



June 2020 Monthly Parish Newsletter

STAY ALERT ▶ **CONTROL THE VIRUS** ▶ **SAVE LIVES**

suffolk
Resilience

Visit suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus for health advice, service changes, business support and schools' guidance.

Keep up to date on the latest guidance on COVID-19 from central government here: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

[COVID-19 related news](#)

New plan sets out how Suffolk will prevent and respond to COVID-19 outbreak

A plan which sets out how Suffolk would prevent and respond to a localised outbreak of COVID-19 was published on 30 June.

Suffolk's Local Outbreak Control Plan will be triggered where there are suspected or confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks in any setting or community within the county.

The plan, a requirement of Government of all local authorities, outlines measures to prevent, manage, and contain outbreaks of Coronavirus and protect the public's health. It builds on existing relationships and processes in place with partner agencies across Suffolk.

The plan outlines how complex cases will be managed in more than 30 high-risk places, locations, and communities, particularly care homes and schools. It also outlines local testing capacity, use of data to identify and proactively manage outbreaks, and contact tracing in complex settings. An outbreak is defined when there are two or more cases in high-risk settings, or a greater than expected occurrence of COVID-19 compared with the usual level for a particular place and time.

Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health at Suffolk County Council, who is leading this outbreak plan, said: “COVID-19 has had a significant impact on all of our lives and, sadly, we will be living with the threat of the virus for many months to come.

“Whilst this plan outlines how Suffolk will best respond to outbreaks, prevention of the virus is absolutely vital in making sure the number of new cases continues to decline in Suffolk. We must all continue to follow social distancing guidelines and ensure we wash our hands regularly, to avoid a second wave of the pandemic. If you develop symptoms of coronavirus, make sure you get a test and isolate at home.”

Delivery of the Local Outbreak Control Plan will be co-ordinated by the Suffolk COVID-19 Coordination Centre. All information (including outbreak notifications) and national guidance will be received here, which enables a co-ordinated response and allows tasks to be allocated to the most appropriate partners.

Suffolk has received £2.79million from a £300million Government fund to support delivery of the Local Outbreak Control Plan.

A copy of the plan can be available [here](#).

Suffolk’s resilience partners continue to provide PPE equipment where most needed

As Suffolk’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic enters its fourth month, the team set up in March to source and distribute personal protective equipment (PPE) to support service providers across the county continues to operate from Suffolk County Council’s offices in Ipswich.

To date, this PPE ‘cell’ of the Suffolk Resilience Forum (SRF) has distributed over 2.3 million items of PPE across Suffolk. Over 1.9 million of these items have been distributed for use in the care sector to support some of Suffolk’s most vulnerable residents.

This equipment is directly supporting a range of staff every day, providing them with the masks, gloves and other disposable protective items needed to ensure safe working and effective infection control in care settings, social care, special schools, emergency services, and health organisations.

As service providers increase contact with residents and reopen, or plan for buildings to reopen in weeks to come, Suffolk’s PPE team will continue to purchase and distribute equipment where there is a shortfall in supply, or where organisations identify an urgent need.

Speaking on behalf of the SRF, Suffolk's Director for Public Health, Stuart Keeble said:

"As the pandemic really took hold in late March, it was vitally important that we quickly established a team to source and distribute PPE where it was needed most. This was especially important given the increased demand for personal protective equipment across the UK, and the world at that point.

"Suffolk's team continues to operate and the SRF is keeping a close eye on levels of demand to understand if, and when, we need to scale back operations.

"We have worked hard to source and supply PPE equipment where it is needed across Suffolk and have been able to provide PPE to all those who have requested it, to continue to protect residents and staff and reduce the risk of infection."

Temporary relaxation of concessionary travel arrangements in Suffolk to end

As more people return to work, public transport operators face the challenge of meeting this extra demand and ensuring adherence to Government guidance.

Passenger numbers are highest at the beginning and end of the day, so people who need to make essential journey for shopping, care or health reasons are being encouraged to travel after 9.30am when buses are currently quieter.

Suffolk County Council and bus operators in the county have agreed to **end the temporary relaxation of concessionary travel rules from Monday 6 July 2020.**

The relaxation was introduced across Suffolk in late March and allowed those with concessionary passes to travel on buses for free before 9:30am. The aim was to provide more flexibility for older people, and those with disabilities, to visit supermarkets during the lockdown.

Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Rural Affairs, said:

"Now that more people are returning to their workplaces and children are going back to school, it is important that we take steps across the county to protect passengers. It is vital we help bus operators balance the need to get people to work and children to school, while maintaining social distancing and adhering to Government guidelines, so this means staggering the times when passengers travel.

