



**Welcome to our August update.** Throughout the summer, while enjoying the sunshine, the Healthwatch Somerset team have been helping people with enquires and complaints about accessing local health and social care services, we've continued to run our *Because we all care* survey about care during Covid-19, and we've been preparing for the important engagement work we have planned for the Autumn. Here are a few things we'd like you to know about this month...



## Somerset mental health services public consultation feedback: virtual event

On **Wednesday 2 September at 7pm**, Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group's *Fit for My Future* team will be holding a live virtual event to share feedback from the mental health public consultation which took place earlier this year. They will present an independent analysis of the consultation feedback including:

- the consultation proposals
- how they ran the consultation
- how feedback was analysed
- potential equality impacts
- key themes from for and against the proposal

- suggestions for amending or enhancing the proposal
- other issues people suggested were important.

Find out more about the event, including how you can ask questions, at <https://www.fitformyfuture.org.uk/mental-health/virtual-event-faqs/>.

You can book your place by emailing [somccg.fitformyfuture@nhs.net](mailto:somccg.fitformyfuture@nhs.net) or call 01935 384119.

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## Testing times – taking part in a national COVID-19 study



Tanya Camberwell, Healthwatch Somerset Engagement Officer, recently took part in the national COVID-19 testing study to help measure the frequency of cases. The study is being conducted by the **Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI**, (an independent research organisation), on behalf of the Department for Health and Social Care.

[Read about Tanya's experience](#) of the study and taking the test.

Visit the **National Institute of Health Research** website to find out about research and ways to take part if you have, have had or have never had COVID-19 symptoms:

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/COVID-19-Research/How-to-get-involved/#>.

Local statistics and information on testing can be found here:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus/>.



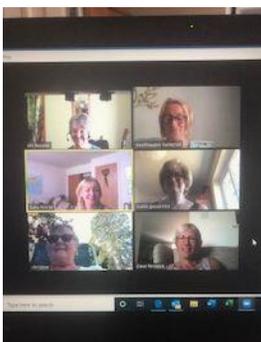
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## Rules around wearing face masks

Although it is now mandatory to wear a face covering in shops and on public transport, some people are exempt. This includes children under the age of 11, and people who are unable to wear a face covering because of a disability or where it will cause severe distress. Find out more about the latest government advice: <http://orlo.uk/ZiADD>.



Some supermarkets are providing lanyards to support customers who are exempt from wearing a mask, to help raise awareness and avoid misunderstandings. Do let us know if you are aware of any similar schemes. [Contact us...](#)



## Knowledge sharing and work planning

Our volunteers are at the heart of everything we do, from talking to local people about their experiences, to sitting on our Local Board. Over the summer we've been keeping in touch via Zoom, updating them about important local issues and information, and about our work programme and opportunities to get involved.

We reviewed Somerset County Council's response to COVID-19 and their coronavirus website which provides a dashboard of local data: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/coronavirus/>, and we shared information from Public Health around looking after your mental health and emotional wellbeing. We also shared the latest data from our care during COVID-19 survey and updated them on our workplan and our hopes to resume volunteer activity.

Find out more about **volunteering opportunities** on our [website](#).

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## We can help you get your message across

The Healthwatch Somerset volunteer **Readers Panel** helps health and social care organisations communicate clearly and effectively with local people, by reviewing materials such as publications, posters, and reports.



This month they have helped Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group review public communications materials around accessing healthcare services, and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust to review information about the Stroke Service pathway.

If you would like our Readers Panel to help your organisation communicate effectively with the people you want to reach, please contact our Volunteer Officer, Sheila Burridge on 01278 264405 or email [sheila.burridge@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk](mailto:sheila.burridge@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk).

**Share your views and get involved - help make health and social care better for you and your community**

**Healthwatch Somerset** is the county's independent health and social care champion. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health and care services, and what could be improved. These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations in the county, so together we can make a real difference.

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