

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 49. Week ending 14/03/2021

#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. What's changed from Monday 8 March 2021

From **Monday 8 March**, some of the rules on what you can and cannot do will be changing as lockdown begins to slowly ease. But please continue to follow the Hands, Face, Space guidance to keep yourself and others safe.

- **You will be allowed to spend time in outdoor public spaces for recreation** on your own, with one other person, or with your household or support bubble. This means you can sit down for a drink or picnic. You must continue to maintain social distance from those outside your

household. This is in addition to outdoor exercise, which is already permitted.

- **Schools and colleges will re-open for all pupils**, and they will be able to return to face-to-face education.
- **Wraparound childcare can reopen and other children's activities can restart** for all children where it is needed to enable parents to work, attend education, seek medical care or attend a support group. Vulnerable children can attend childcare and other children's activities in all circumstances.
- **Care home residents will be able to have one regular named indoor visitor**, providing they are tested beforehand, wear personal protective equipment and avoid close contact.
- **There will continue to be restrictions on international travel.** Holidays will not be a permitted reason to travel. Those seeking to leave the UK must complete an outbound declaration of travel form ahead of departure.
- **Those who have been identified as 'Clinically Extremely Vulnerable'** are advised not to attend work or education settings until at least **Wednesday 31 March**.

Please [click here](#) for more 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 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. All businesses can sign up for free COVID-19 testing

All businesses in England are now able to sign up to the government's free COVID-19 workplace testing programme, including those with fewer than 50 employees (previously restricted to those with more than 50 employees).

Businesses can register to order tests if:

- the business is registered in England
- employees cannot work from home

Businesses must register on or before **31 March** and can get the forms they will need to order free lateral flow tests to test employees in the workplace. Please [click here](#) to register and find out more information.

Please do not use this service if you or your employees have symptoms. Anyone with symptoms should [order an individual test](#) and stay at home.

4. COVID-19 Business Support Grant Update

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 22 February 2021, regarding the extension of the national COVID-19 restrictions, SWT will be making further grant payments to rated businesses that are required by law to remain closed, as part of the Third National Lockdown Support Package. The further grant payment will cover the 44 day period from 16 February to 31 March and will be for £2096, £3,143 or £4,714 depending on the rateable value of the premises concerned.

SWT began sending these grant payments to the banks on 9 March and it will generally take 2 or 3 working days for these to arrive in the bank account. Those receiving grant payments will receive a remittance advice by email advising that payment has been made on 9 - 10 March.

5. COVID-19 Business Restart Scheme

You may be aware that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a Restart Grant scheme in his Budget statement. These grants will be payable to businesses, within the business rates system, that have been forced to close due to lockdown restrictions, to help them get through to **21 June 2021**.

The Restart grants will be paid by the Council during April. SWT expect to identify eligible businesses from those who have already received a business support grant from the Council and do not anticipate having to invite applications. SWT is currently waiting for details of how the scheme is to operate, as well as the funding, and will know more in due course.

Please [click here](#) to keep up to date with the latest news.

6. Register in time to have your say

On **Thursday 6 May 2021** residents in Somerset West and Taunton will have their say on who represents them at the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner election. Residents must be on the electoral register in order to vote for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) who oversees the local police force and ensures they are prioritising what matters to you.

SWT is urging people who have not registered at their current address to make sure they are registered in time. The deadline to register to vote is midnight on **Monday 19 April**. It takes just five minutes to apply online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote. **If you're not registered by 19 April, you won't be able to vote.**

As well as voting to select the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) residents in the district will be voting for a councillor to represent SWT in a by-election for the **Trull, Pitminster** and **Corfe** ward as well as Town Council by-elections in **Minehead** and **Watchet**.

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

7. SWT delivers economic boost for Minehead

SWT has delivered two new commercial units in Minehead. The light industrial units on land off Seaward Way, now officially known as Rainbow Way, are the first commercial project delivered by SWT in line with its corporate priority to encourage economic growth, attract inward investment, and ensure the provision of adequate and affordable employment land to meet different business needs.

Unit One has provided a new home for Snazaroo, a major employer in the town, and Unit Two has been let to national company, Toolstation. Completion of the industrial units has freed up affordable employment space in Minehead town centre, and the common infrastructure works have paved the way for a social housing scheme for 50 houses and apartments for social rent.

