath a particular speciality is maritime heath of which 10% of the world's coverage is found on the Quantock Hills.

If left unmanaged our heathland would quickly become overgrown, with scrub species such as mountain ash (rowan) and silver birch that have self-sown amongst the heather. Gorse may also out compete the heather, therefore changing the wildlife value and landscape appearance of this rare habitat.

Swaling (burning) in conjunction with grazing, is the most efficient way to control this growth and it enables vegetation to quickly re-grow, starting in the spring immediately following the burn.

Though the Quantock Hills AONB is allowed to start swaling in November, the Hills are very exposed to wet south westerly winds so swaling before Christmas is rare. The team usually wait for cold dry, but relatively calm high pressure weather from the east in January, February and March. Too strong a breeze can make fires too intense and more difficult to manage, possible even jumping fire breaks if not watched very closely.

Please [click here](#) to read further information.

You can also sign up to receive the Quantock AONB monthly newsletter [here](#).

Idverde

Donation of Bug Hotels

Three insect eco-hotels donated by Idverde have kicked off a project to improve the biodiversity of a village green in **Brompton Regis** on Exmoor. The Greening of the Green project was conceived during lockdown and plans have been put in place to spend this year creating a space that brings in a wider range of wildlife, from bug hotels and nesting boxes, to a wild flower area and a pond for frogs and to provide water for birds and hedgehogs.

The aim of the project is, in part, to encourage a greater interest in the green from the next generation, and it is hoped that, when possible, a local school will become linked to the project.

To find out more information and see the full press release please [click here](#).

Idverde in Minehead supports this initiative by donating nesting bird boxes and bug hotels to community groups and organisations who can erect them in a public space for the enjoyment of everyone. If you would like to find out more about this offer please contact the Idverde Contract Manager in the first instance at

Julie.Lynch@idverde.co.uk, (Minehead) and/or Richard.Hopkins@idverde.co.uk
(Taunton)

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Fire service asks farmers to be vigilant following recent fires

Over the last fortnight there have been a number of fires at farms across Somerset. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service have been working with their colleagues at Avon and Somerset Police, and investigations have led the police to conclude that a number of these have been deliberate acts of arson.

Whilst not currently thought to be linked, investigations continue into suspected arsons at:

- Holwell Lane, Cheddar (Saturday 13 February)
- Langaller Farm, Creech St Michael (Friday 19 February)
- Bell Lane, Cossington (Sunday 21 February)

Two further barn fires, at Stretcholt, Bridgwater, on Sunday 21 February and Brendon Hill, Watchet, on Tuesday 23 February are not thought to be suspicious.

DSFRS are calling on farmers and farm managers to act with vigilance at the moment to try to reduce these fires happening. They want to prevent any further fires before someone is seriously hurt.

Anyone with information that could assist police with their investigations should call **101**. Alternatively you can call Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555111**. Please [click here](#) for more information.

REMINDER - Public Consultation

Devon and Somerset Fire and 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

Major incident in Exeter

Coastguards from across the South West worked throughout the weekend to assist in a major incident in Exeter. At around 5pm on Friday 26 February HM Coastguard received a call from Devon & Cornwall Police requesting assistance after a piece of WW2 ordnance was found in Glenthorne Road, Exeter. Coastguard rescue officers and staff from across the South West were called in to help. All while ensuring that coastguard rescue teams could still respond to incidents around the coast.

The detonation of the suspected 1,000kg Hermann bomb by the Royal Logistic Ordnance Disposal team, was planned for around 6pm on Saturday. This meant that 2,600 properties, in a 400m radius of Glenthorne Road, including 1,400 university students from the University of Exeter needed to be evacuated.

Coastguards from 11 coastguard rescue teams worked with staff and volunteers from other organisations to door knock and leaflet drop, to ensure that everyone knew they had to leave their homes by 8am on Saturday. They worked through the

night and into the early hours of the morning. After resting they were back at first light continuing to evacuate the area before carrying out road closures and keeping the cordon secure into Sunday afternoon.

After supporting the police for over 45 hours, Coastguard staff and volunteers were stood down at 2pm on Sunday 28 February.

