



## Latest Information, Advice, Useful Links and Service Updates (Updated 28 January 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

- **Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus** – On 26 January, the Prime Minister gave a [statement](#) on coronavirus.
- **New strategy to protect children from sexual abuse** - On 22 January, the Government published a new [national strategy to protect children from all forms of child sexual abuse](#). The Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy sets out how the Government will use new legislation and enhanced technology to stop offenders. The Government will also support local areas to improve their response to exploitation with funding for The Children's Society's Prevention Programme initiative.

### Key messages for residents

- **National lockdown: Stay at home** - Go to [GOV.UK for a full list of restrictions](#) and when you can leave your home.  
You should always stay local if leaving home - unless it's necessary to go further, for example to go to work. Stay local means stay in the village, town, or part of the city where you live.  
If you have any of the [coronavirus symptoms](#) you must self-isolate straightway and [get a test](#). You must continue to isolate if you test positive or are told to isolate by NHS Test and Trace.  
You can be fined up to £10,000 if you do not isolate. [Get support to self-isolate](#).

### Covid-19

- **Slow fall in Covid cases means no room for complacency** - Covid cases are starting to fall across Norfolk – but the rate of reduction is slow and we can't ease restrictions yet. That is the message from Norfolk's director of public health, Dr Louise Smith, who is urging people to continue to follow the Government's guidelines and get vaccinated, when an appointment is offered.  
Norfolk's Covid rate has dipped below 400 for the first time in weeks, to 377 per 100,000.  
Dr Smith said: "It's encouraging to see cases starting to fall across every part of Norfolk due to the national lockdown restrictions. We cannot be complacent – the drop is slow and numbers could quickly move the other way if we started to ease off. That's why it's so important to keep following the rules, as challenging as that is for everyone. It's really encouraging to see the roll-out of the vaccination

programme, so that gives us the longer-term hope that we can slowly return to something closer to normal.”

County council leader Councillor Andrew Proctor said: “In this sombre week, as Norfolk’s Covid death toll passed 1,000, we have some cause for hope. With cases starting to fall and the vaccination programme gearing up, there is the prospect of a brighter 2021. But it may take several months yet and we need to keep following rules – hands, face, space and following the lockdown restrictions to the letter.”

The vaccination programme is led and delivered by NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Melanie Craig, Chief Executive, NHS Norfolk & Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group, said: “The rapid rollout of our COVID-19 vaccination programme continues and we now have 26 sites across Norfolk and Waveney offering the COVID-19 vaccine: three hospital hubs, 21 PCN sites, one large vaccination centre and one pharmacy.

“We have vaccinated residents and staff in 95% of care homes for the over 65s in Norfolk and Waveney/North Suffolk. Risk assessments have been completed for homes that haven’t been visited due to an outbreak of COVID-19 and for the small number of cases where residents or staff were not able to be vaccinated at the point in time the team attended, or due to safety restrictions, mobile roving teams will return to vaccinate them at the earliest possible opportunity.

“I would also like to take this opportunity to reassure everyone in the over 80s and over 70s groups that if you have not had a letter from your GP practice inviting you to book an appointment, please don’t worry, you have not been forgotten. You will be contacted by your GP practice or via the national NHS booking system to a large-scale vaccination centre.

“If you have received a letter from the national NHS booking system and have already booked an appointment with your GP at a local GP led site, I would urge you to keep that appointment. It’s also really important that you attend your appointment at the vaccination site offered to you wherever you can, so that we can make sure as many people are protected from COVID-19 as soon as possible.

“Finally, it’s vital that even after your first and subsequent second dose, you continue to follow the COVID-19 rules and continue to think hands, face and space.”

In other developments:

- Rapid lateral flow tests, which provide a result within 30 minutes, are being rolled out in Norfolk, to pick up symptom free cases
- People who receive a positive result from the rapid tests no longer need to have that confirmed by a PCR test – so their self-isolation and the contact tracing process can start immediately
- The county council has continued to support the NHS and care sector through mutual aid. In addition to around 50 firefighters, 40 other council staff are being provided to the NHS this week, including 20 staff to provide non-specialist support on hospital wards at Norfolk Community Health and Care, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. District council colleagues are also providing support to the NHS.

## Social care

- **Learning Disability Partnership (LDP) and Norfolk All-Age Autism Partnership (NAP)** - Norfolk County Council established two partnerships to better understand the views and needs of its Learning Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder populations. These partnerships work with statutory bodies, the voluntary sector, advocacy services and experts by experience to contribute to and fulfil the Autism Strategy and Learning Disability strategy through coproduction. The NAP has just launched its website to support a wider range of people to express their views and engagement with the partnership and also has training available for the public to raise autism awareness.

