

TDC Covid-19 Initial Impact Analysis

March, April, May, June 2020



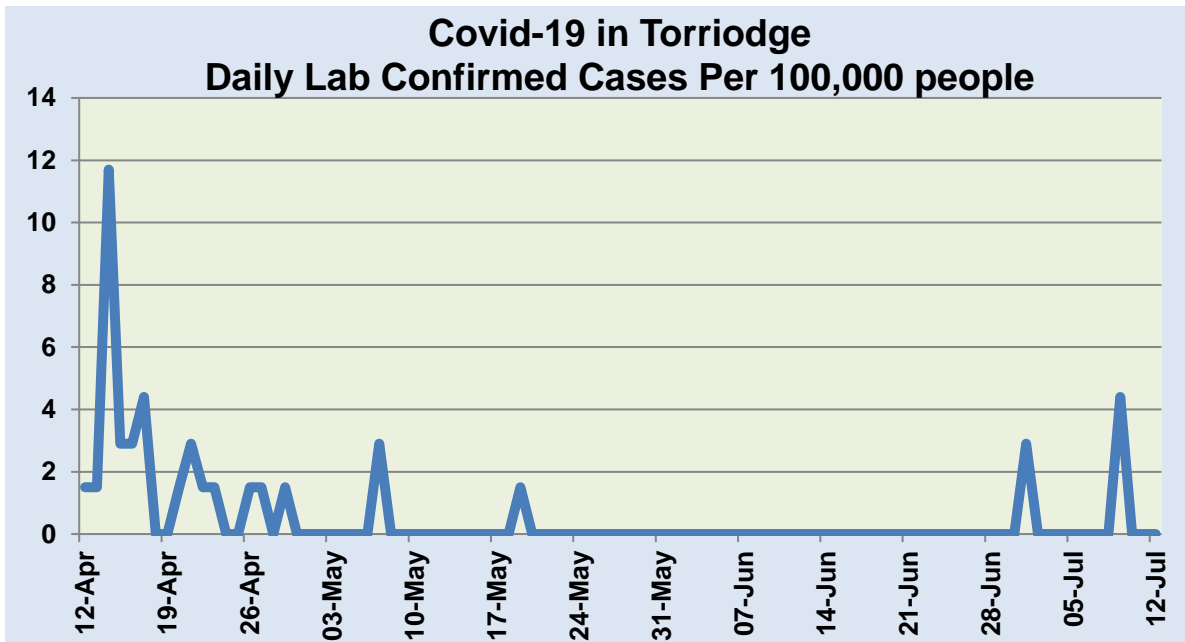
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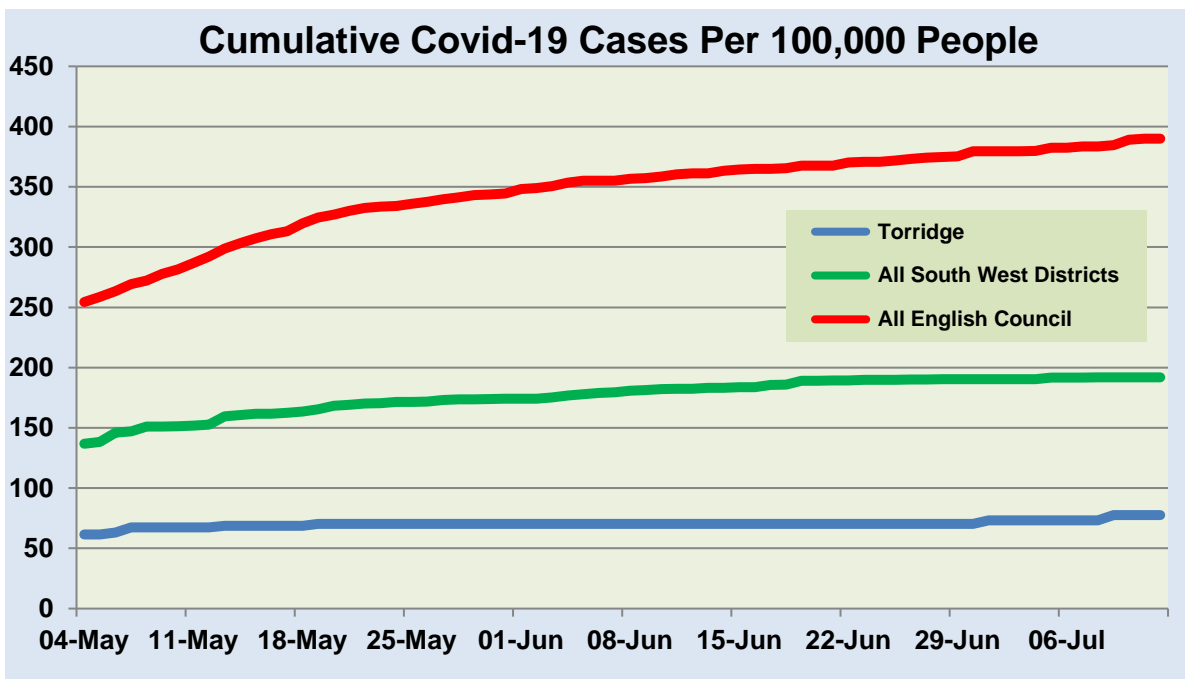
Covid-19 in Torrridge

