

Latest Information, Advice, Useful Links and Service Updates (Updated 21 January 2021)

This is a very fast-moving situation and our 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.

The information below is intended as a resource to keep you up to date with the latest information and advice.

Covid-19 Trusted sources of information

- The most recent **verified data on cases in the UK and Norfolk** is available from Public Health England [here](#) and the Norfolk Insights website [here](#).
- Everyone has a key role in promoting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus and www.gov.uk/coronavirus as trusted sources of information to the public. 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.
- **Keep up to date:** We have [a dedicated webpage for coronavirus updates](#) in Norfolk and impact on Norfolk County Council services. This is updated regularly so please do re-visit this page.
- **Service updates** - The most up to date information on council services can be found at [Norfolk County Council services disruptions](#). The council will continue to monitor its services and, if regulations and circumstances change, it will review its current plans.

Latest national announcements

- **Education Secretary launches review of children's social care** - DfE has launched a [wide-ranging, independent review into children's social care](#) to address poor outcomes for children in care as well as strengthening families to improve vulnerable children's lives. The review will reshape how children interact with the care system, looking at the process from referral through to becoming looked after. It will address major challenges such as the increase in numbers of looked after children, the inconsistencies in children's social care practice, outcomes across the country, and the failure of the system to provide enough stable homes for children.
- **Social care sector to receive £269 million to boost staffing levels and testing** - On 17 January, the Government [announced](#) £269 million funding to councils to increase staffing levels and testing. The new £120 million funding will help councils to increase staffing levels and will be used to support rapid testing of staff and facilitate visits from family and friends where possible. The £149 million funding will help care home providers with the costs incurred, including setting up safe testing areas and providing staff training, and will contribute towards staff time spent administering and receiving tests.
- **Prime Minister and Chancellor launch new business council** - On 18 January the Prime Minister launched the [Build Back Better Council](#) which brings together a broad range of business leaders from across the British economy to work in partnership with the Government on coronavirus economic recovery and future growth plans. The Build Back Better Council will be comprised of 30 members representing industries from retail and hospitality, to finance, science and technology. The [first meeting was held on 18 January](#).

Key messages for residents

- **Vaccine Easy Read** - Public Health England have created this great [Easy Read booklet about the Covid-19 vaccine](#) and are keen for it to be shared widely to support understanding in communities.
- **Advice given over Covid spreading within households** - Don't drop your guard within your own home, if you live with someone with Covid symptoms. That's the message from director of public health Dr Louise Smith, amid concern that spread within homes accounted for over a third of cases. Dr Smith is also concerned that cases in Norwich remain high, despite infections starting to reduce in the rest of Norfolk.

The latest figures show that:

- there are 730 Covid patients in Norfolk's hospitals, including 55 in intensive care
- there have been 3,896 cases in the seven days to 16th January - this is 474 fewer compared to the same time last week
- the seven-day incidence rate is 439 per 100,000 - this is a reduction of 52 compared to the previous week
- for the county, the seven-day incidence rate is 439 per 100,000 - this is a reduction of 52 compared to the previous week

Dr Smith said: "Case figures are reducing in Norfolk, except for in Norwich, which is looking like a regional outlier. In Norwich, cases are also rising among the over-60s. This is very concerning, as it may lead to more hospital admissions and deaths."

Dr Smith said that 35 per cent of cases were now linked to where people lived – whether in their own homes or care homes.

She said: "It's very easy to be wary of strangers but then drop your guard when someone you live with shows Covid symptoms.

"There are simple precautions everyone can follow, to keep yourself safe in these circumstances."

Government guidelines include:

- Spending as little time as possible in shared spaces within the home, when the infected person is present
- Ensuring the infected person can eat meals in their own room
- Double-bagging any rubbish such as tissues used by the infected person
- Using separate towels and ensuring the bathroom is cleaned after the infected person has used it

The latest Government guidelines on staying safe at home are available at [here](#).

[Read the full story here.](#)

Covid-19

- **Service expanded to further stem the spread of Covid-19** - A support service is being substantially expanded in the west of the county this week to help more residents affected by Covid-19 to isolate.

Previously only those who had tested positive for the virus would be contacted by teams from local councils with offers of support. Now the service will expand welfare checks and support to include some of those people who have been asked to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because they are contacts of positive Covid cases.