To find out more about NAP, visit: [Home - Norfolk Autism Partnership](#)

To find out more about the LDP, visit: [Learning Disabilities Partnership Board - Norfolk County Council](#)

- **Carers** - Quality Assurance of Carers Assessments completed by the new enhanced service are complete and results were positive with work of a good standard. These checks will continue on a monthly basis for the next 6 months. Front line Social Care teams continue to undertake welfare calls

with carers during the pandemic, to ensure they have access to timely advice, information and support and to reduce risk of carer breakdown. We are working closely with Suffolk County Council to explore how we can use digital innovations to connect isolated Carers and their Cared for, to advice, information and support.

- **Member briefing on reimbursing charges** - As you will be aware this month, Cabinet agreed to introduce an interim amendment to Adult Social Services charging policy, in response to the outcome of judicial review. It was agreed the changes should be back dated to July 2019. This week the department has written to the people affected by the change, to explain how we are going to reimburse those who are owed money. Those who need letters in the easy read format have been sent them.

At the earliest opportunity, which is in early February, we will be sending everyone a statement which shows whether or not we owe them money, and how much this amounts to. We will also set out what their new weekly contribution will be. People will be able to either leave this money in their customer account to offset against future payments, or they can ask us to pay it back to them in their bank accounts. We don't hold everyone's bank details so we will show clearly how to contact us if this is what they would prefer.

The process will be similar for people who have direct payments. We will make it clear that any over-payment will not be clawed back – a process we do periodically if NCC contributions to the direct payment account have been built up over time but remain unused.

If any Members have questions from people affected, then do please pass them through so we can answer them. If people are at all worried we have informed them they should ring our financial team on 01603 222133 Option 2

Over the coming months the department will be engaging with the people affected to review our charging policy. We are initially discussing how best to do this, and to what timescale, with the Disability Norfolk Network Group.

## Education, schools and settings

- **Schools' attendance information** is being received regularly from almost all schools. There has been a slight increase in the number of school unable to complete the survey on a daily basis which is indicative of the pressure schools are under with reduced capacity. We are following up where schools do not complete the survey. Last week the response rate from Norfolk schools was between 86%-88%. Almost all schools are fully open to vulnerable children. Attendance overall last week was 20% in primary schools, 5% in secondary schools and 29% in special schools. Attendance of children of critical workers is 65% (64% in primary, 65% in secondary). Attendance of children with a social worker is 41% (50% in primary, 27% in secondary) and of children with an EHCP is 30% (42% in primary, 21% in secondary). All schools report that they are meeting the DfE expectations for remote learning in full.

Across Norfolk, 9 schools closed due to Covid related reasons for at least one day last week.

- **Free School Meals** - Norfolk County Council has extended its free school meal voucher scheme to make sure no child goes hungry this February half term. A child from a family that receives benefits is eligible for a £15 voucher for the week. The last time the voucher scheme ran over the Christmas period, Norfolk County Council issued more than 27,000 vouchers and we are estimating the uptake will be similar this half term. Schools can order the supermarket gift cards for pupils using an online service and families can receive the codes by email to redeem themselves or as a gift card 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. For more information and to apply for free school meals, visit the Norfolk County Council [website](#).

- **Digital devices for online learning** - Our **Every Child Online** campaign for digital devices for children and families, launched on Friday 22 January via EDP. Since the launch, £170k has been raised and donations continue to be received. After the campaign launched last week, Hethel-based Lotus made a huge donation of 625 brand new Chromebooks which will bring families up to speed with home learning. It is estimated that Norfolk's 430 schools and academies need around 6,000 devices and at least 1,000 households with school-age children are unable to connect to the internet. The campaign gives two ways to step up and help.
  - Businesses and organisations can give pre-used corporate devices to the county council for refurbishment and distribution to schools. To donate email [devices@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:devices@norfolk.gov.uk)
  - Individuals and businesses can give funding to the NCF to be spent on new laptops and tablets and internet connections. To donate visit <https://www.norfolkfoundation.com/every-child-online/>
- **Post 16's** - Young people Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET) has risen slightly in the last week and is now at 4.45% (766 young people). Our Unknowns have further reduced to 1.2% and we continue to track young people who have dropped out of education to confirm their current status. A meeting is being arranged to explore developing a bid for NEET provision with East Coast College. LA and colleges are aligning lists of the vulnerable students in FE to ensure continuing attendance.
- **Early Years** - Currently there are 650 open settings with 8,521 children attending, which includes 3390 children of critical workers, of which 435 are vulnerable. Of those 142 are children with a social worker and 68 children with an EHCP. There are no sufficiency issues.
- **Adult Learning bucks national trend as participation and achievement rise in 2020** - Norfolk has seen an increase in adults taking on new qualifications in 2020, despite a decline across the rest of the country. Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning service saw participation in qualification courses increase by 12%, compared to a fall of 19% in the rest of the country. Their students also improved their scores by 3% which reversed the national trend where the rate of achievement has dropped by 24%.

