

Latest Information, Advice, Useful Links and Service Updates (Updated 4 March 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

- **Budget 2021** – On 3 March, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, delivered his [Budget to Parliament](#).

The Chancellor confirmed extensions to the furlough scheme and support for the self-employed until the end of September. An extension to the £20 Universal Credit uplift for a further 6 months to September 2021.

The Budget confirmed support for businesses through business rates reliefs, VAT reductions for tourism and hospitality, a VAT deferral scheme, a new loan guarantee scheme supporting businesses' access to loans and overdrafts, Restart Grants and an additional £425 million of discretionary business grant funding for councils to distribute.

The Chancellor also announced:

- Over £1 billion funding for a further 45 towns (including Great Yarmouth) in England through the Towns Fund
- The publication of the government's [Build Back Better: our plan for growth](#)
- The publication of the prospectus for the £4.8 billion [UK-wide Levelling Up Fund](#) which provides guidance for local areas on how to submit bids. The Levelling Up Fund will “invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life across the UK, including town centre and high street regeneration, local transport projects, and cultural and heritage assets. The prospectus will provide guidance to local areas on the process for submitting bids, the types of projects eligible for funding, and how bids will be assessed. To ensure that funding reaches the places most in need, the government has identified priority places based on an index of local need to receive capacity funding to help them co-ordinate their applications.” Bids can be made for up to £20m, or more by exception. The table below shows the prioritisation of Norfolk districts within the Fund:

Name	Priority category
Great Yarmouth	1
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	1
Breckland	2

North Norfolk	2
Norwich	2
South Norfolk	2
Broadland	3

- The launch of the [UK Community Renewal Fund prospectus](#) for the £220 million, alongside the Budget. This will “support communities across the UK in 2021-22 to pilot programmes and new approaches as the government moves away from the EU Structural Funds model and towards the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Funding will be allocated competitively. To ensure that funding reaches the places most in need, the government has identified [100 priority places](#) based on an index of economic resilience to receive capacity funding to help them co-ordinate their applications.”

HM Treasury has made available a [simple factsheet](#) which includes further measures announced by the Chancellor in the Budget today.

The full Budget document is available [here](#).

- **Guidance on approach to elections and referendums during coronavirus** - On 26 February, the Government published [guidance](#) on how political parties, candidates, agents and campaigners can undertake COVID-secure campaigning activity for the May 21 polls.

Key messages for residents

- **National lockdown: Stay at home** – Stay at home messages remain in place. [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 testing is key to schools' return** - Regular Covid testing, plus vaccination, is the way to ensure Norfolk moves towards a more normal way of life.

That's the message from Norfolk County Council, as schools prepare to start welcoming pupils back from Monday (8 March).

Under the Government's reopening plans:

- Primary school pupils won't be tested but all secondary school and colleague pupils and all school and college staff will be encouraged to undergo twice weekly testing
- Initially, this will be at school or college but then people will be encouraged to use home tests

The council is also encouraging people to undergo tests if:

- They are planning to visit a relative at a care home
- They are returning to work

A community collect service is also being considered, so that people can pick up home testing kits. More details will be available in due course.

Results of the recent surge testing in Diss and Roydon should be available next week.

[See further details about testing and how to access home testing kits](#).

Education and settings

- **Making talk and play part of your child's everyday life** - A new campaign is launching to help parents across Norfolk help their children develop vital language and speech skills so they are better

prepared when they start school. Norfolk County Council and NHS partners have launched new resources and a digital campaign aimed at encouraging parents to make talking and learning a regular part of all the activities they do with their babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers.

Families can take up the 9 day challenge, access resources online at www.norfolk.gov.uk/talkandplay, or take a quiz to discover how they can learn together. Parents are encouraged to attend parent and baby sessions online whilst national restrictions are in place to continue with interaction and provide extra opportunities for growing and learning.

Online sessions are hosted by different services within Children's services, such as Norfolk Libraries "Bounce and Rhyme" Sessions and various activities run by the Early Childhood and Family Service. There are also specific speech and language themed events being run in March with access to experts from East Coast Community Health (ECCH).

The campaign is a collaboration between Norfolk County Council, NHS Norfolk Children and Young People's Health Services and East Coast Community Healthcare (ECCH) who are commissioned to provide speech and language support for children in Norfolk.

Families looking for NHS information or advice should visit JustOneNorfolk.nhs.uk or call 0300 300 0123.

- **Norfolk libraries to scrap late fees for children as part of post-pandemic reading push** - The Norfolk Libraries and Information service have put forward ambitious plans to improve children and young people's reading skills which have been diminished nationally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposals, to be considered at the [Council's cabinet on 8 March](#), include the removal of overdue charges for everyone under the age of 16, universal membership of the county's e-library through Norfolk's schools and the introduction of a new '1000 books before school' reading challenge. Alongside the removal of late fees, Norfolk's children will also be offered free and easy to use membership to the county's e-library. The library service will work with schools to give each child the opportunity to access a wide range of e-books, audio books, magazines and comics. This follows a successful pilot in 5 schools in the county and a significant growth in the usage through 2020/21 which has seen children's e-book use grow by 166%.

Later in 2021 the library service will also launch a '1,000 books before school' reading challenge that will be aimed children aged 0-5. The reading challenge will also mark key achievement milestones by awarding certificates as each family reaches a set number of books. This will build on the book start scheme that already offers free books and information about the benefits of reading for each parent and the opportunity to sign up to the library.

