

Latest Information, Advice, Useful Links and Service Updates (Updated 25 February 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

- **Prime Minister sets out roadmap for easing coronavirus restrictions** - On 22 February, the Prime Minister gave a [statement to Parliament](#) on the roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions in England and published the [‘COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021’ roadmap](#). This roadmap sets out how the Government will begin to lift restrictions in England from 8 March, starting with schools and colleges.

It outlines four steps for easing restrictions. Before taking each step, the Government will review the latest data on the impact of the previous step against the following four tests:

1. The vaccine deployment programme continues successfully.
2. Evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated.
3. Infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS.
4. The Government’s assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern.

The four steps for easing restrictions are:

- Step 1 – the priority is to ensure that all children and students return safely to face-to-face education in schools and colleges from 8 March.
- Step 2 – which will be no earlier than 12 April, will see the opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres.
- Step 3 – which will be no earlier than 17 May, the Government will look to continue easing limits on seeing friends and family wherever possible, allowing people to decide on the appropriate level of risk for their circumstances.
- Step 4 – which will take place no earlier than 21 June, the Government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact. Before Step 4 begins, the Government will complete a review of social distancing and other long-term measures that have been put in place to cut transmission.

The roadmap also confirms the Community Testing Programme is being extended until at least the end of June. A new Community Collect model will be launching so that families, small businesses and the self-employed can take away rapid tests from some Government and council sites. People will also soon be able to have rapid lateral flow tests delivered straight to their home, allowing them to carry out tests when it is most convenient.

- **Schools and colleges to reopen from 8 March** - On 22 February the Government set out its plan for the [return of all pupils to schools and colleges](#) as part of the roadmap for leaving lockdown. All students will begin to return to face-to-face education on 8 March with the following testing measures in place:
 - All primary school children will return on 8 March. Primary school staff will continue to take two rapid coronavirus tests each week at home.
 - All secondary school and college students will take three coronavirus tests as they return to the classroom from the 8 March at existing school testing facilities.
 - Secondary school and college staff will also be provided with two tests to use each week at home.
 - University students on practical courses who need to access specialist facilities and equipment can return to in-person teaching and learning from 8 March. Twice weekly testing will continue to be available for all on campus.

The Department for Education has also produced a [‘What you need to know’ blog](#).

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has written an [open letter to parents, carers and guardians](#).

The Education Secretary also announced further elements of the recovery support package to help children and young people catch up on missed learning and development. Details are available [here](#).

- **Care home residents to be allowed one visitor as part of easing of lockdown** - On 20 February, the Government [announced](#) that care home residents will be able to be visited indoors by a single, named individual from 8 March as part of the Prime Minister’s roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions. The scheme will allow a single visitor to hold hands indoors with their relative or contact in a care home and to make repeat visits under carefully designed conditions to keep residents, staff and visitors safe. Every resident will have the opportunity to name one individual, who will be required to have a test beforehand, wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the visit and avoid close contact.
- **Local elections** - The Government have [announced](#) that individuals who need to self-isolate because of coronavirus will still be able to vote in the local elections, following a planned amendment to emergency proxy voting rules published in Parliament.
- **Youth programmes review** - The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is reviewing the programmes and services it supports for young people outside of school including the National Citizen Service, youth clubs, youth volunteering opportunities and local sports/arts groups.
DCMS want to hear from as many young people as possible to inform their policy and have developed a questionnaire in collaboration with the Government’s Youth Steering Group and young inspectors.
The questionnaire is for young people ages 11-18, or up to 25 if they have additional needs (for example Special Educational Needs and Disabilities). The questionnaire is available here: https://dcms.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4SEY9bWviitlBHw. If you have any questions around this questionnaire, please contact youthreview@dcms.gov.uk.
DCMS has also produced an [engagement pack for youth sector organisations](#) to gather views within their organisation and through their networks. The deadline for submissions is 11.59pm on 7 March.

Key messages for residents

- **Renewed appeal for people to participate in testing in Diss and Roydon** - Around 6,100 people living and working in the parishes of Diss and Roydon have now participated in targeted surge testing in the area. More than 2,600 people have been tested at the three mobile testing units since Friday 19 February with around 3,500 home testing kit swabs returned so far of more than 4,000 issued.
Norfolk Public Health and South Norfolk Council have applauded the efforts of local people and remain keen to remind anyone who has collected a home test kit since Friday to complete their test and return

it as soon as possible, and for anyone living and working in the two parishes who has not yet booked a test to do so this week.

