

Update for borough and parish councillors

Stay at home, save lives, protect our NHS

It is essential that people stay at home, especially this weekend and over the Easter weekend. Please help us to remind people of the vital importance of this and reiterate the **'stay home, save lives, protect our NHS'** message.

Following the Government's announcement, the Coronavirus lockdown guidelines are that you must not leave your house except to:

- Shop for essentials, as infrequently as possible
- Receive medical treatment or provide care
- Travel to and from work, if it's impossible to work from home
- Exercise outdoors once per day, alone or with household members.

DEFRA have added to this message to remind people to only go to local parks, and to shop locally, to avoid any unnecessary travel

Remember when out of your house, stay 2m away from other people and wash your hands as soon as you get home and before touching or eating food.

Everyone must comply with these measures.

Latest updates

Here are this week's latest updates:

Business assistance

We are pleased to be able to report that at the close of play on 9 April 2020, 1092 businesses had been supported with grants to the value of £13,935m.

In addition, 1055 businesses have now been awarded the expanded retail discount of 100% on their business rates and new zero bills have been issued. This has a combined value of £20,930,227 for those businesses.

As of 9 April, the team are working on verification forms completed on 6 April. If your business hasn't completed the verification form yet visit west-norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus and click on the link for business assistance. When completing the verification form, please provide the necessary evidence or your bank details when prompted on the form to speed up the processing of the grant.

Housing Benefit

The Government announced that it would be increasing the Local Housing Allowance in April. We have now updated all 1349 eligible claims. This has resulted in an additional

£11,950 per week (£623,000 per year) being paid in housing benefit, directly increasing the income of those vulnerable households.

Changes to garden and food waste collections

Waste and refuse teams in west Norfolk are working to new advice on social distancing. This will affect collections from week commencing 6 April 2020.

Garden waste collections (brown bins) have been reinstated but food waste needs to be placed in your black bin as your food caddy will not be collected.

Due to smaller waste teams they will be unable to collect your separate food waste, please place this in your black bin. It will not be possible to collect side waste or garden waste that has been bagged. Please feed any excess garden waste into your brown bin over the next couple of collections.

To keep up to date with any service changes please visit west-norfolk.gov.uk/yourbins or follow borough council social media channels.

Please share this message with people who may not use the internet or may not be able to get hold of a local paper as there have been a number of grey food waste bins presented and not emptied this week because the message has not got through.

Community co-ordinating hub established and help getting out to those most in need (Press Release attached)

Council's across Norfolk and the rest of the country have been setting up community hubs so that the promised government support can get through to those most in need in our communities. This includes providing food essentials, collecting prescriptions and medicines, ensuring that people feel safe and making sure they know who they can turn to in their times of need.

The Government announced it would be stepping in to directly support about 1.5 million people identified as vulnerable across the country, and council's across Norfolk are actively contacting those people identified in their districts.

But public services in Norfolk were aware that the list would not identify everyone in their communities who need support. A Norfolk-wide helpline was established and community volunteers, local charities and council staff stand by to assist those who need it and are not being helped already.

Letters were sent out to every resident by all Norfolk councils, referring them to the helpline number 0344 800 8020 if they feel they need assistance for essential food items or medicines, or wellbeing support. Calls to this line go through a triage process so that people are directed to the organisation that can help. The county-wide helpline is open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and for emergencies on Saturday and Sunday between 10am and 4pm.

****During the Easter weekend the opening times will be Friday and Monday 10am-4pm, and open for emergencies only on Saturday and Sunday.**

West Norfolk residents encouraged to make the most of garden activities (Press Release attached)

According to the Royal Horticultural Society, not only is composting the most environmentally-friendly way of dealing with garden waste and some kitchen waste, it also results in compost that can be used as an 'excellent soil improver.'

Composting also has the advantage that it can be done all year round and you don't have to be a keen gardener to be able to compost.

It's not just adults who may want to be getting out into the garden at this time of year and whilst we stay home and stay safe this April, there is a whole host of activities which children can enjoy in the garden. An extensive list of ideas and web links are on the press release.

Lots of things to do while staying at home (Press Release attached)

As the Covid-19 outbreak changes the lives of everyone in west Norfolk the borough council is providing a range of activities this Easter that people can do while at home.

The team at Stories of Lynn have created 'The Reprocessors' Challenge' and are encouraging children to reduce, reuse and recycle rubbish and upcycle it in creative ways.

The Reprocessors' Challenge can be found at storiesoflynn.co.uk/learning-during-isolation/

Alive West Norfolk have new videos on their Facebook page of free classes that residents can try at home to stay in shape during the lock-down. Already posted are videos on body combat in 4 minutes, a yoga session, fat burning exercises, pilates and live streaming of a cardio class. More videos and live streams will be added over the next few weeks.

The Love West Norfolk campaign is encouraging people to enjoy a 'virtual West Norfolk' by sharing pictures and films that have been taken previously in the area. These will be shared on social media channels.

There's a list of activities on the asklily.org.uk website that people can search through to find things to do on their own or with the families at home. A quick internet search will bring up loads of other ideas. If you have any great ideas please tell us on social media and we will share them. This sort of interaction can really help people's personal wellbeing

Stay at home this Easter (Press Release attached)

Easter weekend is on its way, and according to the forecast the weather will be dry and sunny. This is an opportunity for everyone to relax but remember lock-down restrictions still apply, requiring us all to stay at home. It is vital you do not meet up with family or friends.

Please do not be tempted to take a drive out to the coast or a beauty spot. You must stay in your local area to take your daily exercise including walking, jogging or a bike ride.

