

Somerset West and Taunton

Newsletter to SWT Councillors and Parish Councils

Issue 76 Week ending 19/09/2021

SWT Council's priority strategic themes and outcomes

Somerset West and Taunton Council's four strategic themes are as follows:

- Our Environment and Economy
- A Transparent and Customer Focused Council
- Homes and Communities
- An Enterprising Council

[Click here](#) to view SWT's expected outcomes.

Key Messages this week

1. Prime Minister sets out autumn/winter COVID plan

The Prime Minister has set out the government's plan to manage COVID-19 throughout the autumn and winter.

Due to the success of the vaccination programme, the data continues to show the link between cases, hospitalisations and deaths has weakened significantly.

The main messages are:

- Boosters, testing and refreshed public health advice will help keep the virus under control in the coming months;
- A Plan B is prepared to protect the NHS if necessary; and
- PM continues to warn the pandemic is not over and public need to remain vigilant

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

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:

- Thursday 23 September – Planning Committee, 1pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 20 September) – **CANCELLED**
- Monday 27 September – Special Audit & Governance Committee: Statement of Accounts, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Wednesday 22 September)
- Thursday 30 September – Community Scrutiny Committee, 6.15pm (deadline for public questions is 4pm on Monday 27 September)

These meetings will take place in the Chamber at Deane House following the Government COVID-19 safety guidelines. As we are very limited to the number of people we can safely get into the Chamber, we are asking people to register if they wish to attend in person.

Information on speaking at public meetings is available on the SWT website. This also gives alternatives to participating without attending in person.

The meetings will still 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.

Contact the Governance Team governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

Please see the dates listed above re deadlines for submitting questions or statements.

3. By-election nominations published

By-elections are being held on **Thursday 7 October** for vacant seats on SWT Council, and Somerset County Council.

The vacancies for the Wilton and Sherford ward at SWT, and the Comeytrowe and Trull division of SCC arose following the death of long-standing Councillor Alan Wedderkopp.

A [statement of persons nominated](#) has now been published for both elections. Applications to register to vote must reach the Electoral Registration Officer by 12 midnight on **Tuesday 21 September 2021**. Applications can be made online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

4. Reopening of the SWT Sheltered Housing Meeting Halls

SWT provide meeting halls within some of their sheltered housing schemes to enable tenants to meet and take part in activities and connect with others. This is a valued service, preventing many older and more vulnerable tenants from feeling isolated and lonely. SWT also rents these spaces out to agencies and

groups who provide activities and services to older and more vulnerable tenants and members of the public.

Meeting halls have been closed during the COVID-19 period, to reduce the risk of infection to tenant's, SWT staff and members of the public. SWT is re-opening the meeting halls with consideration for the ongoing risk COVID-19 presents to everyone, including people who have been vaccinated.

SWT are promoting on-going COVID-19 safety measures, to all those using the meeting halls as they re-open. Please be assured that regular health and safety checks, cleaning and access to bacterial hand gel and wipes will be provided by SWT within these areas.

Bookings will be dealt with by the SWT Business Support team, who are also going to begin updating the promotional material for the venues. Other providers will be able to book venues, from **4 October 2021**, but only 1 booking per day will be allowed, until 1 November 2021. This will allow cleaning to take place between times and will allow SWT to monitor the state of play locally and nationally regarding COVID-19.

5. Get prepared for National Tree Planting Week 2021

In the run-up to this year's winter planting season, SWT is once again offering free trees to town and parish councils, including unparished areas. The scheme, which was first introduced last autumn, supports the Council's commitment towards reaching a carbon-neutral district by 2030.

In addition to furthering the Council's climate goals, the timing of the scheme enables civil and unparished areas to participate in the UK's largest annual tree celebration known as National Tree Week.

Organised by The Tree Council, National Tree Week 2021 is taking place from Saturday 27 November to Sunday 5 December, and will bring people together in a nationwide tree planting event.

