

## Latest Information, Advice, Useful Links and Service Updates (Updated 11 March 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](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) and [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://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

- **Mental health support for children and young people** - The Government has [announced](#) £79 million funding to expand mental health services for children and young people who have been impacted by the coronavirus outbreak and lockdown. The new funding will support the number of mental health support teams in schools and colleges to increase from 59 to 400 by April 2023.

Mental health support teams provide training sessions and workshops for parents and teachers. They also offer a service where children can text their local mental health support team, with a health professional responding within an hour during the school day offering them advice, and provide families with tips on spotting when children and young people are struggling with their mental health.

Public Health England has a series of dedicated resources on the [Every Mind Matters website](#) to help children and young people, their parents and carers to manage their mental wellbeing, deal with stress and tackle issues like anxiety and uncertainty.

- **Further support for commercial and residential tenants** - The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, has [announced](#) an extension to the ban on bailiff enforced evictions for residential tenants, in all but the most serious circumstances, until at least 31 May.

The requirement for landlords to provide six-month notice periods to residential tenants before they evict will also be extended until at least 31 May. The Government has also confirmed that the ban on commercial evictions will be extended for a further three months to 30 June.

- **Call for evidence to improve health and wellbeing of women in England** On 6 March, the Government [launched](#) a 12-week call for evidence to better understand women's experiences of the health and care system. All women are urged to share their experiences to form the basis of a new Women's Health Strategy. The consultation can be found [here](#).

Launching to coincide with International Women's Day, the call for evidence will form the basis of a government-led Women's Health Strategy, to improve the health and wellbeing of women across England and ensure health services are meeting the needs of women. People who live with and care for women, organisations with experience of providing services for women and those with an expertise in women's health are also encouraged to share their views.

## Information for elected members

- **Webinar on standing for election and campaigning in a coronavirus context** - The Local Government Association (LGA) is hosting a webinar on standing for election and campaigning during the coronavirus outbreak at 2pm on 12 March. The session will look at lessons learned from comparable elections that have taken place in Scotland during the coronavirus outbreak by hearing first-hand how candidates and their campaigners responded in their recent by-elections.

There will also be the opportunity to hear from the Electoral Commission (EC) on their latest available [guidance](#) and resources, with attendees able to directly raise questions and concerns to help inform the EC's work to support the polls. The Cabinet Office will also go over the specific guidance relating to campaigning, which it published recently.

[Further information and sign up is available here.](#)

## Key messages for residents

- **Census Day is 21 March 2021: Census Support has begun in libraries** - Norfolk Libraries are part of the national Census Support Service and Library staff can help support residents to complete their census forms online. We can help people with getting online, getting a new code, and we can even fill the census in for people who may have difficulty completing it online.

Appointments are available face to face in 17 libraries across the county, and we can also offer support by phone.

Face to face appointments with customers are available from Monday 15th March in the following libraries: Wymondham, Thetford, Kings Lynn, Cromer, Hellesdon, Great Yarmouth, Dereham, Swaffham, Loddon, Diss, Downham Market, Hunstanton, Fakenham, North Walsham, Gorleston, Acle & Wroxham.

There will also be appointments available until 6pm, one evening a week, appointments on Saturdays, and appointments on Census Sunday 21st March

To book an appointment with one of our trained Census Support Advisors, phone 01603 774777.

More information about the census can be found at <https://census.gov.uk/>

## Education and settings

- **Free school meal vouchers available during Easter holidays** - Children eligible for free school meals will be offered them during the Easter holidays thanks to Norfolk County Council. A child from a family that received benefits is eligible for a £15 voucher per week, a total of £30 for the entire break.

The one-off funding for the scheme comes from the Department of Work and Pensions' winter hardship support. Norfolk County Council has received an additional £952,000 from the fund, much of which will be used to provide free school meal vouchers during Easter.

Schools can order the food vouchers for pupils using an online service and families can receive the codes by email to redeem themselves or as a voucher provided by post, collection or delivery to families without internet access.

