

# Somerset West and Taunton

## **Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils**

### **Issue 46. Week ending 21/02/2021**

**#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. Updated Shielding Advice**

New technology has been introduced in England to help clinicians identify, for the first time, a new group of people who may be at high risk from COVID-19. The technology analyses a combination of risk factors based on medical records, to assess whether somebody may be more vulnerable than was previously understood, helping clinicians provide vaccination more quickly to them and ensuring patients can benefit from additional advice and support.

As a result, the new group of people identified by the new technology will be sent a letter asking them to shield. If you've been told to shield, you're strongly

advised not to attend work, school, college or university. You can read the [guidance on who counts as clinically extremely vulnerable](#). Please [click here](#) for more information.

## 2. Most vulnerable and health & care workers offered COVID-19 jab

All care home residents and staff, health and social care workers, people aged 70 and over, and the clinically extremely vulnerable have been offered a vaccine. These groups account for 88% of deaths from COVID-19, meaning potentially tens of thousands of lives will be saved.

The NHS is now focusing on vaccinating people who have not yet come forward and people in cohorts 5 (All those 65 years of age and over) and cohort 6 (Adults aged 16 to 65 years in an at risk-group). Everybody will get their second dose within 12 weeks. The NHS is working hard to encourage the remaining people who have been offered a vaccine to come forward.

**IMPORTANT: People aged 70 and over who have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19, and who would like to be, are being asked to contact the NHS to arrange a jab.**

Anyone aged 70 and over can arrange a vaccination through the national booking service which can be accessed at [www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination](http://www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination). If people aged 70 and over are unable to book online they can **call 119 free of charge**, anytime between 7am and 11pm seven days a week. If a suitable and convenient slot is not available people can also call their GP practice.

## 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 couple of weeks, which are as follows:

- 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)
- Wednesday 3 March – **Scrutiny Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Friday 26 February)

- Monday 8 March – **Audit, Governance and Standards Committee**, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Wednesday 3 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](mailto: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. SWT supports Empty Homes Week**

National Empty Homes Week this week (15-21 February) is an opportunity for local authorities, housing providers and community organisations to let people know about their work. It aims to raise awareness of the waste of long-term empty homes, campaign for changes to national policy, provide advice for those seeking to bring empty homes back into use, and develop ideas for bringing long-term empty homes back into use for those in housing need.

SWT has a dedicated Empty Homes Officer whose remit is to identify and bring empty homes back into use; providing information, advice and guidance to owners. Please [click here](#) to read the full SWT press release.

For more information see SWT's [Empty Homes](#) web page. You can also report the location of any empty homes that you are aware of to the Empty Homes Officer, Steven Perry, on **01823 219771** or by email: [S.Perry@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:S.Perry@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

#### **5. Live in Somerset Cancelled for 2021**

The organiser of Taunton's Live in Somerset has announced that it will not be bringing live music to Vivary Park this year, as COVID-19 restrictions in the UK show no signs of easing any time soon. Instead, it is focusing its efforts on producing three headline shows for Summer 2022.

LCC Live, which has hosted a series of live music shows in Taunton's Vivary Park since 2014, made the announcement with a "heavy heart". Please [click here](#) to read the full press release.

#### **6. REMINDER- Community Employment Hubs offer services remotely**

SWT's Community Employment Hubs are now providing remote support to help job seekers in lockdown. Although an SWT initiative, the Community Employment Hubs are community-led and provide support to people both in and out of work, including long-term job seekers, employees at risk of redundancy or those seeking new skills or a career change.

Once the restrictions are lifted, the hub venues will reopen, along with four new hubs based in Taunton and Wellington, as well as a new youth hub at the Minehead EYE. In the meantime, however, the Council understands the need to maintain this vital service given the impact on people's jobs and wellbeing, and is now offering support by telephone, email and virtually via the Community Employment Hubs [Facebook page](#).

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

## **7. REMINDER - Help for businesses seeking government grants**

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/>

Should you have any questions before submitting your Register of Interest form, please email [lrsgo@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:lrsgo@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

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

## **8. Final call for Somerset West Lottery New Year Bolt-on Prize**

There is still time to purchase your Somerset West Lottery tickets to be in with a chance to win £100 Etsy gift vouchers, courtesy of the external lottery management company Gatherwell.