Similarly, this year's tree giveaway provides a unique opportunity to support the Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) project. Local councils or charter trustees wishing to take part in any of these initiatives can order bare root trees completely free of charge, up to the value of £50 as per the listed guide on the Council's [Free trees](#) webpage. This is equivalent to seven or eight trees depending on the combination of species chosen, which include Beech, Hawthorn, Lime or Oak.

The closing date for requests is **Friday 22 October 2021**.

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

6. Customer Services Staff Training

On **Friday 24 September** the Customer Services phone lines will be closed at 12.30pm for the remainder of the day for essential staff training. Please see the website for more information: <https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/>. SWT apologises in advance for any inconvenience this may cause.

7. Somerset Waste Partnership Services (SWP)

Somerset Waste Partnership's (SWP) garden waste collections resumed from Monday after a six-week suspension.

This means subscribers will have a collection on their first scheduled collection day in the fortnight after 13 September. All subscribers have been written to (emailed where SWP have addresses) highlighting this date.

The first week of resumed collections has seen, predictably, heavy loads but crews are working hard to complete their rounds. Any collections that are missed will be returned for the following day.

Any missed collection – of rubbish, recycling or garden waste – should now be being returned for within two working days. Residents are encouraged to report any misses, online through the SWP website if possible.

The suspension allowed staff to be redeployed and minimise disruption to recycling collection over a very tough period caused primarily by driver shortages. SWP are grateful for everyone's patience.

All subscribers have automatically had their subscriptions extended by eight weeks – the extra two weeks in recognition of the disruption.

If you are a subscriber and your garden waste has not yet been collected, please remember not to overfill the bin. Bins that are too heavy will be left for the customer to reduce the weight.

Crews will use their judgement and collect any bin they can take safely and be as helpful as they can. A bin that is difficult for a resident to move is likely to be dangerous for the crew to lift – and it could fall off the lifting equipment and become a danger that way.

Thankfully, this has not been an issue in the first week of resumed collections but anyone who is worried can take some material out and store it until their next collection.

The nationwide driver shortage remains a big issue, hitting authorities and businesses up and down the country. There are no quick fixes. Intensive recruitment and retention work continues and SWP are monitoring the COVID situation closely.

If you know anyone who may be interested in a career with SUEZ (Somerset Waste Partnership's collections contractor) as a driver, supervisor or loader, please sign-post them to www.suez.co.uk/join-our-team-in-somerset

For more information on kerbside services, recycling sites, and on COVID-19 and waste, visit: somersetwaste.gov.uk, sign up for the SWP e-newsletter or follow @somersetwaste on Facebook or Twitter.

Partner Engagement – Key messages from other Public Service Areas

Somerset County Council (SCC) SCC Highway Maintenance Update

We have been blessed with some excellent weather this week which has helped with (and accelerated) some of the SCC Highways works.

The A396 Wheddon Cross to Bridgetown Road (between Thorne Lane and Quarme Lane) structural repairs to the damaged verge and embankment supporting the road were completed two days early and the works have gone well. The road closure is now lifted. Thanks to everyone in the area for their patience during these essential safety works.

Carriageway resurfacing took place over the last week at B3187 Sand Street, Milverton, Parkhouse Road & Post Office Lane, Minehead and Magdalen Street/Duke Street, Taunton. All these schemes went well due to the perfect weather conditions and again the Highways team thank the public for their patience and consideration whilst these essential works were carried out.

There will be further works to raise ironworks/covers in **Post Office Lane, Minehead** commencing **Sunday 19 September**, but these works will not require a closure.

Repairs to post and steel tube pedestrian fencing is programmed for **Langford Lane, Staplegrove** (24 - 27 September, temporary road closure).

There will also be temporary traffic signals on the **A38 Wellington Relief Road at Bagley Green** on **17 September** for the installation of a concrete base for a new winter weather station.

A temporary lane closure of the **A38 Exeter Road, Sampford Arundel** from 15 September to 8 October will allow for drainage improvements along this section of road.

