

Title: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) – Briefing Note

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1. Message from Stuart Keeble – Suffolk County Council Director of Public Health

Suffolk's Voluntary and Community sector is the front line in supporting the most vulnerable in our communities. It is during uncertain times like now where your role is even more important in helping people to stay well, remain connected to their communities and accessing services. It is this strength of the voluntary sector and the compassion you show that will help us to ensure that those who need the help and support of others will get it when needed. With that in mind we feel it is important to share with you updates on the current situation here in Suffolk, make available to you key resources that you may find useful in the running of your services, and to ask that you join us sharing some messages in our communities.

2. Background and COVID-19

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organisation was informed of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, China. The cause is now identified as a Coronavirus, one of the family of viruses which also caused Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (*MERS*) and the Serious Acute Respiratory Syndrome (*SARS*) global outbreak in 2002-2003. These viruses are common, and effects can range from mild to very severe.

Based on what is known from other coronaviruses, the virus is mainly transmitted by large respiratory droplets and direct or indirect contact with infected secretions. Current predictions on how infectious the new virus indicates that it appears to be as infectious as a pandemic flu strain.

Stay at home for 7 days if you have either:

- a high temperature 38.7 degrees and above
- Or
- a new, continuous cough

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home. If you have symptoms of coronavirus infection (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started. This action will help protect others in your community whilst you are infectious.

People should:

- Plan ahead and ask others for help to ensure that you can successfully stay at home
- ask their employer, friends and family to help you to get the things you need to stay at home.
- stay at least 2 metres (about 3 steps) away from other people in your home whenever possible.
- sleep alone, if that is possible.
- wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water.
- stay away from vulnerable individuals such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions as much as possible.
- you do not need to call NHS111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999

3. Current Situation

The latest information as of 12th March is as follows:

- In Suffolk we have 1 confirmed case.
- A total 29,764 people have been tested in the UK, of which 29,174 were confirmed negative and 590 were confirmed as positive. This equates to a positivity rate of approximately 2%
- In the East of England there are 32 confirmed cases.
- There have been 8 deaths in the UK.

Most cases are associated with travel back from infected countries or known contacts of confirmed cases. We are now seeing community transmission increasing with no known associated travel. This is to be expected given how contagious the virus appears to be. Last week Government published their Action Plan in response to the COVID-19 that includes four phases. These are:

Contain – During this phase, officials aimed to detect and isolate early cases and trace people who have been in contact with those infected. The aim of this phase was to prevent the virus from spreading widely across the country.

Delay - The aim of this phase is to slow the spread of the virus, reducing the impact and pushing it away from the winter season.

Research - Experts are constantly monitoring and researching the virus with the aim of reducing its impact.

Research takes various forms including looking into new diagnostic tests, drugs to treat Covid-19, preventative vaccines, and coming up with the best course of care for people affected.

Mitigate - In the event of the outbreak worsening, or a severe, prolonged pandemic, the response will escalate, and the focus will move away from "contain" and "delay" to "mitigate". This phase involves providing the best care for people who become ill, supporting hospitals, and ensuring support for those who become infected but do not require hospital treatment. It also involves plans to minimise the impact of disease on society, public services and the economy.

As of 13th March we have now moved into the Delay phase. This phase will see a mixture of the same advice already given out, such as encouraging the washing of hands regularly, while also introducing social distancing measures to slow the spread of the virus.

The speed at which the situation is developing means that these figures are constantly changing and that movements to other phases may happen at very little notice. Therefore national guidance is vital to ensure consistency of response.

4. What can you do as part of the Suffolk response?

The messages we want to promote at the current time is in line with the national message around keeping high levels of personal hygiene through thorough handwashing or the use of hand sanitiser. You may have come across poster s similar to the example below when visiting many public buildings. If you follow the links in this briefing you too can download and print off copies to display in your offices and venues.

The role you play is vitally important in providing reassurance and communicating key messages to your service users. For the public, the NHS website as the single resource the that we should be signposting people to get the most up to date advice.

Furthermore highlighting the importance of good personal hygiene including;

- Washing your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and (ideally warm) water;
- Using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes, then binning the tissue and washing your hands;
- Keeping surfaces clean. The virus appears to survive up to 72 hours on surfaces.
- Avoid touching your face, as if you have touched a contaminated surface and then touch your face (*eyes, nose, mouth*) then the virus can infect you.

