

County Council Report January 2021

1,000 people have now sadly lost their lives to coronavirus, according to the latest official data. The number of deaths in Suffolk is the equivalent to the population of Southwold, Boxford or Fornham St Martin.

Suffolk needs you to follow strictly the lockdown rules, to save Suffolk lives. By staying at home and limiting your interaction with others, this will stop the virus moving from person to person, make fewer people ill and ultimately prevent people from dying.

Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health for Suffolk, said:

“This is such a sad milestone, and my thoughts are with everyone who has been affected by the loss of a loved one.

“Sadly, there will be further deaths, but every single person has the power to bring this number down with immediate effect, to reduce the pressure on our hospitals and to stop people from becoming ill with this deadly disease.

“This new variant is far more infectious, it doesn’t recognise that you follow the rules most of the time, it only takes one opportunity.

“The message could not be clearer: Stay at home. Save lives.

“The lockdown measures are in place because the new strain of the virus is spreading more easily between people. If everyone limits their interaction with each other, we will not be giving the virus the opportunity to affect more people.

“Do not use lockdown restrictions as a challenge to see how you can flex the rules. Question yourself every time you think about leaving your home or getting in the car: is this the safest thing to do to protect my friends and family? Am I putting other people’s loved ones in danger?”

Staying at home can bring its own challenges, including feelings of isolation or worries about finances if you’re not able to go to work.

However, there are many people who are ready to listen, support and guide you through any difficulties or worries you have.

Home But Not Alone (tel. 0800 876 6926) is there to support you if are self-isolating and need access to medicine or food. There is financial support for those self-isolating and is available through your local borough or district council.

Support and resources for Suffolk include:

- **Home, But Not Alone:** Supporting clinically vulnerable people gain access to medication, food and community support: 0800 876 6926
- **Suffolk Advice and Support Service** If you need to talk to someone about your finances and how you can access help please call the SASS service on 0800 068 3131
- **NSFT & Suffolk Mind** If you need to talk to someone about your mental health and wellbeing please get in touch with NSFT: 0300 123 1503 Suffolk Mind: 0300 111 6000

- **First Response** If you or someone you know is in mental health crisis please call First Response 0808 196 3494
- **Domestic Abuse Helpline** Are you a victim of domestic violence and abuse? Call the Suffolk 24-hour Freephone Helpline 0800 977 5690. Are you hurting the one you love? Choose to stop. The Respect Phonenumber 0808 802 4040
- **Physical activity** Visit Keep Moving Suffolk for ideas to improve yours and your family's physical activity levels. www.keeptomovingsuffolk.com
- **The Source website** Information and advice for young people in Suffolk, visit <https://thesource.me.uk>
- **Emotional Wellbeing Hub** Support for young people, call 0345 600 2090 or visit Emotional Wellbeing Gateway

The news of the 1,000th death comes as further roll out of vaccinations is undertaken in Suffolk. It is obviously an NHS programme but to make it easier for people to find out what is happening we are hosing information on the SCC website

For more general information on the Covid-19 vaccination programme in Suffolk, a web page has been set-up on the Council public website, linked for your information here: www.suffolk.gov.uk/covidvaccinations

Locally our vaccination will be in Haverhill; fairly soon when the most at risk groups have been vaccinated a mass vaccination sites will be set up

The key advice is:

The **NHS will contact you** when it's your turn to have the vaccine.

Do not contact the NHS for a vaccination before then.

You'll need to be registered with a GP surgery in England (to get a vaccine). You can [register with a GP](#) if you do not have one.

Please be aware the vaccine is free but there are scammers at work trying to con people into paying – do not be taken in!

The support for people isolating because of a positive test has been extended. Previously Test and Trace Support payments could only be given to people meeting certain criteria, including on benefits. Now Councils across Suffolk have extended this, using their discretion, to help those on low incomes but not on benefits. Councils across Suffolk are helping administer the Government grant scheme to help people remain at home and do their bit to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Details about the Test and Trace Support Payments can be found on West Suffolk Council websites and how to apply for it (**see below**). This is part of a range of measures that councils across Suffolk have introduced to support communities and businesses during the coronavirus pandemic.

Those who are eligible will need to meet all the following criteria:

- You have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace on or after 28 September 2020.
- You have responded to your notification from the NHS Test and Trace and engaged with the service by providing the legally required information.
- You are employed or self-employed.
- You cannot work from home and will lose income as a result.
- You are currently receiving at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit, OR (under the new discretionary powers) you have a household income of less than £37,400 (couple or single parents) or £19,200 (single person) and have savings of less than £3,000.
- You made your application within 14 days of the last day of your NHS test and trace self-isolation period.