There will be new signage works scheduled for week commencing 20 September in the **Leslie Avenue/Rowbarton** area of Taunton.

Footway resurfacing is scheduled for the week commencing 20 September for **Wooldridge Mead, Oxlease** and **Snathe Lea**, all in **Bishops Lydeard**.

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

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](#)

[Report noxious weeds here](#)

[Street light not working](#)
[Blocked surface water drain on the highway.](#)

Concessionary travel update

Restrictions on the use of Concessionary Bus Passes in Somerset returned to normal on Monday 6 September.

As bus services in Somerset return to pre-COVID-19 levels and with students returning to schools and colleges, Concessionary Bus Pass holders can no longer travel free of charge on local routes before 9.30am.

The restriction, which was temporarily lifted during the pandemic, only applies to journeys on the local bus network before 9.30am on Mondays to Fridays. Travel will be free for pass holders at weekends and on Bank Holidays.

Applications open for 2022 school places

Somerset parents and carers are being urged to apply for school places online and on time.

Whether the child is starting school for the first time, or transferring to their next school, applications need to be made through Somerset County Council's website: www.somerset.gov.uk/admissions.

For secondary school places, applications opened on Monday 13 September 2021 and must be submitted before **Sunday 31 October 2021**. This applies to all children moving from primary to secondary school, or middle to upper school, in September 2022.

For primary school places, applications must be submitted between Monday 27 September 2021 and Saturday 15 January 2022. This applies to all children starting school for the first time in September 2022, as well as those moving between infant and junior or first and middle school.

Shortly before the deadlines reminder emails and/or letters will be sent to parents on the Council's database who have not yet applied but the responsibility for getting applications in on time lies with parents and guardians.

Skill Up Somerset Business Apprenticeship Scheme

Government Incentive - £3,000 for Businesses offering Apprenticeship Opportunities. The UK Government announced in the recent budget that they are extending and increasing the payments made to employers who hire new apprentices. Employers in England who hire a new apprentice between 1 April 2021 and **30 September 2021** will receive £3,000 per new hire, compared with £1,500 per new apprentice hire (or £2,000 for those aged 24 and under) under the previous scheme.

This is in addition to the existing £1,000 payment the Government provides for all new 16 to 18 year old apprentices and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan, where that applies.

To find out more about Apprenticeships and the incentives available please refer to the [Skill Up Somerset website](#).

Somerset Activity Sports Partnership (SASP) Addressing Health Inequalities Workshop

Monday 20 September 1.30pm – 3.00pm

Being active is so important for our physical and mental fitness, never more so than during a pandemic. In Somerset we still have nearly a quarter of our adult population who are inactive and activity levels for children and young people have also dropped significantly over the past year. Lack of confidence, time pressures, ill health plus a thousand other things can make the decision to be active harder for some than others. How can we as individuals and our organisations make decisions easier for people to embed being active as a way of life? SASP want to hear your thoughts and ideas on how we can all improve the health and happiness of all in Somerset.

The Addressing Health Inequalities Workshop aims to explore how the new SASP strategy could go further in supporting efforts to reduce health inequalities across Somerset. It will consider the role that sport and physical activity could play in improving individual's mental health and wellbeing. It will explore how we could address inactivity amongst those people with health conditions, who have a disability, or are aged 55 plus. It will then seek to identify the range of localised interventions that could reduce levels of inactivity and enhance recovery, pre-habilitation and rehabilitation. It will be particularly relevant to those working across the health and social care sectors.

Please [click here](#) to find out more and book onto the workshop.

Exmoor National Park (ENP) Farming in Protected Landscapes Fund

To support farmers and land managers protecting the special and unique places that are our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Defra have launched the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme. The programme will provide funding to farmers and land managers for projects that support nature recovery, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide opportunities for people to engage with the landscape and cultural heritage and support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.

