

Press release

For immediate release

Board urges people to follow government guidelines as Mendip sees increase in positive coronavirus cases

The Somerset Local Outbreak Engagement Board is urging people in the Mendip area to stay vigilant after a significant rise in positive coronavirus cases. Although the rates of infection remain low in Somerset as a whole, there is an increase in numbers in the county with more cases emerging in Mendip.

Of the 59 new cases confirmed in Somerset between the 8th September and 21st September that have been reported, a significant proportion of these are within the Mendip district.

Two schools in Street are being supported by Somerset County Council's Public Health team following confirmed cases within the school population. The schools have taken swift and effective action to identify close contacts of those students who tested positive and these individuals are now self-isolating at home for 14 days.

The schools affected are Crispin School and Brookside Academy and the measures that have been put in place to control the spread of the virus involve:

- all 226 Year 8 pupils and all 195 Year 9 pupils isolating for 14 days at Crispin School
- all Year 6 and Year 2 pupils (approx. 145 pupils) plus 10 teachers are isolating for 14 days at Brookside Academy

Public Health have conducted a thorough risk assessment of the processes in place at both schools and are satisfied with the measures in place to keep students and staff safe.

Trudi Grant, Somerset's Director for Public Health, said: "This is another stark reminder of the paramount importance in remaining vigilant and following the government guidance as we see increasing cases across Somerset, particularly in the Mendip area. Public health teams continue to support communities, businesses and schools, providing advice and guidance on what to do if someone starts to show symptoms or tests positive.

"I would like to commend all staff and parents at both schools who have acted quickly and efficiently in order to put important measures in place to help control the spread of the virus. They have been provided with public health advice including what to do if someone was to become symptomatic.

"If you do start to show symptoms, however mild, please self-isolate immediately and book a test online at <http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus> or phone 119. Please keep trying throughout the day if local test slots aren't available. And please don't book a test unless you are showing symptoms."

Chair of the Somerset Coronavirus Engagement Board, Councillor David Fothergill said: "We're all in this together and preventing spread of the virus and protecting our loved ones is up to us. The only way we can do this is through our behaviour.

"Remember HANDS – wash regularly and for at least 20 seconds, FACE – wear a face covering in settings, if you can and SPACE – stay two metres apart from others or one metre plus with extra precautions in place such as increased ventilation or face covering if two metres is not possible."

This comes as the Government announced new rules around restrictions to be implemented from Thursday 24 September after an increase in cases nationally.

This includes:

- Pubs, bars and restaurants to close at 22:00 BST; they will be restricted to table service only
- People should work from home wherever possible
- Face masks compulsory for bar staff and non-seated customers, shop workers and waiters
- Limit on guests at weddings reduced from 30 to 15
- Plans to allow fans to return to sporting events paused
- "Rule of six" now applies to indoor team sports
- Fines for not wearing masks or following rules increased to £200 for first offence

For more information about the new rules please review <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>