

**SSC CORONAVIRUS BRIEFING FRIDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2020**  
**County/District Councillor Linda Vjeh**

- All SCC services are running well despite high levels of demand.
- It is anticipated that current operational procedures will need to be in place for at least another year, and when a vaccine is finally in place, along with a comprehensive vaccination programme.
- Public Health – currently 65 Covid-19 related deaths have been recorded in the county. There are just those recorded as having taken place in hospital.
- As of today, 31 care homes have Covid-19 cases, a smaller increase than previously reported. ONS has recorded three Somerset care home deaths so far, but this is expected to increase once more accurate records are received. Confirmation has been received that those care homes have PPE supplies and additional staff support if required.
- Feedback from care providers in relation to SCC's communication with them has been really positive, and the approach taken by SCC, working closely with GPs and other health colleagues. An additional one-off payment of 10% has been paid over and above normal care fees paid by SCC. This has been averaged out on their last 3 months workload, and is to cover the cost of PPE, additional staffing etc. There is recognition that further support may be required in future.
- New care home guidance – residents of care homes, going into, or coming out of hospital, are now being tested. On being released they are then sent to special isolation wings or alternative provision, to ensure the safety of other residents.
- Testing – there are three layers of testing now available, the situation is changing constantly.

Nationally, two major sites have been set up, one in Bristol and one in Exeter, for the referral of health/key workers, and an expanded national scheme is being put in place which, subject to booking appointments, will be available to other key workers. In order to qualify and to ensure testing is as accurate as possible, those with symptoms are urged to present themselves as early as possible.

Thirdly, staff sites are now set up at community hospitals (Yeovil and Taunton locally) for health and care workers and care home staff. This is being operated by Somerset NHS FT and has the capacity for 300-400 tests per day.

In addition - where anyone is showing symptoms in a care home Public Health England will provide testing kits on site.

There remains a shortage of PPE uniforms, and SCC is actively considering alternative options, including the purchase of pyjamas.

- There is concern over the future of some schools and what the impact will be in relation to the availability of school places should any go into administration. School admission appeal applications can be completed online, and consideration is being given to how the hearings will be held if lockdown continues.

- There is concern over the relaxing of social distancing rules, with DIY stores now opening for business, and the impact this could have on other businesses re-opening, and a possible demand for further relaxation of the current guidelines. SCC are in regular contact with the police, as it seems that already some people are beginning to be making journeys that are not 'essential'.
- Re-deployment of SCC staff – matching staff internally with roles has been working well. Key areas have been the opening of Acacia Court Care Home, and support for the Registration service. Health and wellbeing measures are in place to safeguard and support staff, including a number of online programmes, and a weekly virtual pub quiz and virtual dance offs!
- Almost 700 phone calls have been made to residents identified as vulnerable to find out their needs and provide support if required.
- Next week a letter drop will be made to around 70k people who may be vulnerable to advise them on what options for help and support might be available.
- £50k has been put aside by SCC to support the voluntary/charitable sector. The fund is now up to around £500k.
- Roadworks are continuing, enabled by the benefit of quieter roads at present.
- The Corona helpers website [www. https://www.corona-helpers.co.uk/](https://www.corona-helpers.co.uk/) now has 1,300 volunteers registered, and plenty of capacity to provide support at present. They can help with such matters as
  - Grocery shopping
  - Calls with people to combat loneliness
  - Collect medicines
  - Walking the dog
  - Tutoring