The programme will run from 1 July 2021 and close on 31 March 2024 and applications can be for single year or across more than one year as long as all works will be completed by 31 March 2024. This funding is open to all farmers and land managers within the Exmoor National Park and projects outside the boundary if they can be shown to bring benefit to the area.

Please [click here](#) for more information, full application guidance and links to the application forms.

Quantock Hills AONB

Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund

The Quantock Hills AONB Service is delivering the Greater Quantock Landscape Development Fund providing grants of up to £5,000 to local communities, farmers, landowners and individuals and landscape enhancement projects.

The fund has been provided by EDF Energy and is part of the mitigation measures associated with the Hinkley Point C development.

Projects could include tree planting, works to manage hedgerows, orchard planting or restoration, planting of wildflower meadows, management of small woodlands, willow pollarding or pond restoration.

Please [click here](#) to find out more information and download the application form.

Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (DSFRS)

Supporting EDWARD – (Every Day Without A Road Death)

DSFRS are a member of the Vision Zero South West partnership and are working with UK charity Project EDWARD (Every Day Without A Road Death) this week to raise awareness about road safety and save lives on our roads. This year's theme, is [#FitForTheRoad](#).

The Fire Service regularly undertake safety demonstrations or talks at schools, colleges, local fetes, sports clubs, carnivals and car/biker meet-ups.

If you're organising an event, they can work with you to create a bespoke package. This could be a talk that's focused on a specific safety topic or doing a more general safety demonstration with some of their education vehicles. Please [click here](#) to look at the range of resources available.

If you'd like them to attend an event or organise something bespoke please email roadsafety@dsfire.gov.uk and they will see how they can help.

HM Coastguard Watchet

Ordnance disposal required at Lilstock Beach

This week, HM Coastguard Watchet were tasked to Kilve Beach following the find of another legacy wartime projectile. In extremely good condition, it was identified as a 16lb Quick Fire (QF) Anti-Aircraft round.

The QF anti-aircraft gun became standard issue in the home defence of the United Kingdom against German airships and bombers on the Western Front in World War I. It was commonly equipped on British warships in World War I and submarines in World War II.

A cordon was placed on the beach as the ebbing tide revealed the location of the item. On arrival of the Royal Navy EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) the Coastguard team directed them down to where it was confirmed that the projectile was anti-aircraft and was likely to contain TNT (explosive). Correctly handled by the

experts it was safely removed and stored for transport back to their naval base for destruction.

HM Coastguard continue to warn visitors and locals to take care when visiting our beaches especially those on the active target range of Lilstock, Kilve, and the old wartime range at Doniford Beach.

Don't pick up or move anything suspicious and instead record the location, take a photo, dial 999 and inform the Coastguard. Please [click here](#) to read the full report and see the photos.

Community Support – What help is out there?

Voluntary and Community Sector Support

Universal Credit

Personal Allowance Uplift to End

In April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Universal Credit increased all Personal Allowances by £20 per week. **This will end on the 30 September.**

As the monthly bills such as rent and council tax will be unchanged, now is the time to plan and readjust household budgets and expenses before the winter bills start to arrive.

It may also be a good time to review other bills like Energy, Broadband and Mobile phone contracts. Check out www.uswitch.com for up to date offers and deals.

Don't forget about "The Warm Home Discount "

This is a government scheme which helps with a one-off payment of up to £140 discount towards electricity bills that energy suppliers provide between October and March.

There are 2 ways to qualify:

1. You are already in receipt of the Guarantee element of Pension Credit
2. You are on a low income and meet your energy suppliers' criteria for the scheme.

Contact the helpline on **0800 731 0214** or go to the website: www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme.

Spark Somerset

Reflect, Recover, Renew

Spark are excited to be working in partnership with public, community and voluntary sector organisations throughout Somerset to support an important new research project. Together, they want to look at what has happened during the past 18 months and more importantly, focus on what we need to do as a sector to reflect, recover and renew.