All tickets bought before **27 February 2021** 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.

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

## **9. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP) Recycling Sites Open for Essential Visits Only**

Advice on Coronavirus waste safety is clear for both household collections and recycling sites. While travel to recycling sites is permitted by the Government, users have been asked to only visit if that journey is essential. That could be

because waste that cannot be taken in kerbside collections poses a health or fire risk if stored at home.

Site visitors MUST observe all safety measures:

- COVID-19 symptoms or asked to shield? Do not visit
- stay at least two metres from all staff and other users
- wash or sanitise hands before and after the visit
- wear gloves and consider wearing a mask
- maximum of two people in vehicle from the same household

SWP monitor site numbers and control vehicle flow if it is necessary to ensure social distancing. Sites may temporarily close to reduce numbers and keep everyone safe. The vehicle and trailer permit system remains in place for all recycling sites.

In households with people who are infected or have symptoms, their personal waste should be stored securely in disposable rubbish bags. These should then be placed into another bag, tied securely and kept separate from other waste within the home for at least 72 hours (three days) before being put in the usual rubbish outside the house for the usual collections.

Never put masks, gloves, tissues or cleaning cloths in your recycling. You should wash or sanitise hands before and after handling waste containers, disinfect container handles, and maintain social distance from all waste staff.

For the latest information, check [somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus)

To keep up to date with recycling sites, sign up for the SWP e-newsletter at [www.somersetwaste.gov.uk](https://www.somersetwaste.gov.uk) and follow @Somerssetwaste on Facebook or Twitter

## Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

### Somerset County Council (SCC)

#### Highway Maintenance Report

What a difference a week makes! From the coldest week in Somerset for ten years there has been a dramatic change and we are now in a very mild spell of weather. Of course, at this time of year, that means wet and windy! So, whilst the gritters are now safely parked up back at the depots, SCC Highways are back on to clearing blocked drains and repairing potholes.

There are still opportunities to carry out planned works, though. Starting on **Monday 22 February** SCC Highways will be working on the **B3224 Raleghs Cross Road**. Regular travellers on this route will be familiar with the persistent problems with the road gullies on the Ash Priors/Combe Florey end, going up the hill from the railway bridge. The planned work will be to carry out some more permanent repairs there. To allow safe working space, the B3224 will need to be closed to through traffic and the work is expected to take five days.

During half term SCC Highways carried out some footway surfacing outside West Somerset College on A39 Bircham Road, Minehead. Other highway works being undertaken are drainage improvements. These are at: **Cothelstone Road**, to the east of **Bishops Lydeard** (22 - 24 February); **Shopnoller Road, West Bagborough** (1 - 3 March); and **Lower Knapp Lane, North Curry** (1 - 12 March). At all these drainage improvement sites work will be carried out under the cover of temporary road closures.

For more information on highway maintenance works and to stay up to date visit the website [www.travelsomerset.co.uk](http://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.](#)

### **Somerset COVID Catch up**

#### **Care home film and blog shine light on unsung heroes of the pandemic**

The devastating impact of coronavirus on care staff and residents has been laid bare in a powerful account by a Somerset care home. Linden House in Wellington lost almost a third of its residents as a direct result of the coronavirus pandemic, and had 80% of its staff self-isolating over the Christmas period.

Sandra Joyce, owner of Linden House, has detailed the daily heartbreak, anxiety, and exhaustion care staff experienced at the hands of a virus that takes no prisoners. Her story is told in the latest [Somerset Covid Catch-up film](#) and [blog](#).

#### **REMINDER- New town centre schemes are unveiled**

New schemes to support walking and cycling in three Somerset towns have been unveiled following the recent confirmation of approximately £450k of Government funding.

The proposed scheme in Taunton will receive a contribution from the funding towards their overall cost is the continuation of the East Street pedestrianisation. A more permanent scheme is proposed, subject to further consultation, which will see an automated barrier in place whilst further modelling of traffic impacts and access is considered. Access for blue badge holders at limited times will continue as the scheme is monitored and assessed regularly.

A community engagement and consultation process has started and will run through February with communities and businesses. You can read about the further proposed schemes in more detail and find out how to comment on the [Somerset County Council website](#).