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

8. Local Pantry to Launch in Rowbarton

The Somerset West and Taunton Community Resilience Team are working in partnership with Somerset County Council and Rowbarton Methodist Church to offer a new Local Pantry in Rowbarton, North Taunton. The first of its kind in the District. By partnering with surplus food charity FareShare, this project will offer low-cost, nutritious food for residents, and provide an annual saving of up to £1,144 per family. The initial set up costs, for essentials such as a fridge and storage, are funded from a Central Government COVID-19 relief scheme, and ongoing costs will be covered through membership fees: Local residents are invited to join for up to one year, paying a small fee (£3.50) for their weekly food parcel. The scheme will be run by volunteers and supported by SWT and

other partners. Further details about the scheme are in the attached briefing note and the March launch date is soon to be announced.

9. Consultation begins on Local Validation Checklist

SWT is reviewing its Local Validation Checklist for planning applications and wants to hear your views. Since 2008 local planning authorities have been required to publish a list of information they require to "validate" the planning applications they receive.

The validation checklist has two components - the National requirements including the application form, the fee and certificates; and specific local validation requirements known as the "Local List". The Government requires local planning authorities to review their Local List every two years. As such SWT's current validation requirements are undergoing a significant review to reflect changes in planning legislation, policy and guidance.

The draft Local List is open for public consultation for a four week period running until **Tuesday 6 April 2021**.

After the consultation period, all comments received will be considered and amendments made as appropriate. Once approved this will replace the current Local Validation List and will form the basis on which planning applications are deemed valid by SWT.

The consultation can be found on the [consultations](#) page of the SWT website.

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

10. Working together to deliver a successful Census 2021

The Office for National Statistics – which runs Census 2021 – is working with Somerset West and Taunton Council to deliver a successful census and help local services to fully meet future needs. Understanding the needs of the nation helps everyone from central government to local organisations, such as councils and health authorities, plan and fund public services across England and Wales.

Census outputs inform where public funding is spent on services like transport, education and health – on cycle routes, schools and dental surgeries.

The census, taking place on **21 March 2021**, will shed light on the needs of different groups and communities, and the inequalities people are experiencing, ensuring the big decisions facing the country following the Coronavirus pandemic and EU exit are based on the best information possible.

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

11. Advertisement for New Parish Clerk

Applications are invited for the role of Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) for Carhampton Parish Council, nr Minehead, Somerset upon the retirement of the present Clerk. If you would like to find out more about the

position, please call Alan Hemsley on **01643 822006** for an informal chat or you can [click here](#) for further information. The closing date for applications is 31 March 2021

12. REMINDER- 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](#).

13. REMINDER 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 30 20666**; support@somersetwestlottery.co.uk or visit the [Somerset West Lottery website](#).

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

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. REMINDER- Stronger 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.

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

17. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Garden Waste Subscription Renewal

Do you have a garden waste subscription? Avoid a gap in service by renewing your subscription online as soon as reminder arrives. If you don't have a subscription but would like to sign up, please [click here](#).

You can purchase garden waste sacks and order collections to suit you via My Waste Services at somersetwaste.gov.uk More at: somersetwaste.gov.uk/garden-waste-collections/

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

Soft Plastic Collection Point at Tesco Superstores

Tesco is rolling out collection points for soft plastics to seven of its stores in Somerset during 2021. Among the plastics to be taken are:

- Bread bags
- Fruit and vegetable packaging
- Crisp packets
- Salad bags

- Baby and pet food pouches
- Cling film

The stores involved are:

- **Minehead**
- **Taunton**
- Burnham-On-Sea
- Chard
- Glastonbury
- Shepton Mallet
- Wells

Some ASDA, Morrisons and Sainsbury's supermarkets in Somerset also take certain plastics for recycling - check with the store's customer services what exactly they can accept. The full story can be read [here](#).

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC) Highway Maintenance Report

Last week featured a very stormy spell midweek. On Wednesday night and during Thursday there were a number of trees and branches down across the district. The weather, though, is forecast to calm down and will also be generally mild, which is of great assistance for highway maintenance operations.

As regards planned works, the removal of dead and diseased trees suffering from ash dieback on **Exford Road, Winsford** will take place over two weeks **16 – 19 March and 22 – 26 March**. The work will be carried out using temporary traffic signals.

There are also a few small drainage schemes to complete, one of which is at **Honiton Road, Churchstanton** (temporary road closure on **22 – 26 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.](#)

Temporary Road Closure: Princes Street, Taunton

There will be a temporary road closure on Princes Street, Taunton for approximately 75 metres. The works will commence on **31 March 2021** between the hours of midnight(12am) – 11.59pm.

These works are for Paragon TM Ltd to access telecom equipment for general maintenance on behalf of T-Mobile (UK) Ltd, their works reference is Unknown (reference).

The link to view the new Notice can be found [here](#).