The aim of the project is to identify the strengths of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in Somerset and understand what it needs to thrive

in the future.

Spark are inviting VCSE organisations, large and small, from across Somerset to take part in an online survey. It will only take around 10 minutes to complete and your answers will provide valuable insight into the voluntary and community sector in Somerset, how it has adapted and survived during pandemic and crucially, what it needs to develop and grow.

You can take part in the survey [here](#) up until the closing date on **Friday 24 September**.

Spark will also be hosting a series of online focus groups and events in the coming weeks to give you an opportunity to share your thoughts, ideas and opinions, and explore the emerging findings in more depth. Please [click here](#) to find out more.

Free Volunteer Coordinator Forum

The next online free forum for anybody who manages or coordinates volunteers in Somerset, is taking place on **Thursday 23 September**. It will offer attendees a chance to network, share ideas, discuss best practice in volunteer management and more. Please [click here](#) to book your place.

Community Council for Somerset (CCS) Trustees wanted

The Community Council for Somerset are looking for pro-active individuals to join the Trustee Board. This is an opportunity to make a difference to the lives of individuals and disadvantaged communities across Somerset - empowering and enabling them to take action.

The CCS teams work where they are most needed, delivering critical personalised support for individuals and communities. During the COVID-19 emergency, CCS Village & Community Agents have supported over 43,000 people in Somerset, carrying out over 75,000 community support activities.

Communities across Somerset rely on their support and the CCS want to be able to do even more to help them. They want to grow their reach into more communities, address a wider range of needs and make an even bigger difference to community vitality and sustainability.

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

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) Grants to enable access to horse therapy sessions

Somerset Community Foundation (SCF) has launched a new fund supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Somerset, to access horse-facilitated therapy sessions.

The new grants from the Horseshoes and Handprints Fund will cover 50% of the cost of a course of horse therapy sessions up to a maximum of £250. Horse therapy - or equine assisted therapy - is provided in a horse-based environment to promote

physical, occupational, and emotional growth for people with needs arising from, for example, ADHD, anxiety, autism, Cerebral Palsy, dementia, depression, developmental delay, PDA, Down Syndrome, brain injuries and behavioral/abuse issues.

Please [click here](#) to find out more. Deadline for applications is **5 November 2021**.

Funding deadline for HPC Small Grants looms...

Time is running out for charities and community groups who were significantly affected during the height of the Coronavirus outbreak to apply for grants to support their day-to-day running costs (also known as core costs).

SCF has opened a special round of the Hinkley Point C Small Grants programme and is encouraging applications for grants of up to £5,000 from community groups and organisations who work in places that are impacted by the Hinkley Point C (HPC) development. Many small community groups and charities were unable to fundraise for a significant period of time during the height of the pandemic. Lockdowns have meant that activities like fun runs, charity dinners and coffee mornings were all unable to go ahead and many groups and charities have struggled financially.

Applications to the next round of HPC Small Grants can be made by visiting: www.somersetcf.org.uk/hpcsmall and the deadline to apply is **Wednesday 29 September**.

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

The National Lottery Community Fund Together for our Planet

Grants from £1,000 to £10,000 of National Lottery funding are being offered to support communities across the UK to take action on climate change. In November 2021, the UK will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow. The UK Government's Together for Our Planet initiative has been created to engage people with COP26 and inspire positive climate action.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about the fund and the application process.

To help answer any questions groups may have about the Together for Our Planet funding programme, including the criteria and what the Lottery are hoping to fund, they will be holding a webinar on [Tuesday 21 September at 11am](#). To attend, please sign up ahead of the event.

The deadline for applications is **18 November 2021**.

Department for Transport eCargo Bike Grant Fund

£400,000 has been made available by the Department for Transport in 2021/22 for the purchase of eCargo bikes, to support businesses switching to a sustainable transport solution.

Please [click here](#) to find out more about the fund. The deadline for applications is the **14 December 2021**.