## **Somerset Holiday Activities and Food Programme – Easter Provision Applications Open**

The impact of Covid-19 has meant more families are applying for free school meals and social isolation has increased. There are more than 13,000 children receiving free school meals (Dec 2020) in Somerset with a likely increase by Easter 2021. SCC has joined up with Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) to organise a programme for the forthcoming Easter Holidays aimed at countering the triple inequalities facing Somerset's most disadvantaged young people – holiday hunger, physical inactivity and social isolation.

The County Council has already confirmed it will continue to fund Free School Meals provision for vulnerable families over the Easter holidays. Now, in an initiative funded by the Department for Education, existing or prospective organisers of holiday activity programmes can access funding to deliver daily, four-hour programmes where young people in receipt of free school meals will be able to take part in a range of food, sports and cultural activities, and receive advice on nutrition and cooking skills.

Programmes can be led by a range of organisations from public, private, community and voluntary sectors. In light of ongoing restrictions and uncertainty, the programmes – subject to any prevailing lockdown restrictions – will be held at a range of venues including schools, community halls, parks and leisure centres to name a few. The programme will also include a virtual offer for young people to take part in with a menu of activities that can be done at home and online, along with the face to face provision.

SASP would be delighted to welcome prospective delivery organisations to attend an information webinar which will take place on **Tuesday 23rd February 18:00 – 19:00**. For anyone unable to attend the live webinars a recording will be available along with a Frequently Asked Questions list. [Book your place here.](#)

The grants programme for the Easter holidays is being administered by SASP and opened on Thursday 11 February. Anyone hoping to deliver at Easter is encouraged to find out more about the criteria of the programme on the SASP website - [www.sasp.co.uk/holiday-activity-fund](http://www.sasp.co.uk/holiday-activity-fund)

The deadline for applications is **1 March 2021**.

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

## **STEP-UP Somerset Employment and Skills Webinar**

Do you want to know how you can be more employable? Join the webcast on **25 February at 6pm** for the top 10 most wanted employability skills. [Register here.](#)

Please [click here](#) to be directed to the Learn Live UK Facebook page where other posts are being scheduled.

## **Somerset Skills and Learning (SSL)**

### **REMINDER - 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 and 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](#).

### **REMINDER- Spark Somerset Covid Community Champions**

Spark Somerset are inviting local people to join their growing network of Covid Community Champions. Covid Community Champions have the opportunity to learn about the Coronavirus and other health and wellbeing support, and then share the information with their friends, neighbours, colleagues and the wider community. It's a great way to help people stay safe, well and informed during the pandemic, and you'll get to meet new and interesting people too!

The next online training session is taking place on **Tuesday 2 March at 7pm** via Zoom.

### **Online Networking Forum for VCSE Groups Thursday 4 March, 10am – 11.30am**

Spark Somerset is running an online networking event for VCSE groups in Somerset West and Taunton. It's free and VCSE staff and volunteers from across the area are welcome to come along to catch up on what's happening locally, network with other groups, and find out about the support on offer.

The events will be hosted by Jenny Hannis, Voluntary Sector Adviser, along with Gill Harrison, Community Development Worker. Click here to [register your attendance](#).

## **The Wessex Community Hub**

### **Funding opportunity for Community Led Housing Schemes**

The Wessex Community Hub is an advisory organisation which supports community groups who are interested in community led housing in Somerset and Dorset. The Community Housing Adviser for the Hub can support groups to understand what options there are for groups considering a community led housing scheme and signpost them to technical advisors and others who can offer professional advice and support and also deliver bespoke training.

The Hub also supports groups with small grants which can be used to pay for professional support to progress a scheme. The Hub is currently looking for groups at the start up stage of a project who require either support or funding.

**There is some funding available that needs to be allocated before the end of March.**

If Councillors are aware of any community led groups that might benefit from some funding to kick start or progress a community led housing scheme please contact Sue Southwell (Development Enabling Specialist) [s.southwell@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:s.southwell@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk) for more details.

## **Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service**

### **Fire Safety around log burners**

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service were called out to a Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarm sounding and their gas detector had readings all around the log burner. On further inspection they noticed a metal bucket full of warm ash next to the log burner. The occupier admitted to emptying the ashes from the log burner into this bucket regularly, but didn't take it outside until it was full. The embers from the ashes were producing CO, which thankfully triggered the CO alarm.