For any further information about this closure please contact Paragon TM Ltd on **0113 3470 074** quoting the above works reference number.

A map of the affected area (in red), together with the recommended diversion route (in purple) can be found [here](#).

Travelling to school safely

With schools returning to face to face learning from **Monday 8 March**, this guidance will help to make sure Somerset pupils can travel to and from school safely:

- If you live a short distance from your school or college, walk, cycle or scoot to and from school wherever it is possible and safe to do so
- Avoid sharing a car with anyone outside your household or support bubble
- If you are using public transport to get to school or college, plan ahead and allow more time for your journey

When you are travelling by public or dedicated school transport, don't forget to:

- Wear a face covering (unless you are exempt, including if you are aged 11 and under). It is important you wear them for the entirety of your journey, including inside a bus or railway station
- Socially distance where possible
- Wash or sanitise your hands regularly
- Be considerate to fellow passengers and staff.

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

Libraries reopen and launch 'Reading Friends' service

Somerset Libraries are delighted to announce as of Monday 8 March, almost all libraries reopened, offering a limited service as lockdown measures start to ease. A new 'Reading Friends' befriending service will also be launched for those who may feel lonely or isolated in these continuing times.

Libraries will initially be open in the mornings for people to collect books from the popular 'Library Choice' service. This is where staff pick a selection of titles based on what customers say they like to read, watch or listen. To participate, fill in the online form at www.somersetlibraries.co.uk advising types of book you like to read, favourite authors etc or contact **0300 123 2224**.

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

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)

Village Halls to remain closed until 17 May

National charity, Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) has issued new information to help village halls make sense of the latest announcements about the lifting of national lockdown restrictions.

Contrary to the Government's announcement on 22 February, village halls will not be able to reopen after Easter, except for a small number of permitted activities. As it currently stands, England's 10,000+ rural community buildings will instead have to wait until **17 May 2021** before they can be hired out for many functions including exercise classes, coffee mornings, performances and celebrations.

The [update](#), should be read alongside previous [advice and information](#) issued by the charity which provided a detailed commentary on how village halls could previously reopen following the Government's COVID-secure rules.

However, the guidance does make it clear that one of the exceptions to the guidance is that Village Halls can be used for the Elections being held on 6 May 2021.

SPARK Somerset Covid Community Champions

The Covid Community Champion network gives local people a role in helping their community to get up to date information and make the right choices to stay healthy. After attending a short online induction, Covid Community Champions can help their work place, family, friends and the wider community to understand the latest guidance around COVID-19, and signpost to other health and wellbeing support. They play a vital part in helping keep local people informed, happy and healthy.

Champions have the opportunity to attend regular meetings, where they'll get to know the other Champions, keep up to date, and feedback about how things are going where they live and work. You can watch a video that explains more if you [click here](#).

If you, or someone you know who might be interested in a becoming a Covid Community Champion, you can find more information and sign up for the next training session [HERE](#).

Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Please do not feed the ponies!

Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic there has been an increase in people feeding the ponies on the Quantock Hills. The Quantock Ponies thrive on rough grazing and they do not need extra food. Extra feeding can make them become very unwell and teaches them to associate people and cars with food and increases the risk of people being bitten or kicked.

Never make the mistake of saying "just one won't hurt" when you have no idea how many other people are saying the same throughout the day and also feeding them.

Please spread the word – the ponies are pretty wild and certainly not pets, so keeping a little distance from them and appreciating them from a far is the best for everybody's wellbeing.

For more information about the Quantock Hills, please [click here](#).

Somerset Wildlife Trust Youth Environment Summit

Aged 11-18, live in Somerset and care about the environment?

Join the Youth Environment Summit Somerset (YESS) on **Saturday 27 March 2021** on Zoom & help make change!

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

Idverde

REMINDER- 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.

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

How to make an escape plan

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service advise you to have your escape route planned and everyone in your house should be familiar with it. Do not delay your escape to save valuables or look for pets. Smoke from a fire is toxic and can leave you unconscious in just two or three breaths.

Plan your escape

Escaping from a house, bungalow or converted flat in the event of a fire

- The best escape route is usually the normal way in and out of your home.
- Think of any difficulties you may have getting out, for example at night you may need to have a torch to light your way.
- If the smoke is thick, you should get down low (where there is less smoke) and crawl.
- Think about your route out and how you would alert your children and get them (and any animals) out.

- Keep all paths including stairs clear of obstructions, like pushchairs, toys, or bikes.
- Decide where the keys to doors and windows should be kept and always keep them there. Ideally this should be close to the door or window. Make sure everyone in your household knows where they are.
- Plan for a second escape route, in case the first one is blocked.