You should not take the nice weather or the long weekend as an opportunity to BBQ, picnic or sunbath in public spaces. Please do enjoy these activities in your garden but only with members of your household.

We also urge people against travelling to second homes for weekends and holidays in case they spread the disease and put extra pressure on local hospital and ambulance services. Households should all stay where they have been isolating and not be tempted to move between homes.

In addition to the press release and social media activity, signage has been placed on the roadside from the Hardwick roundabout up the main coastal road, reminding people to stay home. The events boards at Hunstanton has been updated with the same message and the variable messaging boards on approach roads into King's Lynn town centre also carry this message.

Appeal for PPE

An appeal has been launched to urge businesses and communities across Norfolk to help secure supplies of Personal Protective Equipment for workers in vital services. Councils and organisations across the county are backing the drive to ensure stocks of PPE are available in the coming weeks and months.

Whilst the Government has significantly increased deliveries of PPE into Norfolk – local businesses can still play an important role.

With many small businesses currently closed, any PPE equipment such as masks, disposable gloves, aprons, eye goggles, overshoes and hand sanitising gel can be used for the front line staff who are caring for our most vulnerable residents and keeping our vital services operating.

If your business can help, please complete the simple contact form at <https://newanglia.co.uk/data-capture-for-ppe-supply-during-covid/>

Council Tax

The Government announced a £500m hardship fund which will allow those of working age in receipt of Council Tax Support to receive up to £150 in grant reduction on their council tax. This will be applied to eligible accounts and revised bills will be sent in due course.

We know this is a difficult and worrying time for everyone and that for many finances are becoming increasingly stretched. Anyone who is struggling to pay their council tax should get in touch to see how we can help, by telephoning 01553 616200, option 2, to discuss further.

Deliveries

If you have any businesses in your area that are able to provide deliveries of groceries, sanitary products, cleaning products, or baby products (nappies and formula), for people who are isolated and unable to leave the house, but able to pay, please ask them to get in touch with us and we will help promote them on the askLily website. Please ask them to email communications@west-norfolk.gov.uk with their name, what they can provide, and how people can contact them.

Dog Mess Bins

We apologise but the regularity of collections of dog poo bins has reduced due to pressure on our services in these unprecedented times. People can bag their dog poo as normal and place it in their black bin at home.

Grounds maintenance and street cleansing

As a council we are pooling all our resources. Our priority is refuse and cleansing services, along with closing play areas and installing appropriate signage for the safe use of open areas and allotments. It is important to maintain some level of grounds maintenance in order to provide a clean and safe environment for those who are doing their daily exercise. However, staff working on these duties are on alert that at any time they could be redeployed to other duties and grounds maintenance will be reduced or stopped. Staff have been instructed to ensure they maintain social distancing at all times, please respect this.

If you have play areas in your parish that have not been closed, please make sure they are closed and that appropriate signage is put in place.

Homelessness

Over the Easter weekend, anyone homeless needing assistance should contact the council on the our of hours number 01553 616601. If you are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, please let the council know as soon as possible.

Neighbourhood support

With many more people now working from home, we are keen to encourage everyone to be respectful of their neighbours, for example, by keeping noise levels down or not having bonfires which may be disruptive. We would ask too that people look out for neighbours – safely – who may not have anyone checking on them.

Staff

There are many, many frontline and keyworker staff who are undertaking enormous efforts to keep services running, right across the borough council and in other organisations. We are extremely grateful to everyone who is making a difference for our community at this time and we are keen to shine a light on these efforts wherever possible.

Alive West Norfolk staff have already opened their doors to provide activities and care to enable key workers at the NHS and the council to continue to provide essential duties. This has really helped many people who are working so hard to care for all of us.

Universal Credit

We are aware that there has been an increase in the number of people seeking Universal Credit. If anyone has any concerns about Universal Credit, for example being sanctioned if they can't attend an appointment due to self-isolating, they can call their enquiry line 0800 328 9344.

Borough Council service impacts

All of our service impacts can be found here: www.west-norfolk.gov.uk/coronavirus

Please remember our council offices are no longer accepting visits from the public. People can contact us through Live Chat on our website, or by calling us on 01553 616200. Anyone needing to provide documents can post and drop these into the letterbox which is emptied daily.

If you require specific information about any of the issues raised in this update, please contact communications@west-norfolk.gov.uk

Useful contacts and information

Business Support

- The government advice for businesses is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
- The Growth Hub from the New Anglia LEP offers free, expert advice for any business in Norfolk and Suffolk and the advisers are able to signpost employers and employees to details of the new Government support schemes. They're a valuable additional resource. Please call them on 0300 333 6536 or email growthhub@newanglia.co.uk
- You can follow @newanglialep and @angliahub for tweets with links to the latest Government guidance and updates.

Health advice

The best places for health advice are:

- NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Public Health England - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Norfolk County Council

- A single dedicated web page is being developed and details of this will be shared once it is ready. In the meantime the Norfolk County Council website is a useful and trusted resource: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/coronavirus>

Volunteering

- We know that there are many people keen to help out at this time which is very much welcomed. If you are able to volunteer some of your time to assist others in your community, we really need your help. If you are a business and can help with services, vehicles or other resources, we would love to hear from you, as together we really can make a difference. Individuals who want to volunteer should visit www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk and businesses should email covidbusinessresponse@voluntarynorfolk.org.uk
- If any groups have set themselves up in your village or parish, please encourage them to get in touch with the Lily team at asklily@west-norfolk.gov.uk so that we can support each other through this. They may be able to assist the group with help, advice and support, and the group may be able to help individuals that are referring through the countywide helpline. Anything you can do to promote this would be very helpful.