Exposure to this CO would have been life-threatening after just THREE hours.

This is how to safely dispose of ashes:

- Allow the ashes to cool for several hours.
- Transfer them to a metal bucket that can be sealed with a metal lid.
- Wet the ashes before closing the metal lid.
- Take the bucket outside – do not store inside your home, garage, or shed.
- Check with your local authority for correct disposal once fully cooled.

### **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.

## **HM Coastguard Watchet**

### **Undertake Refresher Training Sessions online**

The HM Coastguard Watchet team have had an online meeting over zoom for a refresher training session on the contents and position of their casualty care equipment bags. With one team member on station handling the equipment with gloves on and wiping it down afterwards, the contents of the bags were shown on camera to remind all the team members where each piece of equipment is stored, looking at the tourniquets, bandages, bag, valve and masks for assisted breathing, fracture packs, neck braces and much more.

Following this the team then had a look at tying some of the essential knots and hitches required for our cliff, mud and water rescues. The team continue in limiting physical contact due to lockdown and they are playing their part for the community and their families by only having essential contact during emergency call outs. The refresher training online is important to maintain the team's skills and knowledge as well as being able to see one another safely.

HM Coastguard Watchet ask you all to continue to stay safe during this pandemic, stay home where you can, exercise locally without travelling very far, and don't put extra pressure on the NHS by taking unnecessary or avoidable risks.

Remember if you do have any emergency on the coast to dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard.

## **National Nest Box Week**

### **Take part in the 2021 Nest box Census**

Since 1997, Nest Box Week was set up and developed by the BTO (British Trust for Ornithology). This year, National Nest Box Week runs from 14 – 21 February and once again the Trust is seeking your help to find out how many nest boxes there are in the British gardens - and who's been using them over the last year. Your answers will help to build up the big picture about the nesting habits of British Birds, and how they are changing over time.

It won't take a moment. And if you're happy to share your email address you will be entered in to a prize draw to win £100 of bird care vouchers. Please [click here](#) for more information and to take part in the 2021 Nest box Census.

## **Exmoor National Park**

### **Dream, Discover, Explore... Exmoor**

Stuck indoors? There are lots of videos on Exmoor National Park's YouTube channel so you can still explore Exmoor from your home. [Click here](#) to watch a 12 minute introduction to the beautiful Exmoor National Park, produced for Exmoor National Park Authority by Skylark Media, Bristol.

### **REMINDER- Partnership Fund: Small Grants, up to £2,500**

The deadline for the next round is **22 February 2021** after which all applications that have been received and are eligible will be considered. Subject to funds being available future rounds will be announced after this.

The Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA) has made funding available to support projects that help to achieve National Park purposes, and the fulfilment of Partnership Plan ambitions that make a difference for People, Place and Prosperity on Exmoor.

The scheme is open to external applications from community groups, businesses, charities, individuals and other organisations. Grants up to £2,500 are available for use over a maximum of two years.

Please note during the financial year 2020/21 the fund will be prioritising applications which meet the stated criteria and can help with Exmoor's recovery in the wake of the impact of COVID-19. [Click here for application details.](#)

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

## **Somerset Community Connect**

### **Help to stay independent at home**

Most of us want to remain independent for as long as we can.

[www.somersetcommunityconnect.org.uk](http://www.somersetcommunityconnect.org.uk) is a one stop website which can help you keep safe and independent in your home, advise on transport (such as bus passes and blue badges), home care support and much more.

If you need equipment to help you stay safe and independent at home (such as bathing equipment, walking support, bed grab handles etc.), complete a short survey by [clicking here](#).

### **Somerset Carers Support**

Anyone over 18 who looks after someone in an unpaid caring capacity can receive support from Somerset Carers for free. Caring could be for a loved one, friend, partner, parent or child on a regular or irregular basis. Call **0800 316 8600** or visit [www.somersetcarers.org](http://www.somersetcarers.org) for more information.

## **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](http://www.mhwinfarming2.eventbrite.co.uk)

## **Community Council for Somerset (CCS)**

### **Talking Cafe Live**

This week Izzy Silvester in West Somerset and her fellow Village Agent, Mark Shields talked openly about the subject of Men's mental health during a Talking Café Live online event; they shared personal experiences and highlighted where you can go to seek help if you are struggling. They looked at the barriers that men face when accessing the care they need. Watch a replay of the live [here](#).

