**Coronavirus (COVID 19)**

**Briefing for Norfolk County Council elected members (18.03.2020)**

The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to be a rapidly evolving situation and these regular briefings intend to provide elected members with access to the latest available information. They will be issued weekly, or more frequently as required.

The Chief Medical Officer has confirmed there are now cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Norfolk. The most recent data from PHE is here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-track-coronavirus-cases>.

Locally we are following the Government’s advice and guidance on approaches to supress the impact of the outbreak. The Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) has convened a full response with multi-agency strategic and tactical cells; the council is fully mobilised.

1. **Recent Government action**

The Government has announced new measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus outlined in the [PMs speech on 16 March](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-on-coronavirus-16-march-2020) (key points are outlined in ‘messages to the public’ below).

The Government has announced that after Friday (20 March) schools and colleges will remain closed until further notice - this will be for all children, except to those of key workers and where children who are most vulnerable. GCSEs and A-level exams will be cancelled. (See ‘local response’ section below).

An [emergency bill](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/emergency-bill-to-strengthen-coronavirus-covid-19-response-plans) will introduce new laws to protect public health, increase NHS capacity, strengthen social care and support the public to take the right action at the right time.

Key areas of the bill are:

* Removing barriers to allow recently retired NHS staff and social workers to return to work
* Enabling Adult Social Care not to have to assess under the care act, be able to change care levels with assessment or review, and cease the requirement for financial assessment. This would be for a specific period of time and enable councils to take steps to protect and prioritise people.
* Reducing unnecessary social contacts, for example through powers over events and gatherings, and strengthening the quarantine powers of police
* Enabling the death management system to deal with increased demand for its services
* allowing people to claim Statutory Sick Pay from day one
* supporting the food industry to maintain supplies.

The legislation will be time-limited – for 2 years. The Government has outlined full details of the bill [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-bill-what-it-will-do/what-the-coronavirus-bill-will-do).

**Other Headlines:**

* [**Emergency support for rough sleepers**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/3-2-million-emergency-support-for-rough-sleepers-during-coronavirus-outbreak) **(17 March) -** £3.2 million of emergency funding to help rough sleepers to self-isolate. Councils will be reimbursed for the cost of providing accommodation and services to rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping, who are suffering from or at risk of coronavirus.
* [**Granting permission for pubs and restaurants to act as takeaways**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-grant-permission-for-pubs-and-restaurants-to-operate-as-takeaways-as-part-of-coronavirus-response) **(17 March) -** Relaxation of planning measures so that pubs and restaurants can operate as hot food takeaways to serve people having to stay at home.
* [**Free Childcare**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-childcare-offers-to-continue-during-coronavirus-closures) **(17 March) -** the Government will continue to pay funding to local authorities for the free entitlements for two, three and four-year-olds.
* [**Travel Advice against all non-essential travel**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/travel-advice-foreign-secreatary-statement-17-march-2020) **(17 March)**
* [**Business support**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-employees-employers-and-businesses) – A package of measures to support business (including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme, business rates holiday, statutory sick pay support and a small business grant scheme) and [guidance for employees, employers and businesses](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19) issued **(18 March)**
* [**Delaying the TV licence fee for over 75s**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/bbc-and-governments-joint-statement-on-delaying-the-tv-licence-fee-for-over-75s) **(16 March)**

The latest information on the Government’s response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

1. **Messages to the public**

**How elected officials can help:** This is a very fast moving situation and the focus right now is on delaying the spread of coronavirus and ensuring our services are responding well. This is clearly hugely important and requires all of our attention.

Elected officials with their strong links to the community can help by continuing to promote [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) and [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) as trusted sources of information. It is really important to ensure people go to the right sources of information and keep up to date with how to look after themselves.

**Key messages:**

**Stay at home if you have coronavirus symptoms**

This includes:

* a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
* a new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly).

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home. Testing for coronavirus is not needed if you are staying at home. Read advice about [staying at home](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/).

**Everyone to stop non-essential contact with others and stop all unnecessary travel** ([social distancing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults))

* start working from home where they possibly can
* avoid non-essential gatherings, including pubs, clubs, theatres and other such social venues.
* for people over 70, for pregnant women and for those with some health conditions avoiding all unnecessary social contact is particularly important.

**Contacting 111**

It is really important that people are encouraged to use the [online 111 coronavirus service](https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19/) if they can – people should only call 111 if they cannot get help online. Your help to share this message would be appreciated.

People should use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:

* they feel they cannot cope with their symptoms at home
* their condition gets worse
* their symptoms do not get better after 7 days

**GP services**

You may be getting questions from constituents about their local GP surgery. As the Chief Medical Officer has said, routine non-urgent services in the NHS could well come under pressure as a result of the coronavirus, and so the NHS is preparing a number of practical solutions to effectively respond to this outbreak.

