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## connectme news update



### COVID-19 response

Friday 22 October 2021

#### Latest week in Devon

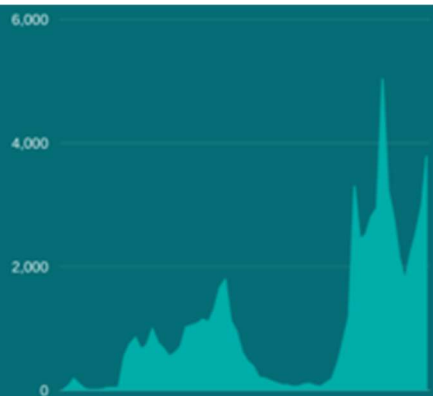
10 - 16 October 2021:

**3,780** confirmed COVID-19 cases



For the latest local coronavirus data visit:

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



COVID-19 rates in Devon are continuing to rise and are now 466 per 100,000 of the population, which is a little higher than the national average (455/100,000).

Cases are still highest among the school age population, particularly 10 to 15 year olds. We are also seeing that reflected in the rise in cases among their parents'/carers' age group, 35 to 54 year olds.

Cases have risen in most of our district areas, but rates are highest in Mid Devon (633/100,000).

#### In this update:

- Act sensibly now to keep you and your family safe
- How 12 to 15 year olds can get the COVID-19 vaccine
- Devon offers a warm welcome to visitors this half term
- National award for supporting farmers during pandemic
- Support schemes offered through Devon's economic recovery programme



**Meeting friends or family?**

**Meeting outdoors is safer.  
If you meet indoors, let fresh air in.**

## **Act sensibly now to keep you and your family safe**

It's been a while, but this week the government's evening briefings were back, with Health Secretary, Sajid Javid talking about COVID-19 over the winter months.

He said that new COVID-19 infections could reach 100,000 cases per day and urged people to have their vaccination as soon as possible, not just to save lives but to protect our freedoms too.

He also warned that if people don't continue with the precautions we are now so familiar with - wearing a mask when in busy indoor spaces, meeting outside where possible, getting tested when required and vaccinated when offered - then we are more likely to face restrictions. He said:

"If we all play our part, we can give ourselves the best possible chance, get through winter and enjoy Christmas with our loved ones."

[You can watch the full press conference via 10 Downing Street's YouTube channel.](#)

Steve Brown, Director of Public Health Devon said:

"Case rates in Devon are rising, and are now slightly higher than the national average. The highest number of cases are among the 10 to 15 year old age group, but we're seeing a rise too in their parents and carers ages, 35 to 54 year olds.

"I am asking people to act sensibly now, to [follow the public health advice](#) and take up your vaccinations when it's offered to you, to keep you and your family safe, and to help the NHS this winter."



## How 12 to 15 year olds can get the COVID-19 vaccine

This week the government announced that local vaccination sites would play a part, alongside schools, in rolling out the COVID-19 vaccination programme to young people aged 12 to 15 years old.

It means that [young people aged 12 to 15 years old will be able to have their jab](#) either at school or at a local vaccination site.

If the vaccine is given at school, they will be unaccompanied. But if it's given at a local vaccination site, a parent or carer can go with them.

The NHS will send a letter explaining this, and detailing the different process for consent if booking an appointment at a vaccination centre or receiving the

