

## Coronavirus Latest Information, Advice and Useful Links (Updated 16 April 2020)

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.

The Norfolk Resilience Forum continues to drive our local response through multi-agency strategic and tactical cells.

**Keep up to date:** We have [a dedicated webpage for coronavirus updates](#) in Norfolk, and impacts on Norfolk County Council services. This is updated regularly so please do re-visit this page.

### Trusted sources of information

- The most recent **verified data on cases in the UK and Norfolk** is available from Public Health England [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.
- PHE is addressing **common questions** on its [Public Health Matters blog](#).

### Latest national announcements

- The latest information on the **government response** can be found [here](#).
- Nearly 200 members of the armed forces are being loaned to NHS ambulance services to support their work during the pandemic, the Ministry of Defence has announced.
- Former Olympics Director, [Chris Townsend OBE appointed](#) to lead the cross government shielding programme in England.
- Expert Working Group has concluded there is currently insufficient evidence to establish a link between use of [ibuprofen and susceptibility to contracting COVID-19](#) or the worsening of its symptoms.
- All [care home residents and social care staff with coronavirus \(COVID-19\) symptoms will be tested](#) as capacity is built up, the government has announced. The measures confirmed are outlined further in the government's [coronavirus social care action plan](#), and will help give residents, their families and those that they care for peace of mind.
- A [consultation](#) has been published on exceptional arrangements for awarding GCSEs, AS, A levels, Extended Project Qualification and Advanced Extension Award in maths.
- The government has outlined the purpose of a new NHS app for contact tracing which will allow those who become unwell with the symptoms of coronavirus, to securely tell this new NHS app - the app will then send an alert anonymously to other app users that they have been in significant contact with over the past few days so that they know and can act accordingly. The app is currently in testing phase.

### Public information – Key messages for residents

- **Mental health helpline goes live** - Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) has set up a 24/7 helpline offering immediate support for mental health difficulties during the coronavirus pandemic. The freephone number, which is staffed by mental health professionals from the Trust, will provide reassurance, self-help advice, support and signposting designed to prevent people from going to the region's emergency departments (EDs) during the crisis.

**It is available to members of the public of any age**, regardless of whether they are an existing NSFT service user. The line is also open to other healthcare professionals, such as ambulance staff and GPs, as well as social care colleagues and police personnel who may need advice when working with individuals who are undergoing mental health difficulties or may wish to refer someone.

The helpline is available on **0808 1963494**. Callers will hear a recorded message instructing them to press either 1 or 2, depending on whether they are a professional or member of the public, and will then be connected to a mental health practitioner.

- **‘Looking out for each other’** – PHE has launched [a campaign to inform those who are well and not at risk](#), on the things that they can do to help support their friends and neighbours who need to stay at home because of Coronavirus (COVID-19). The Looking Out For Each Other assets explain how people can help friends, family and neighbours in isolation safely. They direct to [www.gov.uk/safehelp](http://www.gov.uk/safehelp) for more information. The assets explain that if you are well, you should only leave the house for one of four reasons, including to provide care or to help a vulnerable person. They also tell you what actions you should take to help vulnerable people safely.

## PPE

- Members will be aware that there has been a global shortage of PPE and in particular of masks and visors.
- Nevertheless, the council has been able to provide its staff with PPE in accordance with Public Health England (PHE) guidance.
- The council has so far issued the following quantities of equipment to its own staff:

Aprons	44,750
Gloves	148,560
Sanitiser	6,500 bottles, various sizes
Soap	1,000 litres per week
Thermometers	100
Visors	5000
Disinfectant	>1000 litres
Surgical masks	19,000

- The council currently has 300,000 masks on order via a local a further and million masks from China which should arrive over the remainder of April and in early May.
- PPE is distributed by the an NCC team to primary care and social care organisations with the most urgent needs.

## Community support

- **Covid-19 Community Response Fund** – Funding gathered through the Norfolk Community Foundation appeal is being rolled out to transform support for the vulnerable. [Find out more](#) about some of the ways how donations have been put to use immediately to help people in our local communities, including support to get essential supplies to vulnerable people, helping people affected by domestic abuse during the lockdown and help for people with special educational needs. The appeal is still live and people can continue to donate via the [Norfolk Community Foundation website](#).

