

## **Public Health Update**

South West Directors of Public Health have jointly agreed the additional advice and action set out below

### **Situation Summary**

- The South West has recently experienced the impact of national rising case rates and the impact of increased transmission arising from false negative PCR results
- SW Case rates have increased sharply against the national average and remain high
- The majority of cases are in school age groups. There is evidence of this translating into adults of parent age.
- Over 60 rates are rising steadily. Hospital Admissions continue to be a cause for concern.

### **Risk Assessment**

- The greater prevalence is being seen in school age children and their families
- All local authority areas in the South West have seen high rates of infection triggering thresholds that warrant additional action
- Enhanced mitigation measures will help to reduce transmission, prevent school closures and to maintain appropriate levels of education

### **Covid-19 Latest Public Health Guidance:**

Directors of Public Health (DsPH) across the South West have met and agreed that, given rates of Covid-19 in the South West remain the highest in the country, it is appropriate to continue with current Covid-19 response measures in place, until the end of this term.

Please read the revised version of the regional consensus statement [here](#) .

In line with this consensus agreement, Trudi Grant, Director of Public Health for Somerset, advises educational settings to keep in place the following control measures, as advised by Somerset County Council Public Health team on the 11th November, unless an individualised letter is received:

- Continue to use face coverings in secondary schools in communal areas such as corridors, when movement occurs between lessons and on school transport if used
- Reduce mixing between groups of students as much as possible. Consider pausing regular 'whole school' assemblies and other "large gatherings" indoors
- Promote social distancing and reduce crowding where possible; minimise pinch points in the school day, for example, staggered lunch times, or start times
- Reinforce social distancing and good infection prevention control amongst staff (ventilation and touchpoint cleaning especially in areas where staff gather)
- Any close or household contacts of confirmed cases of Covid-19 to book a PCR test and whilst awaiting test results, undertake a daily LFD test and only attend school if this is negative- this includes students of primary age under parental discretion. The new LFD tests are nasal swabs only and much easier to use than previous stocks