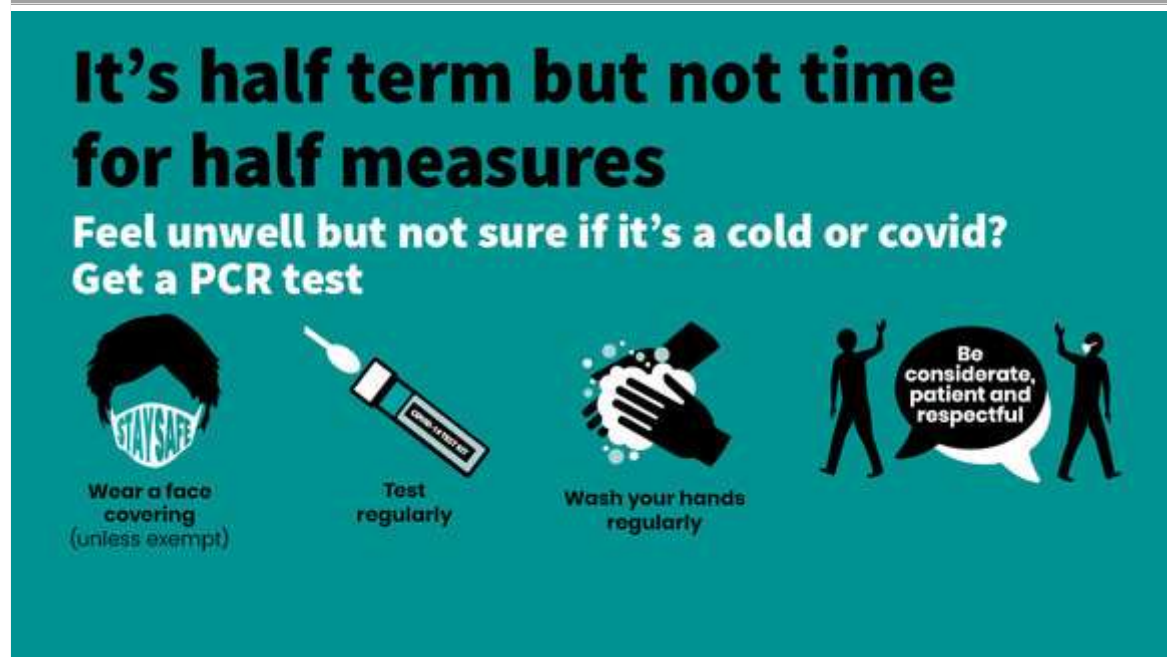
vaccination at school. [It will also explain how to book an appointment at a local vaccination centre.](#)

Once schools know when the immunisation team (Virgin Care) will be visiting them, they will write to parents to let them know and send information about the consent needed and the deadline for that consent to be given.

Trained and experienced healthcare staff will administer the vaccinations in schools in a designated area with a team to check the required consent. Once your child has had their jab, they will be asked to rest for a short while in an observation area.

If your child is absent on the day of the vaccination, or unable to be vaccinated but consent has been given, or if you would like to accompany your child during their vaccination, then you can [book your child a vaccination appointment at a local vaccination centre via the National Booking System](#), with appointments often available as soon as the following day.

The government has produced guidance for parents, children and young people to explain the COVID-19 vaccination programme and answer frequently asked questions. [We've listed them on our website.](#)



## Devon offers a warm welcome to visitors this half-term

A warm welcome awaits visitors to Devon and Cornwall this half-term, but we're [reminding tourists that coronavirus is still with us.](#)

The South West is still very much open and welcoming visitors, and the October half-term holidays are expected to be busy, as crowds make the most of the last break before winter. But with case rates in Devon rising, we're asking everyone not be complacent about coronavirus.



Adverts are being used in areas of the country, from where many visitors to the south west travel, politely reminding them of precautions to take ahead of their half-term break.

"We want visitors to come, but just as we are encouraging Devon residents to take precautions, the same is true of visitors to our county," said Steve Brown, Director of Public Health Devon.

"We just need to look at the rising case rates to see that coronavirus is still with us, and therefore it's important that we stay alert and do what we can to prevent its spread."

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## How to stay safe this half-term

Here are our top tips for how to stay safe this half-term:

- if you have coronavirus or flu-type symptoms that may be COVID-19, please don't travel. Take a PCR test and self-isolate pending the result
  - if you are travelling, and planning to be away for a while, remember to take some lateral flow device tests with you to use
  - remember to take face coverings - although they're not mandatory, the advice is still to wear them when in crowded areas, or indoors with others, including public transport
  - if you're meeting friends, try to make the most of the season by being outdoors, or ventilating your indoor space
  - and if you've not yet had your vaccinations, please do so as soon as you're invited to
-



## National award for supporting farmers during pandemic

We've heard this week that a [Devon-grown initiative to support farmers' mental health has won national praise.](#)

Coronavirus has impacted all of us, but over the last two years farmers have been under more pressure than ever before, and that's had dramatic effect on their mental health. According to the Farming Community Network, nearly half of all calls made to their helpline between July and October last year were related to mental health.

So our Trading Standards service launched a project that brought together rural organisations and support services so those who were struggling knew that they weren't on their own and could access support.

It had to be remotely delivered, so online webinars provided the opportunity for farmers to hear from speakers about a range of topics and issues.

And this week, the scheme was awarded the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Hero Award.



## Support schemes offered through Devon's economic recovery programme

We are offering [three new support schemes](#) as part of our economic recovery programme.