Help and support for businesses affected by COVID-19

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has made available webinars and videos about the support available to businesses to help them deal with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.

HMRC cover the following government schemes:

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) Job Retention Scheme
- Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS)
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) Rebate Scheme

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

Health and Welfare

Have you had your jabs? Book now for first and second doses

Vaccines are the best way to protect people from COVID-19 and have already saved thousands of lives. Anyone eligible, especially those 16 and 17 year olds heading back into education or training, can now book a COVID-19 vaccine online.

Alternatively, use the link below to find out more about where the local 'Grab a Jab' clinics are taking place this week. [Covid-19 vaccinations in Somerset - Somerset CCG](#)

All those who were vaccinated during Phase 1 of the vaccine programme (priority groups 1 to 9) will be offered booster jabs from this month – to boost immunity amongst the most vulnerable groups during winter.

For the latest information about the Somerset vaccination programme, vaccination centres and walk-in centres follow this [link](#).

Stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19

Coronavirus remains a serious health risk. You should stay cautious to help protect yourself and others.

- Meet outside, or open windows and doors for indoor visitors
- If you think you have symptoms stay at home and [take a PCR test](#)
- Wear face coverings in crowded places and on public transport
- Check in to venues when you go out
- Wash your hands with soap regularly, and for at least 20 seconds
- [Get vaccinated](#).

Twice weekly testing

For people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19, it remains very important to participate in twice weekly asymptomatic testing if you are out and about and meeting up with people. Please make sure that you take a test **before** you travel anywhere and if it is positive, stay at home and arrange a PCR test.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 it is important that you take a PCR test, which can be done by phoning 119 or ordering a test here: [Get a free PCR test to check if you have coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

New type of lateral flow test

A few weeks ago, Public Health stated that there would be two different lateral flow device kits in circulation - the Orient Gene kit and the Acon Flowflex kit – both nasal only kits that provide a result in 15 minutes. Due to stock availability issues, the Innova nose and throat kits will be returning until at least mid-September. This kit requires swabbing of both the tonsils and nostrils and the result takes 30 minutes.

Please be aware of this change, and make sure that you always read the kit instructions before you do your test, as they will differ slightly.

You are reminded that if you have previously received a positive Covid PCR test result, you should not re-test yourself by either using a rapid lateral flow kit or by having another PCR test within 90 days of the first positive result **unless** you develop any new symptoms of COVID-19.

If you'd like to know more, a video which shows you how to use the new kit can be viewed [here](#). By testing yourself regularly you are helping to reduce the spread of the infection.

All COVID-19 Restrictions in England now lifted

Please refer to the links below for the latest Coronavirus-related advice, help and guidance, should you need any help in the future.

- [Order your lateral flow tests online](#)
- [How to do a COVID-19 lateral flow test](#)
- [Log your lateral flow results here](#)
- [Book or request a PCR test online](#)
- [List of local pharmacies offering lateral flow testing](#)
- [Somerset COVID-19 Local Outbreak Management Plan Dashboard](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- [NHS – Help and Advice](#)

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.

The Somerset Coronavirus Support Helpline

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?

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:

- Samaritans - 116 123
- CALM - 0800 58 58 58
- ChildLine - 0800 1111
- Anxiety UK - 03444 775 774
- Mind - 0300 123 3393
- Somerset Domestic Abuse helpline - 0800 69 49 999

FAQS

Q. I have been told that I might have “Long COVID” following testing positive in the summer. What is this?

A. Long COVID is described by The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) as “signs or symptoms that develop during or after an infection consistent with COVID-19 that continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis. It includes both ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 syndrome”. The Government is also investing £50 million specifically in long COVID research to better understand the causes and potential treatments.

To support those with long COVID, the NHS continues to expand its long COVID services including assessment clinics, paediatric hubs and an enhanced service for general practice.

