

SCC CORONAVIRUS UPDATE TUESDAY 28TH APRIL 2020
County/District Councillor Linda Vijeh

- PPE – all SCC services are working well, and whilst stocks have been acquired locally these remain 30% below requirements for care homes (which uses a different supply chain); SCC is continuing to try to bridge this gap. The new national distribution scheme, ‘Clipper’, is being introduced but the intention is for SCC to continue to provide PPE for the time being, to ensure that supplies are obtained.
- Thought is being given to how SCC will respond to changing advice going forward e.g. waste re-cycling centres, and possible support required from the police should they re-open. There are significant concerns in relation to possible public order issues once they open.
- Safeguarding referrals remain low but there is some concern about possible hidden issues.
- Hospitals remain below expected capacity at present, and a contact in the Ambulance Service has reported low turnout. Whether or not elective surgical procedures will be able to be re-instated is a decision to be made by the NHS.
- SCC is well aware of the possible financial impact of Covid-19. Financial modelling has been taken forward to the end of Sept. in relation to Covid-19 expenditure, Overall cost is likely to be around £50m. (£10m. on PPE), some of which will be recoverable through various sources. The overall financial gap is likely to be in excess of £10m. There is still no news on additional government funding. The situation is likely to be clearer next week.
- The most vulnerable people in the county have been contacted, with the helpline number provided, with the involvement of the district councils. This is being done in batches in order not to overwhelm the system. 1/3 of those contacted have been asking for support e.g. transport, personal care, etc. 290 calls to the helpline were received yesterday in response to the letters. Patterns of need are being monitored.
- Date from Public Health England for Somerset - as of yesterday there have been 454 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 69 deaths in Somerset.
- Office of National Statistics data – just received this pm., showing new care home data – total deaths for the week up to 17/4 were 135 deaths, from any cause; of this 25 were Covid-19 related deaths. So far, there have been 54 deaths in care homes from all causes, of which 12 were Covid-19 related. Whilst the vast majority will have been tested it is possible to come to this conclusion through ‘clinical’ testing.
- There is no ‘normal’ average for the year for comparison purposes. Seasonal comparison for this week over the last 5 years shows an increase of around 13% this year.
- At present it appears that in Somerset the peak has been reached, but this trend is being tracked carefully.
- Moving forward, information is still awaited from government. The pandemic curve is being tracked closely although it is expected, and strongly advised, that any reduction in the measures in place does need to be at a slow pace, including physical distancing, for some considerable time to come. Up to 1½ years is expected. We are not yet in the recovery period. Relaxing current measures carries significant risk, and at present there is unlikely to be regional variations.

- The testing scheme is being ramped up to meet need, and government guidance is being sought on the 'contact tracing' service, possibly using an app. to do so.
- Promoting health and wellbeing is being actively carried out. There remains good testing capacity, but the logistics of getting staff to testing centres remains a challenge.
- BBC Somerset have set aside an hour this Wed. from 7-8pm, focusing on suggestions for activity. There is also work being done on mental health support.
- Children's Services – safeguarding referrals are across the age range and giving significant cause for concern, but the rate of referrals overall has been lower. Covid-19 itself is not currently considered a main risk for children.
- School child-care provision remains good overall but the attendance of those considered vulnerable has been low, largely due to the stigma involved, and the anxiety of parents around health issues. There is concern in relation to children's mental health as a result of parental/carer anxiety.
- 1/3 of the school workforce are over 50, which is giving cause for concern in terms of their safety and welfare, and the ability to social distance in a school environment.
- A number of schools are providing outreach and online options to prevent children falling behind.
- Additional funding has been provided to keep early years provision open – 50% are currently operating.
- The restoration of children's services is under consideration. A phased response to re-opening schools will pose further challenges.
- Young people are being consulted, and the delivery of 900 laptops is awaited to support them in maintaining contact.
- There is now a fast track procedure in place for foster carer placements, but more are wanted.