As part of these robust plans and as a precaution to protect patients, staff and the public, GP appointments booked online or those that have been pre-booked, may be followed up with a call by the surgery, to make sure they see the right person in the right place for their illness. Patients may also be encouraged to make use of more telephone and online appointments. Each practice may come up with slightly different arrangements depending on local needs and circumstances.

This is not something that patients should be concerned about but is being done as a precaution to help protect patients, staff and the public.

1. **Local response**

**Service Updates**

Coronavirus is currently causing disruptions to certain council services. The latest updates are available at: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/safety/service-disruptions>

**Supporting schools to prepare for closure**

[NCC is working to support schools and academies](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/news/2020/03/schools-closures) following the Government’s direction that all schools should close from Friday afternoon, amidst the coronavirus pandemic. Schools will remain open for the children of key workers and those children who are the most vulnerable. Examples include NHS staff, delivery drivers and children with a social worker or Education, Health and Care Plan.

The council is awaiting guidance from the government on how to support children entitled to free school meals. However, it has contingency plans in plan should these be needed.

**Public messaging**

A [public health campaign](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/news/2020/03/norfolk-county-council-public-health-calls-on-everyone-to-help-norfolk-stand-up-against-coronavirus) has been launched to help keep Norfolk residents safe from the coronavirus to complement the national Public Health England and NHS campaigns. All materials have been cascaded locally to partners and local communities to strengthen reach. The campaign is live and will be responsive to the developing situation. The campaign toolkit, which includes social media images and posters, can be found [here](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/campaigns/coronavirus-toolkit-for-professionals).

NRF partners and working closely with the regional Public Heath England communications team, is leading a joint communications strategy to cascade national messages on how to minimise the spread of the coronavirus and to share local messages about how partners are working together to protect the public and minimise disruption to key services.

**Support to businesses**

[New Anglia Growth Hub](http://newangliagrowthhub.co.uk/) is Government funded and ready to offer free advice to all businesses in Norfolk and Suffolk. If businesses have been affected by coronavirus, whether this is supply chain issues, order or booking cancellations, a reduction in sales, or any other challenge, they can contact the Growth Hub to speak to one of their qualified business advisers. They offer free support and advice and can help them to access the support measures put in place by Government.

**Adult social care**

Social care teams have plans in place and will always find ways to keep people safe and supported at times of crisis. All care plans of the people the council supports are being reviewed to see what is in place in the case of care breaking down. In many cases we are ringing people to discuss this.  The council is also working alongside home care agencies to identify people who might be particularly at risk or isolated so we can find alternative ways to support them if the need arises.

Work is taking place with the council, the NHS and providers to significantly increase hospital discharges to support hospitals with the necessary capacity to deal with the outbreak.

In addition, plans are being developed in Norfolk for the national funding announced in the Budget to:

* Support the financial resilience of home care, supported living, day opportunities and residential care providers over the coming months.
* Work with Primary Care and GPs to identify people will underlying health conditions in the community.
* Work with communities, third sector organisations, and providers to support the implementation of social distancing for vulnerable people.

There is also regular contact with other care providers to ensure they have robust contingency plans in place to meet people’s needs. Further information on the advice to care providers is on the NCC website [here](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/coronavirus).

A 24-hour number 0344 800 8020 has also been set-up for anyone with individual concerns.

**Community resilience**

A Community Resilience and Recovery Committee is being set-up under the NRF to lead on and help coordinate advice on what local communities can do to help each other. Elected officials have a key role to play in supporting their communities and we will keep you informed as this develops.

A ‘Here to Help’ campaign has been launched with the [Eastern Daily Press](https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-norfolk-uk-how-to-help-people-self-isolating-neighbours-family-1-6563785%29) which includes a simple postcard for communities to post through letterboxes offering help to those who are self-isolating in their area. A poster providing “[Six steps to make a positive difference in your community](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/norfolk/downloads/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/campaigns/coronavirus-toolkit/community-action-poster.pdf?la=en)” has also been produced and distributed.

1. **Useful Links**

PHE is addressing **common questions** on its [Public Health Matters blog](https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/) (updated 17/03).

**Guidance for health professionals and non-clinical settings** - [www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

Updated or new guidance issued this week:

* [guidance for hostel or day centres for people rough sleeping](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-services-for-people-experiencing-rough-sleeping) (issued 16 March)
* [Guidance for educational settings](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19) (updated 16 March)
* [Guidance on mass gatherings](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-guidance-for-mass-gatherings) (issued 16 March)
* [Guidance for staff in the transport sector](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-staff-in-the-transport-sector) (updated 16 March)

**Guidance for the public**

Updated or new guidance issued this week:

* [Travel advice for those travelling and living overseas](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus) (updated 17 March)
* [Guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-people-with-confirmed-or-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection) (updated 16 March)
* [Guidance on social distancing and for vulnerable people](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people) (issued 16 March)

**Norfolk County Council**

**Public Health**