So far there have been 50 confirmed Covid-19 cases in Torrridge. In comparison, the average number of cases in each South West Council area is 209; the average number of cases across all local authority areas is 549.

Covid-19 cases in Torrridge peaked in early April. No cases were reported between 19th May and the end of June, but there has been 7 cases recorded in early July.



The impact of Covid-19 has been 150% higher in the rest of the South West than Torrridge and 400% higher in the country as a whole.



Business As Usual

Waste & Recycling

The government has issued national guidance – prioritising black bag collections and weekly food waste collections over dry recycling and dry recycling over garden waste collections. Torridge has not seen any main service disruptions (only the collection of bulky waste items was temporarily suspended along with some electrical items and textiles). We have been able to deliver our normal waste and recycling services (making around 55,000 household collections per week).

The pandemic has created additional work for our waste and recycling crews with increases in the weight of both recycled materials (cardboard, glass etc.) and residential household waste. The overall recycling rate for the last quarter is around 57% (compared to 55.9% in Q1 2019/20).

Housing Options

Achieving move-on from temporary accommodation has been very challenging during lockdown. The Team have successfully housed 5 households since the end of March and a further 4 households are under offer. The Council have also continued to house others who have not been in temporary accommodation during lockdown.

Registered providers, notably Westward Housing and LiveWest, have been very supportive in allowing Torridge to direct match homeless applicants to their properties whilst the choice based lettings system was suspended (Devon Home Choice).

To ensure an adequate supply of temporary accommodation during lockdown we block booked 2 holiday lets and a self contained unit at a pub at discounted rates for 3 months from the end of March. We have also been using Golden Bay Holiday Park as temporary accommodation and currently have 3 households placed there, but we have to decant from the park by the end of June as they intend to open up for tourism from July.

Environmental Protection

There has been an increase in enforcement activity.

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
26	24	Increase of 8%
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
66	25	Increase of 164%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
47	32	Increase of 47%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
11	17	Reduction of 35%

Mar – May 20	Mar – May 19	Percentage Change
150	98	Increase of 53%

Bideford Harbour

The Harbour remained open for business and a clay ship was loaded during the lockdown period (subject to the necessary social distancing restrictions)

Other Administrative Services

In order to comply with social distancing requirements (and to help manage the impact on staff of the national lockdown measures (e.g. the closure of schools and childcare facilities) Torrridge's IT team immediately implemented arrangements to allow staff to work from home and keep the Council's services running.

For an additional cost of £6K on licenses and equipment it was possible to enable the majority of office based staff to work from home. Before Covid-19 the Council had on average 5 officers working from home and the figure is now around 100. We currently have 153 home workers which is over 75% of office based staff.

Note: the IT cost figures exclude the purchase of laptops for the management team.

Committee meetings

Zoom technology and training was rolled out to all Councillors in April and remote meetings recommenced in May (first public virtual meeting on 4th June).

As well as Leadership Team, the Council has now held public zoom meetings (via YouTube) for Full Council, Community & Resources, Plans, and Overview & Scrutiny.

Staff Redeployment

Some officers were redeployed to keep services running and to maximise efficiency:

- Planning Support to assist with Business Rates
- Dem Services to assist with Waste Calls and HR
- Customer Services to assist with Waste Calls and HR
- Finance to assist with Parking
- Parking to assist with HR
- Environmental Health to assist with Waste
- Parking (CEO) to assist with Waste
- Legal to assist with Waste and Business Rates

Furlough of Staff

10 staff were furloughed between March and May. During the same period 17 staff have self isolated (7 of these worked from home). By the end of May 6 staff had been tested for Covid-19 but all tests were clear.

Temporary Service Changes

All **public meetings** were suspended from 17th March to comply with social distancing requirements (virtual meetings commenced in May but have been limited so far).

The **Customer Hub** closed from 23rd March and there have been no physical access to Council services at Riverbank House since that date.

