

Swindon Borough Council are urging all individuals in the town to play their part in minimising the spread of COVID-19 and keep themselves and the community safe.

Earlier this week over 1,000 residents shared an update social media post from the Council on the current situation, which reached over 85,000 people – showing the Swindon community is keen to help spread the word.

Cases are continuing to rise within Swindon and, in an effort to reduce the Borough's COVID-19 case rate, health chiefs in the Borough are reminding residents to protect themselves and others by continuing to wash their hands, cover their faces if in enclosed spaces, and to stay at least one-metre apart from people not in their own household.

In addition, people are being asked to stay at home, even if they have mild symptoms of coronavirus, namely: a high temperature, a new continuous cough or a loss of, or change to people's sense of smell or taste.

Crucially, anyone who has any symptoms must book a test and not leave home for at least 10 days. Those living in households should self-isolate for 14 days if they or any members of the household receive a positive test.

Earlier this week, thousands of households in the SN1 and SN2 areas were sent a letter from the Council's Director of Public Health reminding them of the advice they need to follow after the latest case and contact tracing data showed a high proportion of new confirmed cases were from residents living in those postcodes.

On Friday (7 August) the Government described Swindon as 'an area of concern' on its national COVID-19 watch-list following a spike in cases in the week up to 2 August involving workers at the XPO Logistics distribution centre in Penzance Drive.

The Council will be asking more than 500 community groups and hundreds of local businesses to remind residents of the need to adhere to the Government guidance, while public health messages will also be posted on social media and through the Council's website and various e-newsletters. Leaflets will also be sent out to households and reminders put in various local magazines and newsletters.

Steve Maddern, Swindon Borough Council's Director of Public Health, said: "The recent rise in cases and the Government highlighting us as an 'area of concern' is a wake-up call to us all. We cannot even begin to think we are coming to the end of this public health crisis.

"We are not at the point of implementing local restrictions, but we need to do everything we can to limit the spread of the disease and to keep our case rate down so we do not end up at that point. We need to break the chain of transmission and we need the public and the local media to really get behind this important campaign.

"The message of this campaign is simple: it's up to each and every one of us in Swindon to play our part. Wash your hands, keep your distance and wear a face covering when you need to.

“If you think you have symptoms, no matter how mild, book a test immediately and if you test positive make sure you self-isolate for at least 10 days. If you fall ill, everyone who lives at your property must also self-isolate. Staying at home, means not going out for any reason, including to work, or to the shops.”

Dr Charlotte Forsyth, Medical Director at Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: “The number of COVID-19 patients we are currently seeing in hospital is thankfully much lower than it was but I would urge the public not to get complacent.

“We can all do our bit to help prevent the spread of infection and it is important that everybody follows the national guidance. This includes social distancing, the wearing of face masks or coverings in public areas and frequent hand washing. This is vital not only to protect yourself, but also to protect family, friends and the public around you.

“If you do show symptoms, you should get tested and must self-isolate immediately, to reduce your risk of spreading the virus.

“We all need to work together to control this virus. Here at the hospital, everyone is working very hard to continue looking after every patient that comes through our doors, but please help us by following the national guidance and staying safe.”

Dr Amanda Webb, Clinical Chair for Swindon, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire CCG, said:

“As a GP, I know that many people in the local area like to take responsibility for their own health, and only seek help when their symptoms are no longer manageable at home.

“However, now is not the time to be a hero.

“It’s vitally important that people do not dismiss mild symptoms such as a fever, a cough or a change in taste or smell as a common cold, hayfever or a reaction to the warm weather.

“These symptoms are the warning signs that need to be acted on so, if you do begin to feel unwell, self-isolate immediately and book a coronavirus test by calling 119.”