Some schools may also be offering food parcels, parents and carers should contact their school office to see what they are providing.

Children are eligible for the vouchers if their family receives one of the benefits listed below:

- Universal Credit - with an annual earned income of no more than £7,400 after tax
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for the four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Child Tax Credit (with no Working Tax Credit) with an annual gross income of no more than £16,190

Children in years reception to two that receive Universal infant Free School Meals are not eligible as part of the scheme; they have to be eligible for means-tested free school meals.

[This link provides more information and process to apply for free school meals.](#)

- **New school places for children with autism open in Thetford** - The first specialist resource bases (SRB) to open in Norfolk as part of the County Council's investment in special educational needs are welcoming their first students.

Redcastle Primary School and Thetford Academy, part of the Inspiration Trust have benefited from newly refurbished accommodation, extra staffing and professional support to enable children with autism and other associated needs to benefit from the extra support the SRBs can provide. Both bases are open for up to 10 children initially.

SRBs are part of mainstream schools and provide places for children and young people who need extra support to access and thrive in a mainstream school environment.

Hundreds of new special school and SRB places are being created across the county under Norfolk County Council's £120m Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Action Plan Transformation programme, which aims to increase the number of special school places whilst also strengthening support to mainstream schools to ensure children with SEND can thrive in these settings. Work is currently underway to provide a further 90 new places at eight more SRBs in mainstream schools while work is ongoing to create three new schools in Fakenham, Great Yarmouth and Easton.

As well as creating new special school places, free autism support training is being made available to all schools in Norfolk through the Education Psychology and Specialist Support scheme (EPSS).

[See further information on Norfolk County Council's SEND Transformation Programme.](#)

- **Schools-** From Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 all schools and colleges opened to all pupils with the overall attendance rate at 73% compared to an early national benchmark of 69%. Primary school attendance has been extremely positive at 97% for the first 2 days back with secondary attendance increasing from 37% on Monday to 45% on Tuesday due to the majority working to a staggered start to enable initial testing to take place. Testing continues to require attention, so we have provided further information to schools to highlight the actions needed for different scenarios. We have also procured Test-Register software that is being made available free of charge to Norfolk Schools, which will help schools manage onsite and home testing of staff and pupils and has the potential to reduce the test admin burden.
- **Post 16's** - Our numbers show that 813 young people (4.7% of 16 and 17 year-olds) are currently NEET. The launch of the independent travel training TITAN framework is being delivered to schools, colleges and post 16 providers across the county. This will help to embed independent travel training within the curriculum from an early age. Cohorts of young people who are more at risk of becoming NEET (such as home educated or children missing education) have been sent letters offering information, advice and guidance on transition pathways and progression routes.
- **Early Years** - 668 settings open this week with 11,685 children attending. 4,191 were children of critical workers. of which 567 are vulnerable. Of those 185 have a social worker and 99 have an EHCP. We have 157 providers signed up for home testing and they will receive their next delivery of kits from tomorrow. However, DfE are sending home testing kits to all private and voluntary nurseries from tomorrow so we may see this number reduce. We have also invited childminders with assistants to now join the scheme and they were contacted last week.

## Social care

- **Call to Carers campaign has been launched** - Norfolk County Council, in partnership with the NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group and the Eastern Daily Press has launched a new campaign, Call to Carers. Call to Carers aims to identify unpaid carers who may not be registered or known to their GP practice, or to local council services.

It is also reaching out to any paid carers who have not yet been offered the Coronavirus vaccine, to ask them to get in touch. Between now and 31 March, there is a dedicated online form at: [apps.norfolk.gov.uk/carervax](https://apps.norfolk.gov.uk/carervax), for carers to register for a vaccine, and a 24/7 telephone voicemail service on: 01603 257 256. For more information on eligibility and the support that is available, click on this link: [COVID-19 vaccinations offered to unpaid carers of elderly and disabled people across Norfolk and Waveney - Norfolk and Waveney CCG](#).