Drew Parkinson, Coastal Operations Area Commander for HM Coastguard said; 'We are fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers and staff within HM Coastguard who are willing to drop whatever they are doing at a moment's notice to use their training and expertise to help those in need, be that at incidents around the coast or when our partner emergency services require assistance. 'To all the officers who worked phenomenally hard this weekend, with over 1,000 individual hours worked in Exeter alone – thank you.'

To see more on this story and view the photographs please [click here](#).

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

International Women's Day (IWD) 8 March 2021

**Celebrate women's achievement. Raise awareness against bias.
Take action for equality.**

International Women's Day (March 8) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality.

IWD has occurred for well over a century, with the first IWD gathering in 1911 supported by over a million people. Today, IWD belongs to all groups collectively everywhere. IWD is not country, group or organisation specific.

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

#IWD2021 [#ChooseToChallenge](#)

National Careers Week 1 – 6 March 2021

If you missed out on National Careers Week 2021, you can visit www.nationalcareersweek.com to find out more information and [download The Parents' Guide to National Careers Week 2021](#) designed to inform, involve and guide parental support.

The Parents' Guide provides parents with the information they need to help their teenage children make the right choices to create successful futures after GCSE and sixth form.

The online guides are designed to inform, involve and guide parental support. They include the most up to date information on topics such as apprenticeships, universities and revision techniques.

Wherever reference is made to 'parents' this includes 'parents and carers.' This also includes grandparents, older siblings or any other person with significant caring responsibilities for children.

Please also visit www.theparentsguideto.co.uk for further advice and support.

Somerset Skills and Learning (SSL) Specialist Traineeship – September 2021 Launch

This month SSL launched a brand new offer, something unique that offers you, and other young people, the chance to earn while you undertake valuable work experience, gain new skills and find your path to success.

The Office for National Statistics has announced 13.4% of 16-24 year olds are now unemployed. In response to this, and to support the Government's £1,000 incentives for businesses providing placements for trainees, SSL will now pay trainees for their work experience.

This pioneering new offer not only gives the trainee financial rewards and a qualification, but also the chance to specialise in a work sector that interests them or build their own with support. Please [click here](#) for further information.

SSL Workshops and Courses – March 2021

Ease into the new season with SSL's free March workshops and courses designed to support you to develop new skills, build confidence, motivation and resilience. SSL will support you, your health and wellbeing and help to develop stronger communities across Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES).

This month SSL are continuing with the health & wellbeing theme and have a variety of workshops to keep us all going through lockdown and beyond. Plus, they also have lots on offer to help you learn, connect, develop new skills, job hunt, change career, support your children's learning and also help you get creative!

To find out more, please [click here](#).

Community Council for Somerset (CCS) Talking Café Live: How cycling helped me

This week West Somerset Village Agent, Izzy discussed the brilliant success of the West Somerset Bike Appeal, where over 100 bikes have been donated to help people get active, get to work or school and help them be less isolated.

Izzy was joined by Mark Gibbs who is the mechanic who helps restore the bikes and during the Live he told viewers how cycling helped him back to work when he was in a dark place.

Please [click here](#) to watch a replay of the Talking Café Live.

You can [click here](#) for more information about the West Somerset Bike Appeal.

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

NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

Follow on Facebook

NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) plan, buy and monitor most local NHS services in Somerset. This is a process called commissioning.

Somerset CCG's vision is simple. They want people to live healthy and independent lives, supported by thriving and connected communities with timely and easy access to high quality and efficient public services when they need them. Follow [Somerset CCG](#) on Facebook to keep up to date with the latest key messages.

Somerset Vaccination Programme

Thanks to the efforts of hundreds of GPs, nurses, vaccinators, administrators, marshals and volunteers, the Somerset COVID-19 vaccination programme has offered a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine to the most vulnerable residents across Somerset.

Great progress has been made and 202,000 people (one third of the adult population) have received their first vaccine. Vaccinations have now opened to people in the next two priority groups. They are those aged 65 to 69 (group 5) and those aged 16 to 65 who have specific underlying health conditions (group 6) as identified by the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation](#) that increases their risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Call centres have made 26,500 calls across the county to set up vaccinations. People will be contacted to attend their vaccination through a number of ways: a letter from the NHS, inviting you to book through the national booking service, or a phone call, text or letter from your local GP-led service.