[Digital Advantage Devon](#) helps businesses use digital technology to reach new customers, increase sales and customer satisfaction and to save time and money. It provides up to 12 hours of free digital training and advice, with expert trainers delivering a combination of interactive digital workshops and tailored one-to-one support for individual businesses.

The [Taking Business Digital](#) pilot project aims to support every aspect of business in a digital world, delivering events, seminars, training and one-to-one support. It explores everything from digital marketing and local procurement to supply chains, importing and exporting, and customs procedures.

[Get Set Adapt Devon](#) supports businesses to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and grow by offering a diagnostic review to determine recovery strategy and tactics, and any further support a business may need. One-to-one sessions with a specialist business advisor will provide a bespoke action plan for recovery and growth. There are also tailored workshops and masterclasses based around



business resilience, business models and other key areas. It also includes online learning with 24/7 access to interactive learning modules and a resource library.

All of the programmes are offered free of charge to businesses based in the Devon County Council area, supported through our recovery funding.

An NHS advertisement for flu vaccination. The background is a photograph of several people, including a pregnant woman in the foreground, all wearing face masks and sitting on a bus. The NHS logo is in the top right corner. The text 'HM Government' is in the top left. The main text reads 'BOOST YOUR IMMUNITY THIS WINTER WITH THE FLU VACCINE'. At the bottom, it says 'Get vaccinated. Get boosted. Get protected.' and provides the URL 'nhs.uk/wintervaccinations'.

HM Government

NHS

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## Have you had your flu jab yet?

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us all more aware of viruses and how poorly they can make us. So the NHS in Devon is reminding people to get their flu vaccination to give themselves the best possible protection against illness this winter.

An average of 11,000 people in England die from flu annually, and this year the government has warned that there could be a significant flu surge coinciding with



continuing or rising COVID-19 cases due to colder weather and increased social contact indoors.

Research shows that if you get flu and coronavirus at the same time, you're more likely to be seriously ill. It's also thought that more people are likely to get flu this winter as there won't be as much natural immunity due to lower levels of circulation last year during the national lockdowns.

The COVID-19 vaccine does not protect against flu so it is vital to have **both** your coronavirus **and** flu jab to reduce your chances of becoming unwell and needing hospital treatment. Getting vaccinated helps you and the NHS, which is already facing extreme pressures in the run up to the very busy winter season.

Some [people are eligible to get the flu jab free on the NHS](#) because of their age or circumstances, and can book their flu vaccination appointment at their GP practice or [local pharmacy](#). If you are not eligible for a free NHS flu vaccine, you can still [pay for one privately at a local pharmacy](#).

The people who brought us the ZOE COVID Study app have [published a handy guide about flu](#), its symptoms, and how to keep safe this winter. It also describes the difference between flu and COVID-19.



## Devon households to get £5m to help with food, energy and water bills this winter

The coronavirus pandemic continues to impact on family budgets, and many people are finding it especially difficult now as we move into colder winter months.

The government has announced [a new Household Support Fund](#) to help those most in need this winter. It will be available until Thursday 31 March 2022, and Devon's allocation of it will be just over £5 million.

The fund is designed to support households in most need with food, energy and water bills, and other associated essential costs.

We're working with the eight district councils in Devon, and other partners, to make the funding available as quickly as possible. Details for how households can access the funding will be available as soon as it is confirmed.

**SUPERMARKET VOUCHERS** .....

**OCTOBER HALF TERM**

**GET YOUR SUPPORT**

**DEVON.CC/HOLIDAYVOUCHERS**

## Free school meal holiday vouchers all sent

If your child currently receives free school meals, we have sent you supermarket [vouchers worth £15 per child per week for the October half-term](#) to help you buy food during the holiday.

The letter or email containing information about how to access the vouchers was sent this week to the main contact details we have on record, which is usually the parent that made the original application for free school meals.

If you haven't received it, please check your junk mailbox and get in touch with our free school meals team. You can email them at [freeschoolmeals@devon.gov.uk](mailto:freeschoolmeals@devon.gov.uk) or call our education helpline on [0345 155 1019](tel:0345 155 1019).

Many families in Devon have seen their financial circumstances change due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. If you didn't previously qualify for free school meals but your income has reduced or stopped, the quickest and easiest way for your eligibility to be assessed is [through our website](#) and you will get an instant decision. Alternatively, contact our education helpline on [0345 155 1019](tel:0345 155 1019).

More detailed information about the free school meals holiday voucher scheme is [available on our website](#).



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