Led by Norfolk's Public Health and Community Resilience county-wide partnership working which includes the county's seven city, district, borough councils, the service aims to further bolster efforts to control the virus by making sure people have support in place so they can stay at home and isolate safely. Plans are currently being made by other local councils to expand support in a similar way in the coming weeks.

This expansion builds upon a number of other initiatives already being run including comprehensive support packages for those who have tested positive for Covid-19, new targeted rapid testing in communities, and local contact tracing support for NHS Test and Trace.

A pilot to test the new service was run in Great Yarmouth recently. The first district to roll out the service was the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk on Friday 8 January and other areas of the county will pilot similar offers.

The service in the King's Lynn and West Norfolk area runs seven days a week. Anyone identified by NHS Test and Trace as a contact will either receive a phone call or be visited by the new service with a wellbeing check and an offer of practical support, including access and signposting to hardship funds, food and help to get prescriptions and shopping. Teams will also be checking that those identified as

being a contact of a positive Covid case know how to access testing if they develop symptoms and understand the current lockdown rules.

Norfolk's other district, borough and city councils are currently working to establish the scope and working practice of their services. [Read the full story here.](#)

- **First Norfolk Covid-19 vaccination centre launches** - The NHS launches its first vaccination centre in Norfolk today at the Castle Quarter shopping centre in Norwich as part of the biggest vaccination programme in NHS history. The centre provides an additional option to the vaccination hubs already successfully delivering vaccinations in local hospitals and by GPs across the county.
- **Guidance for the safe use of places of worship and special religious services and gatherings during the pandemic** - The Government has, on 20 January, updated the [guidance for the safe use of places of worship and special religious services and gatherings](#) during the pandemic in England. This includes amendments to reflect the national lockdown regulations in England and updates to guidance on celebrating religious festivals during the coronavirus outbreak.

Social care

- **Supporting our Care Providers** - We send regular communications to our care providers and you can find this correspondence [here on the NCC website](#). We are frequently updating the [Covid-19 vaccination page for care providers](#) with latest guidance and links to Q&As and have shared a localised version of the national vaccination communications toolkit for care homes. This will also be added to our web page to ensure that all relevant information can be found in one place.
- **Day Services** - Continuing to adapt, flex and respond to change during the pandemic, day services continue to provide either building-based services, outreach or virtual support.

Building-based services:

Learning Disability – 70% services open

Older People/Physical Disabilities – 50% services open

Outreach/virtual support

Learning Disability – 70% of services providing

Older People/Physical Disabilities – 60% of services providing

Mental Health – 100% of services providing

- **Member briefing on reimbursing charges** - As you will be aware this month, Cabinet agreed to introduce an interim amendment to Adult Social Services charging policy, in response to the outcome of judicial review. It was agreed the changes should be back dated to July 2019.

This week the department has written to the people affected by the change, to explain how we are going to reimburse those who are owed money. Those who need letters in the easy read format will be sent them.

At the earliest opportunity, which is in early February, we will be sending everyone a statement which shows whether or not we owe them money, and how much this amounts to. We will also set out what their new weekly contribution will be.

People will be able to either leave this money in their customer account to offset against future payments, or they can ask us to pay it back to them in their bank accounts. We don't hold everyone's bank details so we will show clearly how to contact us if this is what they would prefer.

The process will be similar for people who have direct payments. We will make it clear that any over-payment will not be clawed back – a process we do periodically if NCC contributions to the direct payment account have been built up over time but remain unused.

If any Members have questions from people affected, then do please pass them through so we can answer them. If people are at all worried we have informed them they should ring our financial team on 01603 222133 Option 2.

Over the coming months the department will be engaging with the people affected to review our charging policy. We are initially discussing how best to do this, and to what timescale, with the Disability Norfolk Network Group.