Applicants should ensure that they have the below information available before starting the application:

- NI number
- Your 8-digit test and trace ID number
- Your most recent bank statement, proof of self-employment or wage slips

Visit your District or Borough Council websites for details on how to apply for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment:

- West Suffolk Council Test and Trace Support Payment [westsuffolk.gov.uk](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)

Additional help, including financial aid, is also available from Suffolk Support and Advice Service. This additional help is available for those facing financial difficulty or needing support – especially for those who have never asked for help before. On 1 October 2020, the Suffolk Support and Advice Service phonenumber was launched to help people across the county access information or support relating to debt, benefits, housing or employment.

Seven new projects were announced just before Christmas as part of the Suffolk 2020 fund to support residents and improve the county for years to come.

As part of the council's investment in Suffolk's communities and its ongoing commitment to protecting the environment, the authority launched a special one-off fund in March with the aim of setting up and delivering a range of initiatives and projects that provide a positive, tangible impact in what has proven to be an extremely challenging year.

The announced initiatives and projects are as followed:

New booking system and automatic number plate recognition at Household Waste Recycling Centres – Improving the efficiency and customer experience across all 11 recycling centres by enhancing the online booking system using automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) and automated entry barriers.

Adult Digital Learning - Developing new virtual learning tools and techniques and setting up a laptop loan scheme to strengthen and extend access to the Adult Learning Service for those living in digital and/or rural isolation. This approach will enable people to enhance their knowledge and skills to secure employment. Building on the swift switch to virtual learning during lockdown, we will further develop virtual learning for adults across Suffolk and use new technologies to enrich and improve the quality of interaction and training, modernising the service's offer.

Youth Work - Developing and supporting growth of grass roots organisations to deliver accessible, high quality provision for youths across Suffolk. Includes creation of a virtual 'Centre of Excellence' to share best practice and provide a 'one stop shop' of support for youth groups across Suffolk.

Discovering Suffolk – raising awareness of Suffolk's countryside and the county's rights of way network, promoting local (Covid-safe) outdoor activities across all of Suffolk with the development of a smartphone outdoor app and QR codes to engage new audiences.

Automated Numberplate Recognition Speed Indicators – Devices will be installed at the roadside to tackle localised problems with speeding drivers. The devices will be periodically moved between sites of concern and the data will be forwarded to the Police to assist with targeted enforcement.

Virtual Reality therapy - Engagement and coproduction with people living with dementia and their carers to explore and develop interactive and therapeutic experiences to support wellbeing. These would be delivered through mobile virtual reality headsets and include bespoke content and interactions based around archive media of Suffolk.

Mobile Community 'Care Hubs' - Digitally equip and staff selected community vehicles accessing rural communities within Suffolk. This will support digital inclusion and provide a way to share information and provide help around the opportunities available with care technologies and other digital skills.

The work involved in setting up and enabling these projects will begin in early 2021, setting in motion a range of new community projects that will benefit people for years to come. The council's agreement to move forwards with these exciting projects listed above follows the successful launch of the first three Suffolk 20202 projects that were announced over recent months:

EV Vehicle Charging Points – Making grants available to install around 100 vehicle charging points throughout the county. Particularly targeting rural areas and sites owned and managed by not-for-profit organisations such as Parish Councils, village halls, sports clubs, libraries and charities.

Tree Planting - Increasing tree cover, through rural and urban planting schemes, planting approximately 100,000 trees over the next 18 months, establishing 'healing woodlands' to remember those lost to Covid-19, and increasing biodiversity along roadside verges.

Quiet Lanes - Encouraging the use of non-motorised vehicles and more considerate driving at lower speeds along a range of the community's self-selected rural lanes, with a view to adding 200 new lanes across Suffolk.

Locally, it has been announced we will provide a new recycling centre for Haverhill. The option of a site at Homefield Road could provide a bigger recycling centre with improved access which would lead to less congestion and queuing.

The current Haverhill recycling centre site at Chalkstone Way has previously been identified as requiring improvements or relocation as part of the council's programme of recycling centre improvements. The current size and footprint of the site will not be sufficient for the forecast housing growth currently projected in the area. Early plans for the new site involve designing out the need for steps, making it safer and easier for people to recycle their rubbish and also removing the need for the site to close for bin changes as the operational vehicles would be kept separate from the public.