

Thursday 1 April 2021

## Latest week in Devon

19 - 25 March 2021:

**135 confirmed COVID-19 cases**



For the latest local coronavirus data visit:

[devon.cc/COVID-19](https://devon.cc/COVID-19)



Positive cases of COVID-19 in Devon have remained relatively stable over the last week, but we're seeing some outbreaks, particularly at indoor workplaces. Rates are still slightly higher in East and Mid Devon and highest across the county in those aged 20 to 39 years old.

### In this update:

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## Respect each other and local communities

Just days ahead of a long Easter weekend, this easing seems a natural opportunity for people to get together outdoors.

We all no doubt want to catch up with others this weekend, and the relaxation of restrictions now allows up to six people, or two households of any size, to meet up outside – in the garden for example – while adhering to social distancing and good hand hygiene.

But please let's be cautious, otherwise we place ourselves, our families and friends at risk.

"If you choose to meet up, please continue to stick to the public health guidance: keep two metres apart and wash your hands regularly," said Steve Brown, Director of Public Health Devon.

"And if you're having a BBQ with people you don't live with, then don't share cutlery, and try and avoid using the bathroom. We know the virus transmits really well indoors so staying outside and keeping two metres apart is absolutely crucial to reducing transmission."

Easing out of lockdown restrictions can be an anxious time for many, and it may take a while for people to get used to it. Steve is also [asking people to look out for each other](#). He said:

“These last 12 months, with successive periods of lockdown, have been extremely difficult for everyone, and I know that many people will find the prospect of coming out of restrictions daunting. Habits and routines, now common place, take a while to change again.

“So my ask to all Devon residents is to look out for each other, take your time and be responsible. And if you are out and about, please respect each other and local communities, be conscious of the impact your actions have on others and on the environment – park responsibly if you’re driving, and take your litter home with you.”

[You can listen to Steve Brown's full message on our YouTube channel.](#)

The Ordnance Survey website has guidance on [how to get outside safely during COVID-19](#) and suggestions for activities, by location, including links to our very own [Explore Devon website for walking and cycling ideas](#).

With many of us planning to pull on our walking boots, it's timely to remind ourselves of the Countryside Code, [making it easier for visitors to respect, protect and enjoy the outdoors](#).

## Stay outside when meeting others to reduce the spread of coronavirus

As the rules around social contact change, it is important to consider why the restrictions are being eased in a certain way.

Step one of the government's [roadmap out of lockdown](#) is now underway with up to six people or two households of any size now able to meet outside and outdoor sports resuming. It's exciting after so many weeks of lockdown, but please don't be tempted to meet indoors as the risk of spreading the virus is significantly higher inside.

This is because the closer you are to people, the greater the risk of breathing in infected particles, particularly when indoors, as it is harder to physically distance. Outside there is more room to distance, reducing the risk of breathing in larger particles from an infected person.

When indoors, smaller droplets and aerosols containing the virus can remain suspended in the air for some time, especially if there is no ventilation and therefore build ups are more likely to be inhaled by others, but when outside in fresh air, the virus disperses more easily.

It is also important to remember that while the requirement to stay at home has also been lifted, the advice is to minimise travel. Overnight stays away from your own home are still not permitted including over the Easter weekend.

Those who have had a vaccination must also continue to follow the rules. The full impact of the vaccine on transmission of the virus is not yet known, therefore it may be possible to spread the virus, putting others at risk.

Public Health England has [published a blog](#) about protecting ourselves and each other as we move out of lockdown.

## Continue to take your lateral flow tests during the Easter holidays

Rapid COVID-19 tests (known as lateral flow tests) for people without symptoms of coronavirus are important because they help identify those who could be transmitting it unknowingly so they can self-isolate and help stop the spread.

[Secondary school pupils, college students and staff working in all education settings have been taking these tests regularly](#), and everyone else in their household or support bubble has also been encouraged to take the tests twice a week.

Even though schools and colleges are closed for the Easter holiday, please continue to take your lateral flow tests twice a week and [report your results](#).

If you test negative it means that you're unlikely to have coronavirus and you can get on with enjoying your day while still adhering to the guidelines on social distancing, face coverings and regular hand washing. Or, if you test positive, stay at home and self-isolate so you don't infect anyone.

Students returning to school or college for the summer term will also need to remember to take a test either the night before or the morning of their first day back. This is to find and isolate any positive cases.

## Getting the help you need this Easter weekend

The NHS in Devon is [reminding people how to access health services](#) and get the care they need this Easter weekend.

The long bank holiday traditionally puts extra pressure on health services when most GP practices are closed and more people are outdoors enjoying everything Devon has to offer.

Most GP practices will be closed for the four days of Easter from Friday 2 April to Monday 5 April, with normal opening hours resuming on Tuesday 6 April.

For urgent advice over the long weekend people are encouraged to 'Think 111 First' and contact NHS 111 from anywhere, either by phone or online, any time of day or night.

If you need further care or medication, NHS 111 advisors will direct you to the most appropriate service. They can book you in for an appointment at your nearest Minor Injury Unit or Urgent Care Centre. If you need emergency care, they will arrange for you to be seen at a local Emergency Department and will ensure that staff in the department are expecting you and will see you as quickly as possible.

## Care providers and staff thanked for their efforts during COVID-19 pandemic

This week Jennie Stephens, our Chief Officer for Adult Care and Health, paid tribute to all those involved in providing adult social care services in Devon.