At the same time, the NHS is also inviting anyone from the first four priority groups who still want to get their vaccination, to book an appointment, through the [National Booking Service](#).

In Somerset, the NHS is inviting those aged over 65 to book an appointment at a large vaccination centre (at Taunton Racecourse or the Bath and West Showground) or a pharmacy-led hub in the county, situated in Taunton, Yeovil or Bruton. GP practices will contact those who have been identified with a specific underlying health condition, to invite them to book at a GP-led hub.

For more information on the NHS vaccination in Somerset please [click here](#).

Shielding and Contact Strategy

The Government has expanded shielding criteria to pick up additional people at high risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID-19. All will have received a Government letter, advising of the steps to take until **31 March**. The Coronavirus helpline is still available for anyone who requires assistance and support.

The importance of Ventilation

It is important to remember that Coronavirus mainly spreads through the air, and a poll taken last month suggests that many people still do not realise that opening windows is one of the best ways to avoid catching it. So, here is a best-practice reminder for you to share please.

In addition to social distancing and other measures, you can also reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 by:

- Letting plenty of fresh air into your home or room without getting uncomfortably cold. This is especially important if people are coming into your home (for permitted reasons)
- Avoid coming into contact with people in spaces with limited flow of fresh air such as rooms with windows that are never opened.

To increase the flow of air you can:

- open windows as much as possible
- open doors
- make sure that any vents (for example at the top of a window) are open and airflow is not blocked
- leave extractor fans (for example in bathrooms) running for longer than usual with the door closed after someone has used the room.

REMINDER- Hands, face, space advice still vital

The Coronavirus vaccine is designed to prevent serious illness and death from COVID-19. However, even if you have had the vaccine, you can still catch it and might still be able to pass it on, so the hands, face, space guidance must still be followed to protect yourselves and others.

Please remember – and share with others that if you haven't had a vaccine yet, if you have had one dose of the vaccine, if you have had two doses of the vaccine, the message is the same, we all need to stay at home where possible and keep following the hands, face, space guidance to keep ourselves and others safe.

REMINDER- Coronavirus home testing kits easier to order

The Government has announced that it has introduced improvements to the home testing programme to make it easier to get tested.

They include:

- People who do not have access to the internet can now order home testing kits over the phone by calling 119, without needing an email address or any other digital requirement.
- A new NHS Test and Trace partnership with Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) to improve the home testing service for people with visual impairments.
- A new video-call support service with specially trained NHS Test and Trace staff that will help people with vision impairments to test at home.
[Read more on GOV.UK](#)

Mind in Somerset

Open Mental Health

Mind in Somerset is a proud member of Open Mental Health, an alliance of local voluntary organisations and the NHS. They are working in partnership to ensure that residents of Somerset get the support they need, when they need it.

Mental health organisations have come together to provide 24/7 support to adults in Somerset. Whatever is worrying you – anxiety, debt, employment, housing, low mood or addiction.

Open Mental Health supports people to live a full life by enabling access to specialist mental health support. The service is accessible for adults in Somerset who are suffering from mental health problems. Please [click here](#) to watch a video outlining the services available to you.

Anybody who is in need of mental health support can call Mindline Somerset on **01823 276892**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or email SUPPORT@OPENMENTALHEALTH.ORG.UK.

REMINDER - Please don't drop your guard once vaccinated

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 - Latest Vaccination data for Somerset

Cases across Somerset continue to fall (58 per 100k; previously was 74) and SWT is now lowest (41 from 72). Most infections are linked to work places and care settings, but thankfully there is lower spread of the virus, and lower hospitalisation and illness. The contact tracing is much easier for PHE with lower numbers as a result of the vaccine and lockdown working.

You can 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.

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

In Somerset, the Councils have responded to over 12,200 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 visit www.corona-helpers.co.uk

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'm worried about possible side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine. What can I expect?

A. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine is safe and effective. It gives you the best protection against Coronavirus. Don't delay in getting your vaccine when it's offered to you. Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them.

