**Coronavirus (COVID 19)**

**Briefing for Norfolk County Council elected members Friday 20 March 2020**

*The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to be a rapidly evolving situation and these regular briefings intend to provide elected members with access to the latest available information.*

The Chief Medical Officer has confirmed there are now cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Norfolk. The most recent data from PHE is here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-track-coronavirus-cases>. Sadly, the first death from the virus was recorded in the morning of 19 March.

The social distancing measures and closure of schools set out by the Prime Minister this week require a huge effort from all of us to slow the spread of the virus. The Norfolk Resilience Forum continues to drive our local response through multi-agency strategic and tactical cells.

1. **Recent Government action**

The latest information on the Government’s response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>

* [**£2.9 billion funding to strengthen care for the vulnerable**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-9-billion-funding-to-strengthen-care-for-the-vulnerable?utm_source=ef67b5cf-9df0-4ebc-9535-6d42602f3545) **(19 March)** - The funding will help patients who no longer need urgent hospital treatment to return home
* [**Plans set out to support pupils eligible for free school meals**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-set-out-to-support-pupils-eligible-for-free-school-meals) **(19 March)**
* [**Government agrees measures with energy industry to support vulnerable people through COVID-19**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-agrees-measures-with-energy-industry-to-support-vulnerable-people-through-covid-19) **(19 March)** – funding to councils to help them respond to other coronavirus pressures across all the services they deliver.
* [**Ban on evictions and additional protection for renters**](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/complete-ban-on-evictions-and-additional-protection-for-renters) **(18 March)** - Emergency legislation to suspend new evictions from social or private rented accommodation while this national emergency is taking place and landlords will also be protected.

1. **Local response**

**Norfolk Resilience Forum: Health and Social Care Cell**

* Message from Cllr Bill Borrett, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention and Chairman of Health and Wellbeing Board: “Locally we are following the Government’s advice and guidance on approaches to supress the impact of the outbreak. Under the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) we have convened a Health and Social Care Cell which is mobilising a multi-agency strategic response to the impact of the coronavirus.”

**School closures**

* Schools and academies had been planning for potential closure and will communicate their plans with parents via their usual routes. This will include how they will set work and how parents can support their children’s learning.
* Schools will remain open for the children of key workers and those children who are the most vulnerable. The council is updating schools on Government guidance on the definition of key workers.
* The [service disruptions and closures web page](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/safety/service-disruptions) provides the latest information, including an [FAQ](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/schools/education-news).

**Supporting carers**

* To ensure that informal (unpaid) carers, who are looking after vulnerable people, are supported, we have advice available on the [NCC website](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/coronavirus/supporting-vulnerable-people) with relevant contact information, including our [In My Place Carers Emergency Service](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/en/Care-support-and-health/Get-help-with-looking-after-someone/Support-for-carers/Sign-up-for-a-carers-emergency-card).
* Our commissioned service, Carers Matter Norfolk, are developing more contingency plans and new ways to support carers at this time.

**NorseCare**

* NorseCare (covering 23 Residential Homes and 14 Housing with Care schemes) have implemented the following measures:
* Lock-down for all but essential visitors in the homes and schemes which as of Phase 2 includes friends and families, we do have a sign off procedure for particularly sensitive situations such as where somebody is receiving end of life care.
* Screening upon entry to the homes for all visitors who are deemed essential including all of our staff, health professionals and essential contractors.
* Enhanced infection control and cleaning regimes.
* Action cards for CV ‘scenarios’ for homes advising what to do in various situations including, of course if residents have CV-19 symptoms.
* Regular updates and clear guides on changing Government and CQC advice regarding the situation.
* Regularly updated advice for staff on self-isolation and what to do if they have symptoms.
* Trying to secure sufficient qualities of all PPE, this has been a significant challenge, particularly the face masks. The central Government stock has started to arrive and many of homes have today received a good supply from them, we hope to have the rest covered shortly.
* Various other Phase 3 plans including redeploying displaced Norse Group staff into care roles, working on fast track recruitment and training procedures to get people into care roles, altering Head Office roles to help with the front-line care and whole system response.
* Implementing tech solutions in the homes to prepare for both assistance with resident and family contact during the lock-down but also the Government’s request to prepare for non-direct health consultations with GPs via skype etc.
* Offering full support to NCC on combining with Health partners, the LA and others to help with the crisis.

**Scam Alert Coronavirus safety**

* We want to help keep the people of Norfolk up to date by highlighting scams which are using the current situation as part of their approach. The [NCC website](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/business/trading-standards/scams/consumer-alerts) has been updated with the latest information and advice.

**Hospital appointments**

* The James Paget University Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital King’s Lynn have both set-up dedicated phone lines for people to call if they have questions about their appointments, procedures or visiting the hospital.
* **James Paget University Hospital:** 01493 453300. At this time appointments and procedures are currently going ahead as planned at the James Paget.
* **Queen Elizabeth Hospital:** 01553 214545 - operational 9am-3pm Monday to Friday. The hospital is now carrying out some consultations over the phone. Staff are contacting patients if they do still want them to attend hospital for their planned appointment or procedure. If patients have a routine appointment booked and they have not been contacted, they will be called at their appointment time for a phone consultation.

**Service Disruptions and Closures -** The latest updates are on the [NCC website](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/safety/service-disruptions)

* **Libraries to close from Saturday at 4pm -** With the Government advising people to avoid group contact, the county council has decided to close library buildings – except those offering registration appointments.

1. **Messages to the public**

A guide is being developed for councillors to support those affected by the coronavirus and give advice on how residents can help others. This will be circulated via the briefing on Monday.

* Residents wanting to help **–** [advice is on NCC website.](https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/adults-health/coronavirus/how-you-can-help)
* Voluntary Norfolk will be using their volunteering portal to gather the various roles that are needed in the sector. This can be found here: <https://www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk/volunteering/> More options will be added as gaps arise.

1. **Useful Links**

Updated or new guidance:

* [**A summary of guidance for local government settings**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government)

**Norfolk County Council - Public Health**