"As we reflect on the year since the first lockdown in response to the pandemic, I'd like to pay tribute to all those involved in providing adult social care services in Devon, especially those working in care homes – and delivering care in people's homes – who have done everything they can to keep residents safe and enjoying the best quality of life they can in the circumstances," she said.

In her message, she says that the take-up of vaccine by care home residents and adult social care staff in Devon has been comparatively very high. And that while vaccination offers a good level of protection against serious disease, it is not failsafe.

'It is important we all maintain good practice in infection prevention and control in our working and home lives,' she says.

[You can read the full message from Jennie Stephens on our News Centre.](#)

## Free holiday time activities and meals for children

Children and young people are being invited to attend holiday-time activities, which include free healthy meals, this Easter.

We are coordinating the activity programme, working with activity providers in locations across Devon as part of a national initiative funded by Department for Education.

Children and young people, aged between 0 and 18 years old who are eligible for the free places, are being contacted by schools and support providers. The full list of activity providers, locations, times and contact details for the providers in order to book places, [can be found on our website.](#)

## Clinically extremely vulnerable people are no longer advised to shield

The government has advised that [clinically extremely vulnerable people are no longer advised to shield](#) and can now follow the same national restrictions as the rest of the population. This is because cases of COVID-19 have fallen considerably since shielding measures were introduced in January, and over 30 million people have had at least one dose of the vaccine.

Updated guidance about extra precautions you can take to protect yourself while the virus is still spreading in our communities has been [published on the government's website.](#) It provides practical steps that cover things like socialising, travel and going to work and school. These are not rules but advice, so you can choose whether you wish to follow them or not, but we urge you to take care to minimise your risk of exposure to the virus.

Shielding has not been easy, so as well as taking care of your physical health it is important to look after your mental health. The [Every Mind Matters website](#) has

advice and practical steps that you can take to support your wellbeing and manage your mental health during this pandemic and beyond. The [Let's Talk Loneliness website](#) also has a variety of tips, advice and further resources that you may find helpful.

## Workplace testing programme expands to offer free rapid home testing

In the next major push for the government's workplace testing programme, all employers will now be able to offer their employees free, rapid and regular testing that can be taken at home.

From Tuesday 6 April, the [government's workplace testing programme will supply home lateral flow test kits to companies with over 10 workers where it is not possible to set up testing on-site](#), due to a lack of space or because companies operate across multiple sites.

Employers with fewer than 10 people can continue to [access regular testing through our community testing sites](#).

Around 1 in 3 people with coronavirus don't have symptoms, which means they could be spreading the virus in workplaces without knowing, so regular testing could be the difference between a workplace being able to stay open and operational, or needing to close due to a COVID-19 outbreak.

Businesses are encouraged to [register before Monday 12 April](#) in order to access free tests until the end of June, even if they're not yet open or are not able to start using the tests straight away.

## 30 million people receive first COVID-19 vaccine dose

More than [30 million people in the UK have received a first dose](#) of the COVID-19 vaccine as the NHS prepares to administer millions of second doses in the coming weeks.

Around 57% of adults have received their first dose, which includes over 96% of people aged 60 years old and over. Everyone over 50 years old or those who are clinically vulnerable are urged to [come forward for their vaccine as soon as possible](#).

As the drive to vaccinate people with second doses accelerates the total number of jabs administered overall is now more than 33 million.

Around 6% of the adult population have had their second doses so far and there will be a strong push over the coming weeks to give people their second jabs in line with the 12 week dose interval.

The rollout is continuing at pace and the UK is on track to achieve the Prime Minister's target of offering all over-50s and the clinically vulnerable their first vaccine by 15 April, as well as all adults by the end of July.

## Do you want to re-home items you don't use? Join Tuesday Tables

The coronavirus lockdown has given many of us the chance to sort out those long forgotten corners of the loft or garage and have a good de-clutter ready for Spring.

And now communities across Devon have the chance to rehome those every-day items they no longer need simply by leaving them outside their front door every Tuesday, starting from 6 April.

[The new initiative is called 'Tuesday Tables' and is part of Recycle Devon's commitment to help residents reduce the amount of waste they throw away.](#)

It encourages people to pass on items they no longer need so that they can be used by someone that may benefit. All you have to do is put things you don't want any more on your doorstep, in your front garden, or on your driveway every Tuesday – and let people know that you are taking part in 'Tuesday Tables'. You can either display a makeshift sign saying FREE or you can download, print off and display one of the signs available on the [Recycle Devon website](#).

Because coronavirus can be transmitted on hard surfaces, please quarantine items for three days in a garage or a box before the event to help keep everyone safe.

Please make sure that any items you leave for collection are not broken, dirty or potentially dangerous and are not on the pavement or road. And at the end of the day bring in whatever is not taken and maybe try a local Freecycle or Freeagle group, or list items as 'free' on Facebook marketplace or Gumtree – you will be surprised what people will come and collect when it's free. If your road or local area has a social media group this is a great place to share which roads are taking part to build local interest.

For more information please visit [the Recycle Devon website](#).

The latest national advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) is available on the [government website](#) and [NHS website](#).

You can find local guidance and information about the impacts on our services on the [Devon County Council website](#).

Please forward this email to anyone you think would find it useful and [encourage them to sign up](#).

**Please note that all of our sites and offices are closed to the public, except for necessary prearranged visits, but you can still [contact us if you need to](#).**