Practise your escape plan

- Once you have your escape plan, go through it and practise it with everyone who lives in your home. You could do this at the same time as you test your smoke alarms (at least once a month).

Please [click here](#) for further 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

Take care at the coast

With this week’s strong winds and blustery showers for England and Wales, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency urge everyone to take extra care at the coast and expect the unexpected. Objects often get washed up on our beaches, especially after bad weather. If you see something that is an unusual shape, size and especially if it’s rusty, it could be an unexploded ordnance. Please don’t touch it or move it, instead call [#999Coastguard](#) immediately.

Please follow the official COVID-19 guidance at all times and read the safety advice [here](#).

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Somerset Skills and Learning (SSL)

REMINDER- SSL Workshops and Courses – March 2021

This month SSL are continuing with the health & wellbeing theme and have a variety of free* 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)

Be part of the CCS’ Talking Cafe Facebook Lives

Are you a charity or do you offer services to people (of any age) in Somerset that helps improve lives & opportunities? This can be anything from youth services, to employment, health, wellbeing, financial advice, hobbies, social groups etc.

Do you have an important issue on which you would like to raise awareness? Such as domestic abuse, racial inequality, health conditions, LGBTQ+.

Talking Cafes are weekdays at 11am, and a great chance to let people know about what you do - with an average of 1500 views each day - share your knowledge on a subject for the benefit of others!

Email talkingcafesom@gmail.com to request to take part – CSS would love to hear from you.

Somerset Diverse Communities New Business Start-Up Webinar for people from ethnic minority communities

Do you want to start your own business? Somerset Diverse Communities has teamed up with the Somerset Business Agency to help new businesses get started and will offer two free webinars scheduled for **Monday 15 March** and **Tuesday 23 March**.

Before you embark on your new venture take the right steps to build your business from the roots up. Working with Somerset Business Agency Somerset Diverse Communities are delivering a short course that will run over two sessions for individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds. Support is available for people who speak languages other than English.

Register and sign up [here](#).

The WellBe Hub

The WellBe Hub is a mental health and wellbeing service designed to support individuals and organisations develop skills that promote positive health through counselling and training. Their service helps organisations prepare for issues that may arise in their communities. By providing the latest evidence based `Mental Health First Aid training through Mental Health First Aid, staff are well prepared to recognise signs of mental ill-health or emotional distress, ensuring vital support is provided at the earliest opportunity.

To support the COVID-19 recovery, Somerset-based The WellBe Hub is offering a limited number of places on their upcoming Mental Health First Aid Youth and Adult courses at a reduced fee for not-for-profit organisations.

Please contact info@thewellbehub.co.uk or visit www.thewellbehub.co.uk for more information and to secure your place.

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

Data shows vaccines reduce severe Coronavirus in older people

Public Health England (PHE) has submitted a pre-print report that shows that both the Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines are highly effective in reducing Coronavirus infections among people aged 70 years and over.

A pre-print is a research report that has not yet been certified by peer review. In the over 80s, the data suggest that a single dose of either vaccine is more than 80% effective at preventing hospitalisation, around three to four weeks after the jab. There is also evidence which suggests the Pfizer vaccine leads to an 83% reduction in deaths.

The new analysis adds to growing evidence that the vaccines are highly effective in protecting people against severe illness, hospitalisation and death. Please [click here](#) for further information.

New analysis of lateral flow tests (LFT) shows specificity of at least 99.9%

New analysis of community testing data reinforces that lateral flow tests are accurate and reliable and have extremely low false positive rates. The testing data shows lateral flow tests to have a specificity of at least 99.9%. This means there are fewer than one false positive in every 1,000 lateral flow tests carried out.

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

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](#)

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

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.

NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

REMINDER- Follow on Facebook

NHS Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (Somerset CCG) plan, buy and monitor most local NHS services in Somerset. 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.

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

Mind in Somerset

After a year where so many people have faced isolation and loss, two producers have put their own stories and struggles into a moving, energising new pop track. 'Sometimes' is the new uplifting and inspiring song produced by James Hoare and Ben Banjo Field, featuring the vocals of the amazing Duke AI and Rachel Allen. Mind in Somerset invite you to listen, share and donate to really make a difference; this is a song Mind in Somerset believe is capable of uplifting spirits during these tough times. Please [click here](#) for further information.

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 not registered with a doctor's surgery. How can I get my COVID-19 vaccination?

A. Everyone is encouraged to register with a GP; this is the best way to access NHS care. You can register as a temporary patient at a local GP surgery. If you think that during the time you are registered you are likely to be invited for your vaccination that you discuss with the surgery whether it would be more appropriate to register as a permanent resident as you will need to receive your second dose of vaccine from the same site as you receive your first dose.