- **Adult Social Care Recruitment** - February has seen the relaunch of Adult Social Care recruitment campaigns both locally and nationally to raise awareness and attract candidates to work in the sector. Over the coming months you will see various initiatives from print, radio, TV, social media, display marketing and virtual events across Norfolk and Waveney rolling out. The focus of the current campaign is to encourage applicants from other sectors which have been particularly impacted by the pandemic such as retail, hospitality and leisure to explore the opportunities available across Adult Social Care by visiting the Norfolk Care Careers website [www.norfolkcarecareers.co.uk](http://www.norfolkcarecareers.co.uk).

The Norfolk Care Careers Website is a free recruitment platform for all providers of Adult Social Care to advertise their vacancies and a one-stop-shop for candidates looking for jobs and advice and guidance about working in the sector.

- **Supported Housing Accommodation** - Norfolk County Council will be working with partner organisations over the next three years to develop more supported housing for people with learning disabilities, mental health needs, autism and physical disabilities. At the Cabinet meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> March the Council agreed to invest in future housing developments to make sure we get the right type of properties in the right place.

To support this work we are inviting people and families to attend a webinar to talk about our plans and to help shape what the homes should look and feel like. The feedback from these sessions will be used to improve and develop our draft design guide. This is the guide that will be used to describe how all of the new homes should be built. The invitation will be shared with our networks of providers and partners and with people who use our services.

## Business and economy

- **Norfolk Rural Strategy 2021-24 – have your say!** There is still time to have your say on the refresh of the Norfolk Rural Strategy, which aims to address the challenges and opportunities Rural Norfolk faces today. The draft strategy, and the survey about it, can be found [here](#).

**Please pass the survey link onto your networks – the deadline for responses is Friday 19 March.**

- **Support for businesses** - Webinars and videos about trading with the EU are available for councils to share with local stakeholders and businesses. Business travel and mutual recognition of qualifications are both topics explained in the new on demand videos which focus on priority topics for businesses. Businesses can [register here](#) to immediately access the video content.

A [step-by-step guide](#) on how to navigate the new rules on business travel to the EU has also been made available for businesses.

Businesses can also use the [Brexit Checker tool on GOV.UK](#), which will provide a personalised list of the most up to date actions that businesses need to take.

## General updates

- **First look at new Norwich recycling centre as it takes shape** - Construction of one of two new recycling centres for the Greater Norwich area is well underway as pictures taken this week show. A 300 tonne crane is currently on site at the new £2.75m Norwich North recycling centre as sections of what will be a 500,000 litre tank, an integral part of the comprehensive water management system on site, are manoeuvred into place. This tank is the largest of its kind at any of Norfolk's recycling centres and will ensure any surface water runoff stays within the site.

Work on the major project started late last year, and includes a new access road to the recycling centre, which is located on land off the A140/A1270 junction near the airport. The Norwich North recycling

centre, which is set to replace the current Mile Cross recycling centre, is on track to open in autumn 2021. The site will complement the £1.9m Norwich South site, to be built on an underused part of the Harford park and ride site, which is scheduled to replace the smaller Ketteringham recycling centre later this year.

Both the Norwich North and Norwich South sites are at locations with good transport links to make them accessible to as many people as possible in the growing Greater Norwich area.

[Read the full story here.](#)

- **Fire Service recruitment - Could you be our next on-call firefighter?**

We have received extensive media coverage this week around our campaign to recruit more on-call firefighters across Norfolk. Our communities rely on on-call stations, and those staffing them are their own town/village residents, combining a career with us alongside their primary employment.

We currently have more than 35 vacancies across Norfolk and need everyone's support to help us fill these.

If you know someone who could be our next on-call firefighter, they can find all the details on our website [www.norfolk.gov.uk/fire](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/fire) and also sign up to our online Q&A session on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March.