Most side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are mild and should not last longer than a week, such as:

- a sore arm where the needle went in
- feeling tired (fatigue)
- a headache
- feeling achy (joint pain / muscle ache)
- chills or feeling feverish
- feeling or being sick

If side effects, such as pain and/or fever are troublesome, medicines containing paracetamol can be taken.

If you have a high temperature you may have Coronavirus or another infection. If your symptoms get worse or you are worried, call **111**.

Q. I'm pregnant / recently given birth and worried about having the COVID-19 vaccine. Where can I go for some advice?

A. You probably have a lot of questions around the COVID-19 vaccine, including:

- if the vaccine is safe for pregnant women
- if the vaccine is safe if you are breastfeeding
- if the vaccine is safe if you are of childbearing age
- does the vaccine contain animal products
- how effective is the vaccine
- the side effects of the vaccine

Please check out the following websites listed below. These are constantly reviewed and updated with the most relevant and up to date information:

- [Information for pregnant women or women of childbearing age](#)
- [Guide to use of human and animal products in vaccines](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination programme – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine – NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Crime / Safeguarding

REMINDER- Crime Prevention through Sport Fund

Avon and Somerset Police launch new Crime Prevention Through Sport fund in partnership with Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP) and The West of England Sport Trust (Wesport).

The Crime Prevention Through Sport Fund aims to support projects that use sport and physical activity to reduce violence, crime and anti-social behaviour. This fund is for projects that focus on using activity as a tool to engage and support young people up to the age of 25. Applications that use sport in its widest sense including traditional, informal sports and activities will be considered and encouraged to apply.

Together the partners are invested in supporting projects that thoroughly consider all the aims of the fund and those who are future-proofing their work to leave a lasting impact & support for the communities they work with.

Funding information:

- The first phase will remain open until **Monday 22 March**
- The second phase opens on **Monday 5 April** and closes **Monday 17 May**.

Please [click here](#) to review the relevant documents and to submit an application.

For further details on the Crime Prevention through Sport Fund please [click here](#).

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Knife Crime Update

A&SP work to reduce knife crime and serious youth violence is continuing as the campaign moves into its next phase, with the release of a documentary produced by one of the young people involved in the recent animation project.

Bristol student Harvey, who made one of the four films created as part of an innovative police youth engagement project, has now made a film exploring how agencies must work together and listen to young people if we are to break the cycle of violence.

In *Knife crime: A new way forward*, Harvey talks to key professionals in the Avon and Somerset area involved in the delivery of youth and other services, including the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police Andy Marsh, and Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens. He explores the reasons why young people might carry knives, and what support they need in order to have better life opportunities.

To find out more information and watch the documentary video please [click here](#).

County Lines

Drug dealers will often use children as young as 12 to transport drugs across the country. Given that they will be too young to drive, these young people will usually travel on public transport to get from A to B.

During a time when we are being told to stay home to protect lives, we should be extra aware of children travelling by themselves and questioning their motives for doing so. We all have a responsibility to help protect our most vulnerable. By being able to spot a few tell-tale signs, you could be saving a young person's life. For example:

- Have you seen a child travelling a long distance alone?
- Do they seem unfamiliar with the local area?
- Are they travelling at unusual hours? (late at night or early in the morning)
- Are they travelling the same route on a regular basis?
- Are they deliberately avoiding authority figures such as police or members of staff?

If you see something that doesn't feel right, or looks suspicious, concerning a child or young person - trust your instincts. They could be a victim of County Lines. You can report to the police by calling 101 or by calling Crime Stoppers on 0800 555 111.

Always dial 999 in an emergency.

BBC Radio Bristol's BIG DAY OUT

BBC Radio Bristol's 'BIG DAY OUT' last week featured A&SP dogs and mounted officers. The Mounted and Dog sections are a valuable asset to the force and regularly support the neighbourhood policing teams with a variety of operations.

If you want to know more about the work that they do in our communities you can watch the virtual tours with BBC Radio Bristol at:

ASP Dogs - <https://m.facebook.com/bbcradiobristol/videos/1012348749297733/>
 ASP Horses - <https://m.facebook.com/bbcradiobristol/videos/181103503426663/>

#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