Even though the live has ended, you can still ask questions and an Agent will come back to you.

## **Somerset Community Foundation (SCF)**

### **REMINDER- Hinkley Point C Community Fund**

The HPC Community Fund is part of a wider £20 million commitment of funding, provided by EDF through Section 106 agreements, for communities that are affected by the development of the new nuclear power station, to promote their social, economic and environmental wellbeing and enhance their quality of life.

If you run a local community project in Somerset and would like to find out more about grant funding from the HPC Community Fund please call Somerset Community Foundation on **01749 344949** or visit: [www.hpcfunds.co.uk](http://www.hpcfunds.co.uk)

The full press release can be viewed [here](#).

## **Somerset Prepared Funding Support**

As well as [preparedness](#) advice, the [Somerset Prepared Partnership](#) provides funding to local communities developing emergency arrangements. Groups can apply to Somerset Prepared for up to £5,000 for training, equipment or other costs that would help your community be better prepared for emergencies. Applying is simple, and they are happy to work with you to find the solutions that are right for your community. See the [Funding Support](#) page for terms and conditions and how to apply.

## **REMINDER- Food support for families during lockdown**

Somerset County Council (SCC) has provided additional funding to help schools provide families with food support during this lockdown. During term time, schools are providing meal options for all pupils in school – including vulnerable children and the children of critical workers – as well as those children being home-schooled who are eligible for Free School Meals. The Council recognises some children who are not eligible for Free School Meals might still benefit from receiving food support, so their additional funding can be used by schools to support a wider range of children.

During the February half-term holiday schools have provided vouchers or food boxes for all children who are entitled to Free School meals using funding from the Winter Food Grant. Work has already started on providing some fun holiday activities with food included to support families during the Easter holidays. More details will be released when known.

If you know a family that would benefit from support around food then please link them with their [local village agent](#) or to call the Coronavirus Helpline on **0300 790 6275**. Information is also available on the [SCC website](#).

## **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.

## **REMINDER - 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.

SCC 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. This was effective from 1 February
- 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.

### **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**

### **Somerset COVID-19 vaccination milestone and now open to next priority groups**

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 in across Somerset. Across the UK, figures released show that 15 million people have been vaccinated. In Somerset the latest published figures show that 146,379 vaccination doses were delivered up until 7 February with further vaccinations being given in the following week. Please [click here](#) to read more.

### **Go fizz free for your health and for your planet**

Most of us know that fizzy drinks are bad for our health, but many don't realise they harm the environment too. Somerset County Council is encouraging everyone to reconsider their choice of drink and take part in Fizz Free February for a healthier future. SUGAR SMART is bringing together public health messages such as tooth

decay and obesity as well as shining a light on the environmental impact of fizzy drinks, be they sugary or sugar-free.

Fizzy drinks pile on the empty carbs and create a larger carbon footprint. Sugar Smart have explored the impact of bottled soft drink overconsumption on the climate, including water use, soil erosion, plastic pollution and local communities in detail. Here are some punchy facts to motivate everyone to kick the fizzy habit for the rest of the month – and for life. Please [click here](#) to find out more.

### **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 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.

### **REMINDER- 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.

## **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](http://www.corona-helpers.co.uk)

## **MIND in Somerset**

### **Wellington Support Group Online**

Struggling with your Mental Health?

Please come and join the Wellington support group.

Meetings are held every Wednesday afternoon on Zoom until we are able to meet in person. From 1:00pm- 2:00pm.

For more information please email

[wellingtonpeersupport@mindinsomerset.org.uk](mailto:wellingtonpeersupport@mindinsomerset.org.uk)

## **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](#).

## **Get Your Mind Plan**

Answer five quick questions to get your free plan with tips to help you deal with stress and anxiety, improve your sleep, boost your mood and feel more in control.

[Click here](#) to take the quiz and get your free plan.

## **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)  
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>  
[Public Health England](#)  
[NHS – Help and Advice](#)

## **FAQS**

**Q. I feel wary about having the COVID-19 vaccination. How can I be sure it is safe?**

**A.** The vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Any Coronavirus vaccine that is approved must go through all the clinical trials and safety checks all other licensed medicines go through. The MHRA follows international standards of safety.