The programme of precautionary testing, which was launched on Friday 19 February to identify if there is wider spread of a variant of Covid-19 first identified in South Africa, has seen such a huge community response that targets are being met earlier than expected. Adjustments are now being made to the opening times and dates of drop-off points and the three mobile testing units.

Completed home tests can be dropped off at Midwich Ltd in Vince's Road Diss, IP22 4YT or outside Roydon White Hart/Roydon Church any time between 9am and 7pm today (Wednesday 24 February). From Thursday 25 February, kits can be dropped off daily between 8am and 6pm at Diss Leisure Centre.

Tests can be booked for anyone over the age of 16 who lives or works in the parishes of Diss and Roydon. Bookings can be made from 8pm each day by ringing 119 or visiting www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test with appointments available at two mobile testing sites at:

- Roydon Community Centre, open daily from 10am to 4pm until Sunday 28 February
- Diss Leisure Centre, open daily from 9am to 3pm until Thursday 4 March.

Those who don't have Covid symptoms should click 'yes' when asked 'is the person who needs a test part of a trial or government project?' and then select 'taking part in community testing'. Those who do have Covid symptoms follow the instructions on the website and choose one of the mobile testing units listed above and drive to the testing centre if they can.

Positive tests will be sequenced to identify any further spread of the variant of Covid-19 that is believed to have originated in South Africa, enabling a better understanding of the variant and identifying if there are any more cases of this strand of the virus in the area. Anyone who tests positive must self-isolate immediately with their households and pass on details of their contacts to NHS Test and Trace.

Anyone unable to attend a mobile testing unit or experiencing difficulties with booking a test should contact the South Norfolk help hub on 01508 533933. For further information see www.norfolk.gov.uk/surgetesting

Education and settings

- **Schools** - As of 22nd February 2021 NCC have delivered 4,041 digital devices to children and families as part of the **Every Child Online** campaign. There is ongoing support available through the dedicated technology support line, to help families and households resolve any connectivity or systems issues they may be experiencing.
- **Free School Meals** - Schools, colleges, Early Years and Home Education ordered 27,000 vouchers for the February 2021 half term via NCC EdenRed. We will keep open the NCC EdenRed meal voucher portal and this will be available for schools that may need to use it for local vouchers.
- **Schools Leadership** - Over 100 Head Teachers attended the Education Norfolk Head Teacher Zoom meeting this week which was another good opportunity for Heads to share questions, hear updates and receive additional support. There will be another event next week for Secondary Heads.
- **Post 16's** - The number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) has now risen to 813 and at 4.7% is higher than we have seen in Norfolk in the past 5 years. Young people without a known status of education, employment or training continues to decrease and now stands at below 1%. This indicates that we can be confident that we know who the NEET young people are. We continue to highlight the issues of rising NEET with the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and have been successful in attracting 50 additional places for such young people into Norfolk. Our County is being used by the ESFA as a test case to advocate for the need to have a quicker and more flexible response to the needs of 16–18-year-olds who are not in employment, education or training. Furthermore, Norfolk County Council has been leading a dialogue with the Local Enterprise Partnership and East Coast College on using some remaining ESF funding to provide additional NEET support
- **Early Years** - We have 658 settings open with 9,967 children attending. 39,10 are children of critical workers, of which 513 are vulnerable and of those 173 are children with a social worker, 77 have an EHCP. We are in the process of distributing testing kits to the first 177 settings who have signed up for

workplace testing. We aim to send information to the second cohort of 119 settings this week and private and voluntary nurseries will have access to home testing from 22nd March 2021.

Social care

- **Amendment to Charging Policy** - We have this week written to people affected by the interim amendment to the charging policy agreed by Cabinet, following the outcome of the Judicial Review which found against the county council. Around 2300 letters explaining each individual's position have been sent, together with a Frequently Asked Questions and easy read versions of both letters and the FAQs. If Members have constituents who are concerned, then please encourage them to get in touch with us to talk through their circumstances.

The contact details for the financial assessment team are: 01603 222133 Option 1 or you can email at fab@norfolk.gov.uk. A copy of the letter templates and Frequently Asked Questions can be found on this link <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/start-with-social-care/paying-for-care/pip-reversal>

- **Carers Wellbeing Pack** - We are pleased to be able to say that the Carers Wellbeing Pack online form is now live and available for carers and practitioners to fill in. The link is: <https://forms.norfolk.gov.uk/service/Carers-wellbeing-pack>

Please can you encourage carers to access this resource, which comes with face masks, gloves, hand sanitiser, and some small 'pick me up' items.