Q. I normally have a flu jab at this time of year. Is this going to be rolled out like normal?

A. The Government recommends as many people as possible receive a vaccination against flu this autumn and winter. This could help to reduce overall pressure on the NHS and is especially important this year given the possibility of a substantial resurgence in flu.

The NHS has begun to roll out the annual campaign for the flu vaccination from August 2021.

As with the COVID-19 vaccine, flu vaccines are available from a range of different providers, including GPs, community pharmacies, and health centres. This ensures that access is as easy as possible for all, including vulnerable groups. The NHS has learned a number of lessons from the successful COVID-19 vaccination programme on reaching out to previously vaccine hesitant groups. The NHS is implementing these lessons in the flu vaccine programme this year in order to drive uptake higher than ever before.

Please [click here](#) for more information on the COVID-19 response: Autumn Winter Plan 2021.

Crime / Safeguarding

Modern Day Slavery

Unseen's Campaign to end County Lines

County Lines describes the mobile phone lines used by criminal gangs to organise illegal drugs to be moved and sold from one village, town or city to another across the UK. Children are most often used to move and sell the drugs. They are recruited by gang members who pose as friends and then trap the young people into a terrifying cycle of violence, exploitation and abuse.

How much do you know about County Lines exploitation? Did you know it can happen to any child, anywhere, from any background? What would you do if a child you knew was involved in County Lines?

Frequent headlines detail the suffering that County Lines causes our children and how they can become trapped in this form of modern slavery, coerced by violent gangs into dealing drugs. Yet research conducted for Unseen reveals that a third (32%) of UK adults do not know what County Lines is. Some have never even heard of the term.

The findings are alarming. It's why Unseen is campaigning to raise awareness of County Lines using the hashtag #endchildexploitation.

You can find out more about County Lines by getting your own [free guide](#) delivered to your inbox. The guide includes information about who is at risk, how children are recruited, how to spot the signs of exploitation and where to go to for help.

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

Somerset Violence Reduction Unit

Campaign launched to reduce knife crime

Somerset communities are urged to report any knife crime in the area – and young people are encouraged to avoid becoming involved or victims of knife crime.

A knife crime campaign was launched last week with a bid to raise awareness about the dangers of carrying a knife and report knife crime incidents across the county. The Somerset Serious Violence Reduction Unit states Somerset is a safe place to live, but police data suggests the reporting of knife possession has doubled in Somerset between 2016-2018.

Early this year, the Violence Reduction Unit commissioned a research report on '[Social Media and experiences of cultural norms, violence and exploitation in Somerset](#)'. Insights from this report finds the primary reason young people carry weapons is for protection and out of fear for their safety, not to intentionally incite violence. Some young people said they have carried weapons because they perceived it to be cool and are sometimes swayed by music artists and online influencers.

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

Avon & Somerset Police (A&SP)

Be Seen, Be Safe

As the nights draw in and get darker A&SP would like to remind all bike riders that front and rear lights need to be fitted and working. These are for the riders and other road users' safety.

Riding without lights is an offence under Section 42 of the Road Traffic Act and could lead to the rider being reported to court. The police will be conducting pro- active patrols and will be checking bikes for lights and any other safety issues. Be seen Be safe.

Take Five Week

This week A&SP are supporting [#TakeFiveWeek](#), which seeks to shine a light on scams and provide advice to help you not become a victim.

Always remember to challenge if someone contacts you asking for your personal or financial information. Saying 'no' can feel uncomfortable but it's fine to reject, refuse or ignore requests of this kind. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

If you receive a scam email [#StopChallengeProtect](#), forward it to report@phishing.gov.uk and texts to 7726 which spells 'SPAM' on your telephone keypad.

For further Neighbourhood Policing Updates...

For regular updates on events/campaigns and what is happening in your area, please keep an eye on the relevant policing Facebook pages detailed below:

- [Minehead and West Somerset Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Wellington Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Taunton Neighbourhood Policing](#)
- [Sedgemoor and Hinkley Point Neighbourhood Policing](#)

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.