Car Park charges were suspended across Torridge on 24th March (fees were reinstated in Appledore and Westward Ho! on 15th May). **Charging was re-introduced on 15th June to all car parks.**

Northam Burrows was closed to vehicular traffic on 28th March but remained open to walkers (the gates were re-opened to vehicular access on 15th May without entry charges). The dog order was temporarily suspended on Westward Ho! beach in May. **Charging was reintroduced on 11th July.**

Public Conveniences were closed to the public on the 24th March (individual cubicles re-opened 23rd May). **Public conveniences have now re-opened.**

Communal enclosed spaces in parks (e.g. play areas) were closed from 24th March. Wider public areas in parks remained open (subject to social distancing measures). **Play areas were re-opened on 6th July.**

Leisure centres and swimming pools closed by our contractor (1610) on 20th March.

Constructions Projects were suspended – such as the work to convert a property on the High street into affordable housing. **Routine maintenance** works were also suspended including the annual spring works at Westward Ho! to improve facilities (e.g. repair the bridge over the pebble ridge). **Projects have now re-commenced.**

Nuisance Complaints were suspended because officers were unable to enter people homes.

Fly Tipping/Littering enforcement limited to significant areas only because officers cannot interview people and there is a 6 month statute of limitation on cases.

Food Inspections – general inspection programme suspended due to access issues

Bulky Waste collections suspended. **Re-started 8th June.**

Closure of **Pannier Markets** in Torrington and Holsworthy.

In March restrictions were imposed at **North Devon Crematoria** and the gardens were closed to the public on 1 April.

Some restrictions on **Homelessness**. During lockdown we have not been able to place anyone who has approached requiring emergency accommodation during out of hours because we cannot access accommodation (we would usually use hotels or bed and breakfast providers, such as Travelodge and these are closed).

Number of Businesses Helped

	Small Business Grants	Retail, Leisure & Hospitality (lower)	Retail, Leisure & Hospitality (Higher)	Total Business Support
April	1,856	179	125	2,160
May	96	78	20	194
June	44	7	2	53
Total	1,996	264	147	2,407 business
Amount	£19,960,000	£2,640,000	£3,675,000	£26,275,000

Business grants of £26.3M have been paid so far (there are still some discretionary payments which will be paid in July).

As at the 31st May Torridge were ranked 42 out of 314 Council's in terms of how quickly we had paid out the grant monies to local businesses (speed of payment to support the local economy was one of the government's primary drivers behind this initiative).

Number/Cost of Individuals Supported

Additional Work/Costs Associated with Housing

Since 27 March we have accommodated 11 people/9 households who were rough sleeping or at immediate risk of rough sleeping (as at 31 May the net spend was £13,903). We continue to accommodate 7 people/6 households.

In addition to those accommodated due to Covid-19 we are currently accommodating 22 households under a statutory homeless duty; 10 families and 12 single people. 6 of these households became homeless during lockdown.

We have continued to accommodate 2 intentionally homeless households in hostel accommodation under a discretionary power after our statutory duty has come to an end, rather than evict.

We have installed additional internal doors at our hostels to create self contained units and have been running at reduced occupancy to minimise the sharing of facilities. This has led to a reduction of income and increased cost because we have had to pay for nightly let units rather than use some of our own stock.

We have incurred additional cleaning costs both from increased cleaning at our hostels and through undertaking deep cleaning for providers of nightly let accommodation when units become void. This has come at an additional cost because other homeless households have had to be placed into nightly paid for accommodation rather than into our own stock.

Sheltered/Vulnerable Residents (end of May)

Database shows 55 service requests for food parcels and other support

The Covid email group have received 69 support requests

The Covid helpline received an initial spike of calls in March but has since dropped off.

Council Tax Hardship

No payments have been made to date, but system changes have been made and the system will be ready to make these payments after 15th August.

Money Paid out in Support

£50,000 was paid out to Parish & Town Councils to support Voluntary and Community Groups. At the end of May only around 30% of the money had been spent by Parish Councils.

In addition to the £50K to support community groups, TDC have signposted the 12 other organisations who have provided financial help and/or support during this period. This includes the Devon County Council Covid-19 Prompt Action Fund whereby TDC provide 50% of the DCC grant.

Torrige were also allocated £85,000 from DCC to support the economically vulnerable.

Benefits

The latest information received from DWP in relation to UC indicate a 284% increase in UC claims.

There has been a 84% increase in new claims for Council Tax Support.