Further reading:

- [Pfizer/BioNTech Vaccine](#)
- [Oxford University/ AstraZeneca Vaccine](#)
- [Moderna Vaccine news release](#)
- [MHRA guidance on coronavirus vaccine safety](#)
- [Covid vaccine information – NHS](#)

**Q. Who will receive the COVID-19 vaccination? What is meant by priority groups?**

**A.** The NHS is currently in the process of offering the vaccine to people in the priority groups. When everyone in these groups has had the chance to get their first dose of the vaccine the programme will expand to other people that are at risk either due to their age group or medical condition in line with the advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) which provides guidance on advice on the [priority groups](#) for the COVID-19 vaccination.

Please [click here](#) for further information and to see a list of the priority groups for the Coronavirus vaccination.

## **Crime / Safeguarding**

## **The South West Cyber Resilience Centre**

The South West Cyber Resilience Centre (CRC) is led by serving police officers, funded by the Home Office as part of a not-for-profit partnership with business and academia. The CRC seeks to protect Small and Medium Enterprises from cybercrime. It covers the policing areas of Avon and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Wilts and Dorset.

As part of a national network, it provides free core membership which delivers simple and comprehensible guidance on reducing cyber risks, with regular updates on the latest threats.

Almost half of businesses (46%) report being subject of attacks or breaches in the last twelve months, and the trend is increasing. This isn't just about businesses with an online presence: it's about anyone who might keep their customer lists, order details or financial records on a computer, because losing those records can be really challenging. But simple steps can prevent cyber-attacks from being successful.

For more information about the CRC and the services it offers please [click here](#).

## **Domestic Abuse**

### **Ask for ANI – Action Needed Immediately**

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

## **Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)**

### **Stay Safe, Stay Legal**

#### **Mobile devices and driving**

When it comes to driver distractions - including mobile devices such as phones, 'sat navs' and tablets - please don't try and second-guess what the law covers and what it doesn't.

Here are some important points to remember whilst driving:

- the only LEGAL way to use a mobile phone is hands free: the only LEGAL AND SAFE way to use a mobile phone is not at all
- Don't let your device block your view of the road or traffic ahead
- You must stay in full control of your vehicle at all times
- Police can stop you if they think you're not in control because you're distracted. You can be prosecuted

The law still applies to you if you're:

- stopped at traffic lights
- queuing in traffic
- supervising a learner driver

You can use a hand-held phone if either of these apply:

- you're safely parked
- you need to call 999 in an emergency and it's unsafe or impractical to stop

## **Wellington Neighbourhood Policing Update**

### **Is your vehicle taxed?**

The Wellington Neighbourhood Policing Team have been proactively patrolling in the Bishops Lydeard area this week. Working in partnership with the DVLA, PCSO Vicky Henderson arranged for the two untaxed vehicles below to be removed from Greenway.

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras are used to scan registrations and check them against information stored in the DVLA's database.

If your vehicle is found to be untaxed, an officer may [issue you with a fine](#). [Click here](#) to see if a vehicle is taxed. You can also find out how you can tax your vehicle without a V11 reminder by clicking [here](#).

### **REMINDER- Helping parents to keep their children safe online**

Avon and Somerset Police have recently renewed their efforts to support parents and carers to help their children to stay safe online. Co-ordinated in the UK by [The Safer Internet Centre](#), the theme for this year's Safer Internet Day was 'An internet we trust – exploring reliability in the online world.'

In Avon and Somerset, experts in online child safety are offering practical advice and tips which allow parents to talk to their children confidently about how to be savvy, questioning and critical users of the internet.

During the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of reports of children falling victim to predators who target them online, through popular apps, games and social media platforms such as SnapChat, Instagram and Roblox. As a direct response to this, teams of experts have been holding a series of webinars for parents and professionals who work with young people offering advice and information about how to keep children safe online.

Webinars for parents have been hugely popular and oversubscribed every time A&SP have run them so they are delighted to offer a recorded session

on YouTube for people to look at in their own time. Please [click here](#) to read the full A&SP campaign article.

## **#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/](http://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**