## Education, Schools and Settings

- **School’s opened/closed** - Approximately 330 schools in Norfolk remain open for key workers and vulnerable children, with approx. 100 schools closed in Norfolk, almost all due to not having any demand for children of key workers. Over the Easter holidays those schools have remained open for key worker children only.
- **School Provision** - Since the emergency COVID-19 school policy taking affect we have received 52 contacts from parents/carers, concerning 73 children, where the parent or carer believes they are entitled to a place, but their school was not providing this. Cluster Advisers have been able to work with schools to resolve these queries and find placements for 46 children either in their own or a local alternative school. There have been 20 occasions to date when we have supported the school’s original decision as the parent/carer was not eligible under the Gov guidance for school placements. In general, we have been able to resolve each query within 2-3 days, with a couple of outstanding queries due to the parent being uncontactable. As of 9<sup>th</sup> April, there are 3 live queries which cluster advisers are dealing with. Examples of queries we have been able to help with include:

- NHS worker at Queen Elizabeth Hospital with daughter at Kings Lynn junior school: alternative place found at a neighbouring school.
- Mother works at a residential care home for vulnerable children and father in RAF. Three children at Thetford primary school which was closed when the boiler broke: alternative space found at local primary academy.
- Parents in food production and postal service with sons at Dereham infant schools: alternative placements made available through partnership with another local primary.
- **Parental queries** - We have also received an additional 20 calls relating to other aspects of school provision which have been passed off to other teams. These included queries relating to independent and special schools, and school admissions
- **Early Years Provision** - Approximately 250 early years providers remain open over the Easter period, with approx. 900 children of key workers and 100 vulnerable children in attendance. Staffing is becoming an issue as staff go into self-isolation, and we are working with providers to facilitate staff support. We are also providing further support for early years setting to remain open, including financial, staffing and food/catering support. Parents requesting information on settings are being directed to the Norfolk Community website, which contains details of all settings open, both over Easter and in the summer term
- **Free School Meals** - The Government advice for free school meals changed this week and the voucher scheme was extended to cover the Easter holiday period. We have since updated our information and FAQ's to reflect this change. The process for parents accessing the vouchers is complex, and we are providing information to the Customer Service Centre so they can help parents with this.
- **Contingency Planning** - We have now developed a contingency plan in the event of a significant reduction in school capacity across the county. This plan covers the progressive steps we may need to take to consolidate school provision across clusters and then districts, with a worst-case scenario of prioritising school and childcare provision for NHS staff children in locations adjacent to the 3 main hospitals in Norfolk (Norwich, Kings Lynn, and Gorleston).
- **Vulnerable Children** - The number of Vulnerable Children attending school prior to the Easter break was relatively low. In response to this we have developed a re-engagement strategy to increase the number of Vulnerable Children attending school after Easter where this is appropriate. This focuses on how we can mitigate any barriers that schools might face in taking children with very complex, sometimes behavioural needs back into school. Working with Social Care teams and individual schools we will ensure those children most in need of a school place, i.e. those children with a social worker, are able to secure places first.
- **Children not on a school roll** - Processes have been developed to monitor the online/home learning provision for all children not on a school roll, as well as monitoring the welfare of all post 16's not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Weekly welfare checks are now in place for all 16-18 year old's who are NEET.

## Children and Young People

- **Scheduled Childrens Social Care reassurance conversation** took place with Ofsted regional lead last week, with confirmation that our plans, performance and practice guidance are robust.
- **Staffing availability of Social Workers and Family Support Practitioners**, albeit diminished, remains stable from the previous week, and frontline support and protection services continue to be delivered to children, young people and families on caseloads. Practice 'Quick Guides' have been developed to support the overall Covid 19 Practice Guidance issued, providing critical pointers of safeguarding effectively in a virtual environment.
- Although still at much lower levels than seen ordinarily, demand at our front door has continued to rise from first full week of pandemic. Publicity campaigns have gone live, and with plans for a dedicated child and young person line/text number being progressed, suggests demand should increase further over the coming days.
- **Out of hours Emergency Duty Team** has been significantly bolstered over the bank holiday weekend, with Childrens Social Care managers and staff providing additional capacity to respond, and intervene where necessary, to welfare concerns as well as urgent safeguarding matters.

## Business and Self-Employment Support

- **Council partners offer support to county's vital businesses** - The [Council are keen to hear from crucial businesses](#) involved in the supply of food and medicine about their ability to maintain these essential services throughout the pandemic and invite them to complete the survey.

The survey is being circulated to butchers, green grocers and pharmacies across the county, to better understand the impact COVID-19 is having on their current and future business, and seek to ensure that appropriate support is put in place.

Businesses can complete the survey [here](#) or in the 'Support for Business' zone on the Council's website at [www.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus) where you can access a range of help and advice.

- **Claiming a grant through the coronavirus Self-employment Income Support Scheme** – The government has provided [further information on the scheme for the self-employed or a member of a partnership in the UK who have lost income due to coronavirus](#) (COVID-19). This scheme will allow individuals to claim a taxable grant worth 80% of your trading profits up to a maximum of £2,500 a month. It will be available for 3 months, but may be extended. The grant will be subject to Income Tax and National Insurance contributions but does not need to be repaid.

HMRC has detailed [here](#) how they will work out income and profits if you're self-employed or a member of a partnership in the UK and have lost profits due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

**NB.** The online service used to claim is not available yet. HMRC will aim to contact individuals by mid May 2020, and will make payments by early June 2020.

## Service updates

- **INFORMATION ON ALL SERVICE DISRUPTIONS AND CLOSURES CAN BE FOUND [HERE](#)**