April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
173	78	Increase of 122%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
152	86	Increase of 77%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
123	79	Increase of 57%

Apr – June 20	Apr – June 19	Percentage Change
448	243	Increase of 84%

Workstream Analysis

Telephone Statistics – Calls Answered

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
9,989	10,075	Reduction of 1%
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
9,744	10,544	Reduction of 8%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
8,127	11,886	Reduction of 31%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
9,179	9,109	Increase of 1%

Mar–Jun 20	Mar–June 19	Percentage Change
36,039	41,614	Reduction of 13%

Telephone traffic has remained high when it is taken into account that some Council services have been closed/reduced. As the offices have started to reopen call volumes are returning to normal levels.

Looking back at 2019, the figures were particularly high in Council Tax and Waste/Customer Services during this 4 month period.

Telephone Statistics – Calls Made

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
6,738	6,794	No significant change
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
6,351	5,918	Increase of 7%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
4,029	6,374	Reduction of 37%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
4,563	7,688	Reduction of 41%

Mar–Jun 20	Mar–June 19	Percentage Change
21,681	26,754	Reduction of 19%

Looking back at 2019, there were particularly high outgoing call volumes in Council Tax, Housing Options and Waste.

TDC Mobile Phone Stats

We can get two sets of data for our mobile phones:

Calls Made - total number of outgoing for each dialled number per month.

Mobile Internet - the internet as accessed by means of a smartphone or other mobile device

Month	Calls Made	Mobile Internet	3 Month Averages			
			Calls Made		Mobile Internet	
Jun-20	6,444	31,435	6,393	Increase of 46%	30,804	Increase of 33%
May-20	6,417	30,922				
Apr-20	6,318	30,056				
Mar-20	4,248	23,830	4,380		23,203	
Feb-20	4,979	26,167				
Jan-20	3,913	19,612				
Dec-19	4,446	24,534	4,444		24,669	
Nov-19	4,631	25,415				
Oct-19	4,255	24,057				
Sep-19	4,031	20,518	4,804		23,571	
Aug-19	5,483	26,041				
Jul-19	4,897	24,154				

From the above, comparing Jan to March this year, with April to June this year, there has been a 46% increase in the number of calls made by mobiles and a 33% increase in the times the internet has been accessed from mobile devices.

We don't have historical data to compare accurately with last year. However if we assume that there has been an additional 2,000 calls per month made on mobile phones (based on the average uplift over the past 3 months) and apply this to April, May, and June in the previous table, we have the following:

Telephone Statistics – Adjusted calls made (with estimated additional mobile calls)

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
6,738	6,794	No significant change
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
8,351	5,918	Increase of 41%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
6,029	6,374	Reduction of 5%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
6,563	7,688	Reduction of 15%

Mar–Jun 20	Mar–June 19	Percentage Change
27,681	26,754	Increase of 3.5%

Emails Received by Torridge (legitimate inbound)

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
71,410	53,626	Increase of 33%
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
61,259	50,883	Increase of 20%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
65,274	52,267	Increase of 25%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
73,848	50,153	Increase of 47%

Mar – June 20	Mar – June 19	Percentage Change
271,791	206,929	Increase of 31%

For a number of years there has been a move towards using email as the most efficient way of going about everyday business. We only have reliable email statistics for the past 15 months but these figures support the feeling that there is an ongoing channel shift away from physical visitors and telephone towards electronic media.

This increase is also reflected in both inbound and outbound email volumes.

Emails Sent by Torridge (outbound)

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
31,926	25,013	Increase of 28%
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
32,055	28,579	Increase of 12%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
29,618	27,375	Increase of 8%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
30,042	27,735	Increase of 8%

Mar – June 20	Mar – June 19	Percentage Change
123,641	108,702	Increase of 14%

Internal Emails at Torridge

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
135,584	112,772	Increase of 20%
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
236,678	155,102	Increase of 53%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
198,911	179,655	Increase of 11%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
169,924	121,711	Increase of 40%

Mar – June 20	Mar – June 19	Percentage Change
741,848	569,240	Increase of 30%

With homeworking in place there has been an expected and significant increase in internal emails over the past 3 months.

Rejected Emails (includes viruses and SPAM)

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
1,082,219	281,259	Increase of 285%
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
302,759	230,977	Increase of 31%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
78,584	178,749	Reduction of 56%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
35,690	182,574	Reduction of 80%

Mar – June 20	Mar – June 19	Percentage Change
1,499,252	873,559	Increase of 72%

On average, Torridge rejects around 200,000 emails every month. There was a large increase in unwanted emails at the beginning of the Covid-19 epidemic which saw a massive spike in SPAM in Feb/Mar 2020 when Torridge rejected around 2M emails. The fall off in SPAM since March indicates that fraudsters focus on major news issues which are more likely to be opened by the public, hence warnings of increased SPAM levels when the government's tracing app is launched.