It will also include a letter giving them details of Carers Matter Norfolk and other resources which may support them.

Business and economy

- **Webinars and videos for organisations that trade with the EU** - [Webinars and videos](#) about trading with the EU are available to share with local stakeholders and businesses. Topics covered in the webinars include importing and exporting goods, moving goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and details of the Government's cross-border trade forum, designed to help businesses and traders find answers to questions regarding the transition period.

General updates

- **Major demolition work underway for Great Yarmouth's Third River Crossing** - Major demolition works began in Great Yarmouth this week to make way for the town's Third River Crossing, one of the key infrastructure projects for the county being delivered by Norfolk County Council. The Great Yarmouth Third River Crossing will link the A47 at Harfrey's roundabout to the port and the enterprise zone on the other side of the river. The bridge will ease traffic congestion on the town's roads, shortening journey times and improve journey reliability, as well as supporting wider plans and work to maximise investment, regeneration and economic growth opportunities in the town and wider area.

After establishing the construction site throughout January and some early test piling works, the demolition of a number of vacant properties on Queen Anne's Road is now underway, with further demolition planned for Southtown Road and commercial units within the Suffolk Road Enterprise Park in the coming weeks. Further demolition works will then take place on the eastern approach to the former South Denes Car Centre to allow the creation of new approach road structures and walking and cycling routes linked to the new bridge.

All demolition works in this first phase of the construction will be completed by the end of April 2021 with the new bridge due to open to the public in 2023.

[Read the full story here.](#)

- **Budget for investment and recovery agreed** - A £439 million net revenue budget, a £102 million boost for roads and infrastructure and a 3.99 per cent Council Tax rise have been agreed, at Norfolk County Council's full council meeting on Monday 22nd February. The decision means the council will:
 - Raise general Council Tax by the Government's guideline figure – 1.99 per cent – and raise the adult social care precept by two per cent in 2021/22 and one per cent the following year. This

would raise the county council's element of Council Tax by 3.99 per cent, increasing the share of band D bills by £56.43 to £1,472.94 for 2021-22.

- Invest £45.7m to meet cost and other pressures in services, including £28.2m in adult social care, £7m in children's services and £10.5m in community and environmental services
- Set aside £18.8m for Covid 19 costs in 2021-22
- Make savings of £41.2m, including a net £20.4m of new proposals
- Invest £102m in the capital programme, taking the total infrastructure programme to £537.66m. New items include £11.5m for supported housing for young adults, £4m for children's residential homes and investment in the Long Stratton bypass and new libraries.
- Invest £2m in new funding to respond to flooding, including an additional £350,000 in revenue budget provision, £235,000 in highways spending to reduce road flooding risks and £1.5m for the creation of a new flood reserve to fund urgent works, repairs and to enable recommendations from flood investigation reports.
- Increase by £4,000 each councillor's Local Member Fund, taking the total to £10,000 to be made available to local parishes and communities to fund environmental projects
- Provide £3m for improvements to greenways, footpaths and the national and Norfolk Trails network in the county

The budget papers are available [here](#) and you can see a recording of the meeting later this week at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tun_oQ2SVM8.

● **Fire Service update –**

- **Annual Police and Fire Collaboration Report** - We've produced a report highlighting the partnership work undertaken during 2020 between Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service and Norfolk Constabulary. It details projects that are in addition to our usual emergency services collective responses to incidents. It features details of Covid-19 work and how the services adapted training to support our Ambulance colleagues, alongside updates on location sharing, road safety projects and other community safety and education work. You can view the report in the attached PDF.
- **On-call recruitment campaign** - Our service is reliant on on-call firefighters at 39 of our 42 Norfolk fire stations. Next week is our on-call recruitment week where we will be highlighting the role and seeking applications from people in communities. Please could you help us spread the word about the opportunities across Norfolk, which enable people to give something back to their community and combine the role with their primary career. We are reliant on Norfolk residents to take up these posts to help us keep Norfolk as safe as possible. A recent increase in home working means more people may now be available in some of the rural areas during the day and could be perfect for the job. We'll be highlighting staff stories via our Facebook and Twitter channels next week. More details about on-call careers are also available at www.norfolk.gov.uk/fire

If you know anyone who may be up for a new challenge, please let them know! Following the week, we'll be hosting a live question and answer session for those wanting to find out more.

This will be held at 7pm on Thursday 18th March and you can register for details by emailing marketing@norfolk.gov.uk