

Information

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From:	Cllr Clare Paul, SCC Cabinet Member for Public Health & Wellbeing and Climate Change
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Coronavirus Update

Last night, the Government announced it was asking 1.5m people across the UK who have specific health conditions to self-isolate for the next 12 weeks. The Government also guaranteed that those same people will be supported to stay at home for the full 12 weeks by national and local government working with supermarkets, the military and volunteers.

The details are still emerging but we are already assessing and progressing with that task here in Somerset. Over the coming days, we will have a vital role to play on contact and wellbeing, emergency food and supplies. While it appears the food parcel scheme will operate on a national level, we are developing a workforce-based Somerset model to fill the inevitable gaps and provide a framework for volunteers in Somerset.

This will clearly be a major task and we are reviewing resources and redeploying our staff to ensure we WILL rise to the challenge. It does mean some of our current services will slow, withdraw or stop completely, but it is right that we focus our support on our most vulnerable residents.

Social distancing – keep a ‘physical distance’ from others

The guidelines for ‘social distancing’ are to encourage everyone to reduce the number of social interactions they have with other people to help reduce the spread of the virus. Older people and those with underlying health conditions should be particularly stringent when following this guidance.

Many people have taken these new measures on board and are now reducing the contact they have with friends and family. However, with the good weather this weekend we saw some areas of our county extremely busy with visitors.

COVID-19 spreads through droplets in coughs and sneezes and we think that every person who gets the virus spreads it to at least another 2-3 people, who in turn will then infect another 2-3 people. The sacrifices we make now to reduce our social interactions are the best thing we can do to not only protect us as individuals but

stop the spread of the disease through our communities and give our NHS and wider health and care system the best possible chance. If you do **have** to go out, for work, essential travel or for exercise, then you need to keep a 'physical distance' of at least 2 metres from other people.

Self isolation

Anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 (a new, continuous cough and/or a high temperature) must stay at home for 7 days from the onset of their symptoms. All members of the household must stay at home for 14 days from the onset of symptoms. As much as possible, when self-isolating, you should not even go out of the house to buy food and other essential items.

It is very important that people stay in their primary residence at this time, and for the foreseeable future and do not travel to second homes, camp sites, caravan parks or similar, either for isolation or holidays. Doing so puts additional pressure on local communities and the health and care services available.

Schools

Following Government guidance, educational sites are now closed to most students until further notice. Vulnerable pupils and children of key workers can continue to attend but we must not put an unnecessary burden on our schools and we are encouraging staff – even those allocated as key workers – to keep their children at home wherever possible.

Individual schools should be making their own arrangements to provide online learning resources and parents should contact their child's school or college directly if they have any queries.

Further details about schools, provision and school meals are available [here](#).

Somerset Waste Partnership

All 16 recycling centres were closed today (23 March). This decision was taken by Viridor, which operates the sites for the partnership, to ensure the safety of the public and staff with concerns about being able to maintain the required physical distancing. Viridor have said the sites will remain closed until they can be operated safely.

All garden waste collections have been suspended until further notice, due to Coronavirus-related staff absences, however, all today's recycling and refuse collections were scheduled to take place as normal today.

For the latest information on service disruption and guidance on disposing of potential contaminated waste, please visit www.somersetwaste.gov.uk/coronavirus and follow @somersetwaste on Twitter and Facebook

GP practices in Somerset moving to phone and online triage

As the Chief Medical Officer has said, as coronavirus expands, routine services will come under pressure, but the NHS will flex its response in line with well-established

escalation plans, backed by regular guidance to local health services, including GP practices, which is being regularly updated.

As a precaution to protect patients, staff and the public, GP appointments will be triaged online or over the phone to make sure that patients are cared for by the right person, in the right place for their illness and GP surgery doors will be kept open where possible.

Working from home

[The Heart of the South West LEP's Digital Skills Partnership](#) is supporting communities that are increasingly working from home by formulating a guide to digital tools and freely available digital training to support the use of those tools. They have a list of free online learning facilities that cover topics for all skill levels. The resources are available by subscribing to their newsletter, you can sign up [here](#). Another useful guide to working from home can be found at cosmic.org.uk. Please visit [our website](#) for more useful advice for businesses.

How communities can help

We continue to urge everyone to look out for friends, family, neighbours and the community, but most of all yourself. It's important you stay safe, so you can continue to help others.

If you represent a community group, or would like to join one, please visit [our website](#) for useful links.

Stay up to date

Latest Somerset County Council Coronavirus service updates can be found online at www.somerset.gov.uk. And to keep up-to-date with all the latest COVID-19 information, visit the NHS site at www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

Many thanks

Cllr Clare Paul