Education, schools and settings

- **Schools** - Data for 19 January 2021 indicates that 98% of the schools are open for vulnerable children and children of critical workers and the attendance rate appears to be consistent since schools were able to reopen on 11 January 2021. There are currently 178 education settings where a positive case has been reported. This figure has reduced from 249 from the start of January where cases have been closed, which is done after 28 days of no further reported cases in the setting. A project is underway to support all asymptomatic testing of staff, in education settings. We have re-established a responsive support system for schools with the district advisers who have received 112 queries since the start of term.
- **Free school meals** - Free School Meal vouchers are now available through a national scheme in place of meal boxes if needed. Schools are also able to order vouchers through EDENRED for half term.
- **Supporting online learning** - Devices are currently being sent to schools to support home learning – an additional 501 devices have been allocated and are due to be delivered this week plus 381 devices being processed via the Norfolk Assistance Scheme and 140 ex NCC devices. A technology support line support by the library service is in place to support learners. More devices will be made available to support children and young people as schools work with families to identify needs. The national Laptop scheme extended to primary schools last week.
- **Post 16's** - the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) continues to rise and is now at 4.4% (761 young people). Our Unknowns have reduced to 1.4% and we continue to track young people who have dropped out of education to confirm their current status. The majority of providers have no plans for a January or February intake of students. There are now weekly meetings with college principals and Public Health colleagues established to support Covid testing in colleges. Norfolk County Council have been accepted as case study local authority for Education to Employment DfE research project together with 10 other LAs and the first meeting took place on 12th January 2021.
- **Early Years** - Currently we have 640 settings open with 9,046 children attending, including 3,263 children of critical workers and 385 vulnerable children. Of those 123 are children with a social worker and 70 with an education health and care plan (EHCP). We have a number of providers that haven't submitted data, so these are being chased.
- **Work complete on expansion of village school** - A £3m extension to a Norfolk primary school is ready to begin welcoming students. Work to build a brand new eight classroom block for Key Stage One students at Hethersett CE VC Primary School finished today (January 18).

The work was part of Norfolk County Council's £20m investment in schools in the area. In 2019, Hethersett VC Junior School was converted to a primary school, increasing the number of school places available there from 240 to 420.

The project to improve facilities at Hethersett CE VC Primary School also includes improvements to the existing accommodation, the provision of a new library, a new office and reception. These latter works are expected to be completed in February as are remaining external works, such as the car park and new pedestrian access from Admirals Way.

Two other schools in the village have benefitted from £20m in County Council funding as part of plans to meet increasing demand for school places. Hethersett Woodside Infant School was converted to a primary school and moved to a new £8m, 420 place building last summer. Hethersett Academy unveiled a new £8m extension in September last year, complete with 17 new classrooms and a state-of-the-art theatre

Business and economy

- **Post EU trading support** - The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has launched a series of new, on demand videos to help businesses familiarise themselves with the new rules and the actions they should take. Businesses can find out more about 18 topics, including importing and exporting, trade,

data, and audit and accounting. [Register now](#) to immediately access the video content. New rules are here – make sure your business is prepared.

The video support subject matter includes:

- Businesses Engaged in Emissions Trading
- Businesses Hiring Overseas Staff
- Businesses Involved in the Horizon 2020 Funding Service
- Businesses Involved with Data
- Businesses Operating Online
- Businesses Preparing and Auditing Financial Accounts
- Businesses who Import and Export
- Businesses Providing Services to EU Markets
- Businesses Shipping Waste between GB and EU
- Businesses Working with Intellectual Property
- Chemical Regulations
- Moving Goods into, out of, or through Northern Ireland
- Placing and Selling Goods on the Market
- REACH Chemical Regulations
- Recognition of Professional Qualifications
- Rules of Origin
- Trade Tariffs

The list of sectors covered includes:

- Aerospace
- Automotive
- Chemicals
- Civil Nuclear
- Construction
- Consumer Goods
- Electronics and Machinery
- Energy
- Life Sciences
- Metals and Other Materials
- Retail
- Services and Investment

For more information on post-EU business support, you can contact 0800 998 1098 and the New Anglia LEP Growth Hub at <https://www.newangliagrowthhub.co.uk/> and 0300 333 6536

General updates

- **Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service** has continued to respond to spate flooding over recent days and would encourage people to only leave their homes for essential reasons. The Service has been instrumental in dealing with the flooding, and during the period 23-28 December 2020 responded to **1067 calls and 571 incidents** in support of residents affected, which represents a 500% and 370% increase respectively from the same period in the previous year.

Furthermore, the service has this week started additional new duties to support NHS colleagues. We now have staff assisting with swab testing and mask fitting at acute hospitals in King's Lynn and Gorleston. This is just one way we are supporting the NHS and partners during the pandemic as we also continue to maintain our own operational fire and rescue service to protect the people of Norfolk.