This gap between the first and second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine is currently twelve weeks. Any treatment or details of any visits/vaccinations will be recorded and added to your medical records.

For more information registering as a temporary resident/permanent resident and support on finding a local GP please visit the [NHS website](#) for further information.

Everyone is entitled to NHS care; this includes members of traveller communities. If you have any difficulties with registering with a GP surgery, please contact the Somerset CCG Patient Advice and Liaison team.

Q. Can I choose which vaccination the NHS give me?

A. You cannot choose which COVID-19 vaccine you receive. Both the Pfizer and the AstraZeneca vaccines have been tested extensively in thousands of people. They are both highly effective in providing protection against Coronavirus.

Q. When will I get my second COVID-19 vaccination?

A. This depends on how and where you were vaccinated for your first dose. You will always be advised to attend the same place you got vaccinated for your second appointment.

- **I had my first vaccination done through a GP-led clinic** – if you were vaccinated through a GP-led clinic then you will be contacted to book in your second dose, when the time is right. This should be around 10 weeks after your 1st dose given. You do not need to do anything other than wait for a call to book in your second dose.
- **I had my first vaccination done through the National Booking Service** – you may have already booked your second dose in when you booked your first. If you did not do this, you should be able to book your second dose through the same route. You will be directed to attend the same vaccination centre or pharmacy-led clinic you attended for your first vaccination.
- **I am a health and care worker** – Health and care workers will be contacted with a date for their second dose appointment through the vaccination centre they attended for their first dose. You need to ensure you attend the same place you did initially.

Crime / Safeguarding

COVID-19: Warning Over Third Lockdown HMRC Grant Fraud Fraudulent Texts

Please be aware of unsolicited text messages that are being sent to members of the public purporting to offer a COVID-19 grant due to the current lockdown. The text includes a link to “claim” the grant and starts with the words GOV.UK or HMRC, suggesting the text message has been sent by or on behalf of the Government and is therefore an authentic message.

An HMRC spokesperson said: "HMRC will never offer a tax refund by text, email or phone. One way to check whether you are due a rebate is to log into your Personal Tax Account."

The following is recommended:

- Encourage those who receive them to report them. The National Cyber Security Centre advises: "Suspicious text messages should be forwarded to 7726. This free-of-charge short code enables your provider to investigate the origin of the text and take action, if found to be malicious."

HMRC advise: "Check [gov.uk for our scams checklist](#), find out how to [report tax scams here](#), and get information on how to [recognise genuine HMRC contact here](#)."

Action Fraud

NHS text alerts for life-saving COVID-19 jab

The NHS will begin texting people today inviting them to book their life saving COVID-19 jab, making it quicker and more convenient to get an appointment. Almost 400,000 people aged 55 and over and 40,000 unpaid carers will be the first to get a text alert inviting them to book a slot as part of the latest development in the NHS vaccination programme, the biggest in NHS history.

The messages will include a web link for those eligible to click and reserve an appointment at one of more than 300 large-scale vaccination centres or pharmacies across England. Reminders will be sent 2-3 weeks after the original alert to encourage people to get their vaccine if they have not taken up the offer.

Texts will arrive in advance of the standard letter, meaning if the trial is successful the solution could enable the NHS to react faster to changing vaccine supplies and fill appointments quickly.

The text message will be sent using the Government's secure Notify service and will show as being sent from 'NHSvaccine'.

The NHS will never ask for payment or banking details.

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

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Phone fraud warning after incidents reported in Somerset

A&SP is reminding people to be cautious and recognise signs of telephone and courier fraud following a number of reported incidents in Somerset in recent days. They are investigating four reports in the Bridgwater area of fraudsters phoning potential victims and claiming to be police officers dealing with fraud. In one instance, a woman in her 90s living in Sedgemoor, was called by a fraudster falsely claiming to be working for police in Bournemouth. He told her officers had arrested someone who had her account details and claimed her bank were involved in the scam.

He went on to encourage her to take out a four-figure sum from her bank and to lie to cashiers about why she was making such a large withdrawal, before handing it over to a 'courier' who would give her a password when he arrived. She duly handed the money to the fake 'courier' and also provided personal banking information over the phone, which led to money also being stolen from her account.

Fraud protect officer Amy Horrobin said: "Fraudsters tend to prey on the elderly and vulnerable people but anyone can be a victim. There's no shame in being tricked by these professional criminals, they can be very convincing."

Please [click here](#) to read the full A&SP press release and for tips on how to stay safe.

#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