Attached to this email is the full range of posters that the NHS has produced on the *Catch it Bin it Kill it* Campaign as well as the more specific handwashing posters.

Additionally if you can engage with your community providers, town clerks as well as other services prompting them that it would be a positive move if they review their business continuity plans. Ensuring that they are up to date and that they have assured themselves that systems are in place to maintain any core services if they faced a loss of staff due to COVID-19.

5. Community Resilience

In the event of more widespread cases of COVID-19 it is vital that communities are as resilient as possible to help support the work of the health services. This is where Voluntary and Community sector can play an important role in helping to establish those compassionate communities through existing services such as good neighbour schemes. The key will be to ensure that any national guidance is followed to ensure that we protect those in the community and who operate the schemes on the front line. This could include looking at new ways of working to help provide support. For example if you volunteer for a good neighbour scheme, and some has been told to self-isolate, then perhaps phoning them rather than a person visit would be appropriate.

It could well be that there is no national guidance and it will be down to individual local groups and authorities to work together to help those most in need in the community. This is where regular meetings and working groups to establish an appropriate response will be required. As a Council we are very keen to work as closely as possible with you to help support and offer guidance as needed.

6. Suffolk System

The Director of Public Health as a key role to play in making sure that safety of all Suffolk residents is considered and that all the various agencies work in a collaborative way to ensure this. Locally a lot of preparatory work has been undertaken and a executive level multiagency resilience forum has met, chaired by the Director of Public Health, with representatives from a wide range of health and non-health agencies (including District Councils, Police, Fire, MoD as well as others).

The Voluntary and Community sector partners will be key in helping support the delivery of community services should this situation worsen. As this situation progresses we will continue to communicate with you and at times may call upon your support. Further information will be shared in the coming weeks.

SCC continues to work closely with all organisations through established mechanisms and following national advice on this situation as it evolves. As this is a new virus, national guidance is being produced and amended as new evidence emerges and cascaded. It is important that we do not write our own guidance, but rather follow the national documents.

7. National Guidance.

Below in the table is the current full list of links to guidance on COVID-19. As more is learnt the guidance is updated and so it is important that locally we refer to the national advice, rather than try to produce our own Suffolk specific guidance.

Website	Link
NHS	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19
NHS 111	https://111.nhs.uk/service/covid-19
PHE UK Dashboard	https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/f94c3c90da5b4e9f9a0b19484dd4bb14
Gov.UK – Central public resource	https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response
PHE Health Matters	https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/20/what-is-self-isolation-and-why-is-it-important/
PHE Health Matters	https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/13/expert-interview-what-is-contact-tracing/
PHE Health Matters	https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/
Gov.uk – Returning Travellers	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas-with-implications-for-returning-travellers-or-visitors-arriving-in-the-uk
Gov.uk - Single central information source	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public
Gov.uk - Advising the general public on how to prevent	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-guidance-to-assist-professionals-in-advising-the-general-public/guidance-to-assist-professionals-in-advising-the-general-public

spread of COVID-19 infection	
PHE Campaign Resource Centre	https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101-novel-coronavirus-/resources
Gov.uk - First Responder guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-interim-guidance-for-first-responders/interim-guidance-for-first-responders-and-others-in-close-contact-with-symptomatic-people-with-potential-2019-ncov
Gov.uk - Health Professionals Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/wuhan-novel-coronavirus
Gov.uk - Non health Specific Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-guidance-for-non-clinical-settings-and-the-public
Gov.uk - Non health Specific Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings
Gov.uk - Infection Prevention and Control guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-infection-prevention-and-control/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-wn-cov-infection-prevention-and-control-guidance
LGA webpage	https://www.local.gov.uk/coronavirus-information-councils
WHO Corvid-19 Dashboard	http://who.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opstdashboard/index.html#/c88e37cfc43b4ed3baf977d77e4a0667

Additional information that you may find useful relevant to the voluntary sector

National Council of Voluntary Organisations - <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/coronavirus>

ACAS - <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus>

Charity Finance Group general information: https://cfg.org.uk/coronavirus_guide

Institute of Fundraising information: <https://www.institute-offundraising.org.uk/news/information-for-fundraisersabout-coronavirus/>

Campaign to end loneliness - <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/press-release/an-update-on-coronavirus-covid-19-and-social-connections/>