- **Schools** - Attendance within schools is continuing to rise ahead of the schools opening to all pupils from 8th March. The overall attendance last week was 24.3% in primary schools, 6.1% in secondary schools and 41.8% in special schools. Attendance of children with an EHCP rose from 35% to 41% and children with a social worker from 47% to 51%. Significant work is underway to provide support for next week, including support on Testing and a media campaign.
- **Post 16's** - Between October and the end of January 200 NEET young people progressed into education, employment or training (EET). This was a mixture of fulltime education, apprenticeships, re-engagement provision and jobs without training. This movement into EET has helped to balance the new entrants to the NEET cohort. Students with special educational needs at Parkside and The Clare schools have completed two virtual work visit programmes with Greater Anglia and The Millennium Library. Staff, students and parents have given excellent feedback on the experiences. These opportunities will be rolled out to further schools. TITAN "Ready to Go" framework launch meetings are continuing to be delivered to schools, colleges and post 16 providers to ensure a successful roll out in the summer term
- **Early Years** - Data indicates that we have 662 settings open with 10,415 children attending. 4,068 are children of critical workers, of which 521 are vulnerable and of those 172 children have a social worker and 84 have an EHCP. No sufficiency issues. Testing kits have been offered to all private and voluntary nurseries and the second phase aimed at childcare on domestic premises will start today.

Social care

- **Cabinet considers housing boost for people with disabilities** - One hundred and eighty-one supported housing units are set to be developed in Norfolk, to help people with disabilities live more independent lives. Cabinet will discuss the report when it meets at [10am on Monday, 8 March](#).

The County Council is proposing to invest £9m-£18m of capital to develop supported, adapted and specialist housing over the next 10 years, to improve people's lives, reduce hospital admissions and reduce care costs by £1.9m per year.

The types of housing required are:

- Housing for those with complex needs. Suitable housing will be bespoke and built to a very high specification to meet those needs.
- Short term accommodation for those who may need support to adjust to independent living. This may include young people with care and support needs who require a training or enablement environment in order to prepare to live more independently.
- Long term supported accommodation for those who may require dedicated, supported or adapted accommodation, with long term support, in order to live as independently as possible in the long term

Business and economy

- **Business Support Helplines** - The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has set up new helplines to assist UK businesses with enquiries related to the end of the Transition Period. The [Business Support Helpline](#) (0800 998 1098) can help businesses in England identify the actions they need to take. Businesses can also call HMRC's Customs and International Trade Helpline and speak to an adviser on 0300 322 9434 or get in touch by [webchat](#) or by emailing enquiries@businesssupporthelpline.org.
- **Small and medium-sized enterprises toolkit: trading with the EU and Northern Ireland** - The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has produced a [toolkit for small and medium-sized enterprises](#) to help them identify the decisions and actions they need to make to continue trading with the EU and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The document provides an overview of actions to take outlines support, helplines and resources that may be useful for SMEs and signposts to more detailed guidance on government websites.

Communities

- **2021 Windrush Day Grant Scheme** - The [Windrush Day Grant Scheme](#) provides funding to communities looking to celebrate, commemorate and educate about the Windrush generation and their contribution. Applications for funding will remain open until 10 March 2021. The Government has updated the [guidance](#) on how councils, charities and community groups can submit bids for funding from the scheme. The update includes Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) following the February 2021 Bidder Day Events.

General updates

- **#WeNeedMore on-call firefighters** - Residents of Norfolk looking for a new challenge and a chance to make a real difference are invited to consider a career as an on-call firefighter to help fill vacancies across the county and protect Norfolk and its people. Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service is supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council's national on-call recruitment week. The campaign, #WeNeedMore, will run from 1-7 March to raise awareness and to encourage people from all backgrounds to consider a rewarding career in the fire service.

Working as an on-call firefighter means being involved in a wide range of activities in your local area, from responding to emergency calls to carrying out work in local communities and supporting their needs, or providing fire prevention advice to help to keep people safe. On-call firefighters must live or

work within five minutes of an on-call station, and respond to 999 calls via an alerter system. They also attend weekly training nights.

Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service has produced some new brochures highlighting what's involved so people can find out more about the application process, training and career progression available. There is also a brochure for potential employers of on-call staff so they can find out about the commitment involved.

Following the on-call week, the service will be hosting a question and answer session for people to find out more. This will be held online on Thursday 18 March at 7pm. To register interest in attending, please email marketing@norfolk.gov.uk.

There are currently vacancies at: Attleborough, Dereham, Diss, Downham Market, East Harling, Great Yarmouth, Heacham, Hingham, Holt, Hunstanton, King's Lynn, Loddon, Massingham, Outwell, Reepham, Sandringham, Swaffham, Watton, Wells, West Walton and Wroxham.

For more information about on-call recruitment go to www.norfolk.gov.uk/oncallfirefighter

- **From a £64m road to a £6,000 trod, cabinet set to discuss highway improvements large and small** - Highway improvements big and small are on the agenda for the Norfolk County Council's [Cabinet on Monday, 8 March](#), as members are set to approve a £42m programme of maintenance, 113 small locally important highway schemes costing £715,000 and improvement schemes totalling £85m.

A new connection between the A47 and A10 that will not only reduce delays but also and lower the traffic levels in the village of West Winch, is set to be backed by members next week. The £64m West Winch Housing Access Road aims to put appropriate infrastructure in place before the development of 4,000 new homes in the area. If approved next week the next step will be for a business case to be submitted to the Department for Transport with the aim of securing £50.08m Government funding for the route.

Cabinet members are also set to agree spending for the year ahead on road maintenance and improvement schemes, following the approval of the county council's 2021/22 budget on Monday 22 February.