Website Traffic (Total Hits)

March 2020	March 2019	Percentage Change
130,569	79,616	Increase of 64%
April 2020	April 2019	Percentage Change
176,578	144,637	Increase of 22%
May 2020	May 2019	Percentage Change
153,874	141,525	Increase of 9%
June 2020	June 2019	Percentage Change
117,439	83,464	Increase of 41%

Mar – June 20	Mar – June 19	Percentage Change
578,460	449,242	Increase of 29%

With the Customer Hub closed from 20th March there has been a marked change in customer habits. Prior to this date we were welcoming an average of 1,600 physical visitors a month to the Customer Hub and it is likely that many of these people have since chosen to contact the Council digitally.

This Hub closure has contributed to the significant increase of traffic to Torridge's website when compared to the same period last year. Other factors include the ongoing channel shift towards digital contact methods and the impact of Covid-19 on the number of people contacting the Council for information and support.

Website Traffic (COVID pages)

Over the period in question we have created 74 new Covid-19 web pages. There have been 23,000 hits on the Covid-19 pages on the Torridge website as local residents and businesses seek advice (e.g. what help is available to them).

Activity on the Covid-19 pages peaked in April and has now reducing month on month as we move out of lockdown.

March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	Mar – June 20
7,306	8,401	4,254	2,830	22,791

Government Guidance (part of Covid-19 pages on Website)

Every day the Government produces guidance notes to the public and public bodies on dealing with Covid-19. Links to all of the government's guidance is placed in date order on the Torridge website. The following table shows the number of new links listed on the Torridge website each month. As the country moves out of lockdown the number of daily guidance notes from the Government has increased.

March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	Mar – June 20
200	300	500	800	1,800

Social Media – Facebook

At the beginning of 2020 Torridge had 1,538 followers on Facebook. By the end of May 2020 we had 2,438 followers. An increase of 58.5%.

Month	Number of Posts	Reach (people who saw content)
March	78	221,648
April	74	192,717
May	67	150,085
June	62	155,306
Totals	281	719,756

As a comparison, in February 2020 we made 41 Facebook postings which reached 72,178 people. Based on this sample, due to Covid-19 there has been a 71% increase in our Facebook posts and a 150% increase in the number of people who saw our Facebook content.

Our top Facebook post was 'Free Parking extended to 15th June' which reached 24,466 people.

Social Media – Tweet

At the beginning of 2020 Torridge had 2,295 followers on Twitter. By the end of June 2020 we had 2,468 followers. An increase of 7.5%.

Month	Number of Tweets	Tweet Impressions	Profile Visits
March	82	46,500	1,506
April	81	50,300	1,705
May	71	34,500	710
June	60	25,600	403
Totals	294	156,900	4,324

As a comparison, in February 2020 we posted 38 tweets, there were 19,900 tweet impressions and 856 profile visits. Based on this sample, due to Covid-19 there has been a 93% increase in the number of Tweets posted and the number of impressions and profile visits associated with those posts.

Our top Twitter post was 'Geoffrey Cox holds virtual meeting with Council Leader' which had 5,109 impressions.

Social Media – Instagram

At the beginning of 2020 Torridge had 575 Instagram followers. By the end of June 2020 we had 993 followers. An increase of 73%.

Other Communications (up to end May)

- 25 press releases sent out associated with Covid-19
- 45 New articles posted on the website associated with Covid-19
- The communications team have a folder for email correspondence with customers who have questions and queries. In March we had 75 emails in the folder, in April 138 emails and in May 193 emails. By comparison we had 62 emails in the folder in February. Based on this sample we have seen a 118% increase in 'enquiry' traffic.

Other Impacts

Use of Zoom

The Council started to use Zoom to host remote meetings in May.

	May 2020	June 2020	Total
Number of Meetings	154	140	294
Number of Participants	850	874	1,724
Number of Meeting Minutes	47,048	50,688	97,736

Senior Management Team

Additional workload associated with the coordination of the Covid-19 response, communications with remote working staff and Members, and attending virtual meetings (various resilience forums, Devon groups, SW groups, etc).

Other Covid Related Works

A range of preparation activities took place which required officer input. Some of these activities required a great deal of set up but were not fully utilised:

- Preparation for food deliveries to the vulnerable
- Preparation for NHS staff
- Preparation for drive through test sites

Government Support for our District (Wages/Furlough)

- There are 7,700 employments furloughed in Torridge
- There have been 3,800 claims for self employment support with a value of £10.6M