"The relaxation of the concessionary travel scheme was a temporary measure to address the situation at the time. The situation has changed, and we are now facing a new set of challenges. Therefore, I urge people to only use public buses for essential journeys and to travel after 9:30am where possible."

From Monday 6th July concessionary bus passes in Suffolk will only be valid Monday to Fridays 9.30am to 11pm, and all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. Also, all passengers are now required to wear a face covering on public transport. For more information about concessionary travel in Suffolk, visit suffolkonboard.com.

An alternative travel option for elderly and vulnerable passengers is the county's Connecting Communities demand responsive services, which operate Monday to Friday 7am to 7pm. Further details can be found at communities.suffolkonboard.com or by calling **0345 606 6171**.

Looking after the vulnerable is top priority

**Article by Councillor Beccy Hopfensperger, Cabinet Member for Adult Care.
Published 23 June 2020.**

Nationally the focus of Covid-19 within the care sector has been on care homes. In Suffolk, we recognise that the experience is the same in all care settings, including extra care housing and supported housing, although the prevalence has not been as great. Care settings have been on the frontline in terms of our local response to Covid-19. News of cases, the need for testing, and sadly people passing away as a result of this virus, has been widely reported.

I want to share what has been happening within homes to protect residents and give an update on the support the county council is continuing to provide care homes as they face this challenge.

While we are seeing a gradual decrease in the number of cases within Suffolk's care homes, and the number of deaths due to Covid-19 appear to be reducing, providers are still in the response phase of this pandemic.

Suffolk's care homes continue to care for residents with the utmost professionalism and kindness. They are following national guidance regarding social distancing, hygiene standards and the correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Testing is available for all care homes - for the entire home, including staff and residents who are not displaying any symptoms.

Ahead of a national testing site being available, we started testing residents in care homes. Since testing began in mid-April, over 2,300 people have been tested across all care settings and testing continues.

With more testing taking place, infection control and prevention measures can be more effective.

The county council, with its health partners, continues to have daily contact with care homes to support them and respond to their needs and concerns. This support has included help to source agency staff where there is staff absence, obtaining PPE, a dedicated infection prevention and control enquiry line, and a package of financial support.

While providers are responsible for sourcing their own supply of PPE and financial support has been provided to help meet the additional costs, the Suffolk Resilience Forum has supplied care providers with 1.7 million items of emergency PPE when they have encountered difficulty in sourcing their own supply.

The number of people who have died in care homes in Suffolk due to Covid-19 is decreasing on a weekly basis. However, this doesn't take away from the fact that people have died because of this virus. It is a tragedy that families are losing their

much-loved relatives and friends to this virus, and my deepest sympathies and condolences are with those who are grieving during this most difficult time.

In Suffolk, we are continuing to see a higher percentage of Covid-19 related deaths within care homes compared to some other areas. The reasons for this are complex, but factors we think are contributing to this are more people choosing to die in their usual place of residence and the high number of nursing beds that we have within care homes. These provide care for people with complex care needs who may be approaching the end of their life, and I would like to assure people that we have very good practices for providing end of life care in Suffolk.

Dying within a care home setting often reflects a person's wish to remain in their usual place of residence, in comfortable surroundings, with people around them who are familiar, as opposed to being in an unfamiliar hospital setting.

Although we no longer have any council-owned care homes in Suffolk, they are all privately owned and run, the county council still considers looking after the most vulnerable to be its top priority. The council is standing shoulder to shoulder with our care providers as we continue to face this crisis, and I want to take one final moment to praise their monumental efforts and their continued dedication and professionalism. The kindness and warmth that they show our most vulnerable each day, despite the pressures they face, is deeply moving.

I would ask people to please do what they can to protect our most vulnerable by continuing to follow government guidance around social distancing and hygiene to reduce the spread of the virus in our communities. Thank you for doing your bit and, please, Stick With It Suffolk.

Improving Suffolk's wellbeing and mental health with a simple 'thank you'

A new, colourful way for people across Suffolk to show their appreciation for others, is underway in Suffolk.



Suffolk Says Thanks recognises the small acts of kindness taking place across the county in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The initiative was launched on 4 June by the Suffolk Resilience Forum, which has a specific group tasked with looking at emotional wellbeing in the community related to the pandemic.

As a direct result of the current situation, people may be experiencing mental health issues, or their emotional wellbeing may be affected. To help with this, the simple act of saying 'thank you' is known to have a positive effect on both the person giving thanks, as well as the person receiving it.

Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health Suffolk, said:

"Coronavirus has changed our way of life in so many ways and, consequently, more people's mental health is likely to be affected.

"Suffolk residents have a huge range of mental health support available to them, and there is always someone available to talk to, 24/7. But sometimes, a simple 'thank you' is enough to make someone's day and can be the small boost that they need.

"Suffolk Says Thanks builds on the appreciation that we as a nation have been showing to key workers and NHS staff

"So let's say 'thank you' across Suffolk: the neighbour or volunteer who has put out your bins, the friend who collects your shopping, or the person on your street that waves every morning as they pass by your house."

Posters, cards and other colourful materials can be downloaded from www.suffolksaysthanks.com to provide inspiration for saying thank you in different ways. People are invited to share their messages with others, through the website and on social media, using the hashtag #suffolksaysthanks.

Gemma Levi, chair of Suffolk Resilience Forum's Emotional Wellbeing in the Community group, said:

"As a nation we've been great at thanking others and seen the positive impact it's had on our key workers. We now want to acknowledge the small acts of kindness and Suffolk Says Thanks gives people the materials and inspiration to thank those in their local community.

"We would like people to post their 'thank you's' as photos and videos on social media, to download materials to colour in and display in windows, or even print out one of the template letters to pop through someone's door.

"Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that demonstrating an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

"The act of giving is one of the 'five ways to wellbeing', which is an established framework setting out simple steps for improving day-to-day mental health."

If you are experiencing something that makes you feel unsafe, distressed, or worried about your mental health you can call the FirstResponse service on 0808 196 3494. This phonenumber is provided by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It provides immediate advice, support and signposting.

Better Broadband for Suffolk reaches 100,000th customer as third phase contract is agreed

More than 100,000 households across Suffolk are already using faster broadband, thanks to the council-led Better Broadband for Suffolk programme.

The partnership - between Suffolk County Council, Openreach, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and local councils – has made faster broadband available to around 150,000 premises since being launched in 2010.

It means the current total superfast broadband coverage in Suffolk stands at more than 96 per cent, with plans currently in place to reach 98 per cent coverage before the end of the year.

The team has plans to go even further, after announcing, on 3 June, an additional phase of work to provide connectivity to approximately 5,000 more premises, including over 550 businesses, in some of the most rural parts of Suffolk.

The work will be carried out by Openreach – operator of the UK’s largest phone and broadband network, used by the likes of BT, Sky, Plusnet, and TalkTalk – and is set to start as soon as deployment under the current contract ends. Work will continue until September 2022.

Faster broadband provides many benefits including staying in contact with friends and family through video conferencing services, easier web browsing and online shopping, the ability to stream high definition video, and work from home. Covid-19 has led to many of these benefits becoming even more crucial during times of social distancing and will have a large part to play during the recovery phase.

Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, said:

“It is incredible to think that over 100,000 homes and businesses in Suffolk are now using Superfast Broadband as a result of this project. Faster and more reliable broadband is more important now with many of us using digital devices to stay in contact with family and friends or working from home. As Suffolk, and the rest of the UK, begin to move into the recovery phase, Superfast Broadband will continue to play a crucial role. To find out if Superfast Broadband is available in your area please contact your service provider or visit the Better Broadband for Suffolk website.

Our ambition has always been, and will always be, to achieve total Superfast Broadband coverage across Suffolk. With the contract now being signed on the third phase of the programme, we are closer to realising that goal. This will mean that some of the most rural and hard to reach premises in Suffolk will enjoy equal or faster speeds than some major cities and towns across the UK.”

Laura Whelan, Openreach’s regional director for the East of England, said:

“We’ve already made a great deal of progress across Suffolk, making faster broadband available to thousands for the first time. We know there is more to do connecting up the most remote areas, and that’s why we’re delighted to be working with Suffolk County Council on extending that reach even further. Openreach has an important role within the East of England, with more than 3,400 of our people living

and working here. We've also recently announced a great deal of work to build full fibre in some of the most 'hard to reach' rural areas, including Bungay, Saxmundham and Kentford."

Minister for Digital Infrastructure Matt Warman said:

"We've invested almost £30 million into this project to deliver faster broadband to rural homes and businesses across Suffolk. I am pleased so many people have taken up superfast and full fibre internet connections for the economic and social benefits they bring.

"But there are more homes to connect in Suffolk and across the UK, so we have pledged a further £5 billion to make sure people in hard-to-reach areas get the high-quality broadband they deserve."