

# Information

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## Coronavirus Update

Cinemas, theatres, gyms, clubs, leisure centres, cafes, pubs and restaurants must all now close, after new measures were announced yesterday evening (Friday 20) by PM Boris Johnson to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

This follows on from the announcement earlier this week that UK schools must close to all but children of identified 'key workers' and the most vulnerable.

And in response to the growing number of cases across the UK, a Major Incident was declared across Somerset at a meeting on Thursday of the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum. This solely is to make sure all agencies are able to work together more effectively in the event of reduced staffing levels and an increase in demand and is very much a multi-agency response to a national emergency.

### Somerset School closures

'Key workers' are now defined as workers in health & social care, education & childcare, key public services, local & national government, transport, utilities and work critical to the COVID-19 response. Some schools in Somerset will be providing wrap-around care, and school staff may be redeployed in other roles or to other sites. Full details on this along with FAQs are available [here](#).

### Somerset Businesses

I am sure you are getting a number of enquiries and requests for help from your local businesses and residents on the type of support available and how to access it as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Heart of the SW Growth Hub (<https://www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk/>) is the main source of advice and guidance. It offers businesses assistance and can sign post to additional help available. Do be aware that this is a rapid and changing set of circumstances, but by registering with the Growth Hub, businesses can receive updates as more information and details on support emerges. Alternatively, email [info@heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk](mailto:info@heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk) or phone – 03456 047 047. There is also a support phone number for anyone self-employed available at 0300 456 3565.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak also announced new measures yesterday evening including the government will pay 80% of wages for employees who are not working, up to £2,500 a month, as part of unprecedented measures to protect people's jobs. The Chancellor made an appeal to employers to stand by their workers during this outbreak. COVID-19 support for businesses is available [here](#). This covers support for businesses paying sick pay, business rates and the 'Business Interruption Loan Scheme'.

### **How Somerset is preparing for the outbreak**

Somerset County Council is now working in business continuity mode. Our focus is very much preparing for the outbreak, mitigating its effects, protecting our most vulnerable and ensuring vital services continue. We're working closely with partners, community organisations and are in contact with all our providers. The CCG's emergency control group will also move into County Hall on Monday working seven days, 8am to 8pm, ensuring even closer working.

### **How communities can help**

Somerset County Council is working hard to ensure those self-isolating and/or vulnerable adults and their children receive appropriate food, sanitary products and medication. We'd like to urge everyone to continue 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.

A wave of community groups have been set up across Somerset to assist those in need, which is truly humbling to see. Please visit [www.sparksomerset.org.uk/](http://www.sparksomerset.org.uk/) in the first instance for the latest information and guidance on local community support.

- Somerset Community Foundation has launched the [Somerset Coronavirus appeal](#) to get vital funding to local charities and community organisations that helping the most vulnerable people during the outbreak.
- Money saving expert, Martin Lewis, has launched the [Coronavirus Poverty Relief Fund](#) where £1m is available to fund urgent small charity COVID-19 poverty relief. Applications close at 11:59 on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Spark has launched '[Corona Helpers](#)', a free online platform on which COVID-19 support groups can recruit and manage volunteers and individuals can pledge their support.
- The Community Council for Somerset (community / village agents) are already working in communities with different groups and individuals to make sure the vulnerable are identified and supported. Local village agent details can be found at <https://somersetagents.org/somerset-village-agents/>

Covid-19 Mutual Aid UK is compiling a list of local groups set up on social media in an effort to share learning, resources and support. To find out what groups may be in your area, or to register a group, go to: <https://covidmutualaid.org/local-groups/>

### **Every little helps...**

In order to enable older people to travel to supermarkets earlier in the day, we are relaxing the restrictions on concessionary bus travel. With the agreement of bus operators, concessionary bus passes can now be used before 9.30am on services across Somerset. For further information on the changes of Somerset County Council services, please review our Coronavirus pages on [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk).

### **Emotional health and wellbeing**

This is a concerning time for us all. A new webpage is set up at <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-mental-health-information/> on mental health and wellbeing. Here you can find advice on maintaining a healthy lifestyle, staying connected, coping strategies, mental health and wellbeing advice if you are self-isolating and helping children cope. If you feel you or someone in your community needs to talk to someone, please contact Somerset Mindline on 01823 276892 (open seven days a week).

### **COVID-19 symptoms**

For most people, COVID-19 produces mild symptoms. These include a cough, high temperature (fever) and shortness of breath, and you'll be fine after plenty of rest. However, for some (older people or those with an underlying health condition), it can lead to severe respiratory issues.

If anyone in your household develops a fever or persistent cough, the advice is you must **all** stay home for 14 days. Other 'social distancing' measures announced this week includes stopping all non-essential contact with others – this is especially important for the over 70s, people with underlying health conditions and pregnant women and home work if you can.

We can all do our bit: wash your hands regularly with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds, try to avoid touching your face (particularly nose, eyes and mouth), wipe down surfaces and objects regularly and use a tissue if you cough, then bin it.

### **Any questions?**

If you are a Councillor, and any COVID-19 related questions, particularly around holding Council meetings, please email [democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk)

Latest Somerset County Council Coronavirus service updates can be found online at [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://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/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

Many thanks

Cllr Clare Paul