In Norfolk, 31% of adult learners progressed into Further or Higher Education while 28% are in employment. Meanwhile, 100% of the service's apprentices who completed their apprenticeship have remained in valuable long-term employment. Anyone who wants to make the next step in their education, further their career options or just learn a new skill can check out the latest course on the [Adult Learning Website](#). [Read the full story here](#).

## Business and economy

- **Norfolk Knowledge Hub** - Norfolk County Council has worked together with the Norfolk Chamber of Commerce over the last few months to develop the new Norfolk Knowledge Hub. It is designed to deliver virtual business support via its free to access digital platform. Any business or individual can log on to the hub which is completely free to use, so there are no membership fees, and it contains no sales adverts, just the latest advice and support to help Norfolk businesses, employees and individuals at this challenging time. Information is available as videos and podcasts, as well as traditional written articles.

This one-stop-shop will be the place to find up to date and relevant information in easy to understand, bitesize chunks. Our aim is to cut through the myriad of information that is out there, making it more straightforward for businesses, employees and individuals to access impartial, genuine, trustworthy, practical, useful support and information, which has been pre-moderated, and is gathered together all in one place. The hub which is easily accessible via the website or by downloading a smartphone app, is a place where people can learn, exchange and share knowledge, experiences and ideas and create new business connections.

The Norfolk Knowledge Hub can be found at [www.norfolkknowledgehub.co.uk](http://www.norfolkknowledgehub.co.uk) or on the App store. You can also join in the conversation on social media using #KnowledgeHour

Thanks to Norfolk County Council's support, the Chamber of Commerce secured a grant of £113,000 from the Norfolk Strategic Fund to develop this exciting new platform.

- **Kick Start Scheme** - The Government has [announced](#) that, from 3 February 2021, it is to make it simpler for employers of all sizes to benefit from joining the scheme by removing the limit requiring they create a minimum of 30 vacancies to apply directly. The scheme, which has been underway since September, aims to help to put young people who have been some of the hardest hit by the economic impact of the pandemic on the first rung of their career ladder.
- **Webinars, videos and tools for businesses** - The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has published a series of short, on-demand videos to support businesses following the end of the transition period. Topics covered include importing and exporting, rules of origin, audit and accounting, and registration is needed to access the video content. Register: <https://www.workcast.com/register?cpak=1070296099921910>

The Business Partnerships Team has also produced a [toolkit](#) to help businesses to take action and to encourage others in their sectors and supply chains to do so by sharing messages on social media and other internal channels.

- **Funding to get more young people into work** – The Government has [announced](#) that employers can now [apply for a £1000 cash boost](#) to help them take on new trainees. The new scheme will support young people to gain the skills and experience they need from the very start, helping them to get a job, an apprenticeship, or pursue further study. The cash boost – which is available until 31 July 2021 - will help businesses with the cost of providing a high-quality work placement for a trainee.

## General updates

- **Budget proposals unveiled** - Despite Covid and “extremely challenging” pressures, the county council has developed budget proposals to lead Norfolk's recovery next year. That's the message from a report to Norfolk County Council's cabinet, which outlines tax, spending and investment proposals for the year from April. The meeting will consider two reports:
  - The proposed £439 million revenue budget – spending on services and running costs, funded by Council Tax, Business Rates and Government funding. By law, this budget must always be balanced
  - The proposed £537 million capital budget – spending on infrastructure – funded by Government grants, land sales and borrowing.

The revenue budget report says that the council has seen its Government funding reduce by £92.8 million since 2015, while cost pressures on children's services and adults' services rose by £40.1 million, last year alone. The council is proposing to:

- 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 overall share 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 £45.7 million to meet cost and other pressures in services, including £28.2 million in adult social care, £7 million in children's services and £10.5 million in community and environmental services
- Make provision of £18.8 million, set aside for Covid 19 costs in 2021-22
- Make savings of £41.2 million, including a net £20.4 million of new proposals
- Invest £102 million in the capital programme, taking the total infrastructure programme to £537.66 million. New items include £11.5 million for supported housing for young adults, £4 million for children's residential homes and investment in the Long Stratton bypass, new libraries and green trails. Existing schemes include 500 new special school places, extra care housing for adults, better broadband links and the Great Yarmouth third river crossing.

Cabinet will discuss the revenue and capital reports when it meets at 10am on Tuesday, 1 February. [Read the reports and view the meeting live, or a recording afterwards](#). Once cabinet has met, the budget proposals will be considered by the council's scrutiny committee on Wednesday 17 February, before the full council takes a final decision on Monday 22 February. [Read the full story here](#).