

Title: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) – Briefing Note

Date: 9th March 2020

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1. Situation report

The latest information as of 8th March is as follows:

- A total 23,513 people have been tested in the UK, of which 23,240 were confirmed negative and 273 were confirmed as positive.
- In the East of England there are 23 confirmed cases.
- There have been 3 deaths in the UK.

Local authority level reporting can be accessed from the link below and will be updated daily

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-number-of-cases-in-england/coronavirus-covid-19-number-of-cases-in-england>

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.

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.

2. Role of SCC and Director of Public Health (DPH)

The role of the County Council is to provide system leadership through elected members as well as through the role of the DPH. The DPH role has a legal responsibility to assure that systems are in place to protect the health of the Suffolk population and that different agencies are working together in relation to this type of incident.

The DPH also chairs the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) in the event of a Pandemic Flu outbreak which includes multiple stakeholders (*including non-health such as Police and Fire*). Although COVID-19 is not a pandemic flu we are using the pandemic flu plan to aid our response to this new virus. As this is a national incident, SCC are also linking in with national, regional and local stakeholders providing a conduit for information both internally and externally working with ACS, CYP and others. To enable a coordinated SCC approach, a Business Continuity Group has been established.

3. Suffolk response

A number of local actions have been undertaken as part of our response. This includes:

- Promoting the national guidance and feeding this to all relevant partners.
- Weekly SRF teleconference being chaired by the DPH
- Media engagement including BBC Radio Suffolk interviews and an interview in the EADT – providing a reassuring and steadying voice and reiterate key messages such as hand hygiene.

- Linking with SALC, CAS, faith groups on the important of compassionate communities and providing national guidance to the Chamber of Commerce.
- An internal SCC Business Continuity Group has been formed with representatives from all directorates to provide a channel to provide a robust coordinated approach and chaired by the CLT duty director.
- Communications to staff on the importance of handwashing and increasing the provision of Handwash, desk wipes and hand sanitiser in SCC buildings (*these are on order and awaiting delivery*).

We continue 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.

4. What can you do as local members and residents of Suffolk.

The role you play as elected members is vitally important in providing reassurance and communicating key messages to the public. Directing members of the public to the NHS website (link below in RED) as the single resource the public should be accessing 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.

5. National Guidance.

Website	Link
NHS	https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19
NHS 111	https://111.nhs.uk/service/covid-19
PHE Health Matters -Self Isolation	https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/20/what-is-self-isolation-and-why-is-it-important/
PHE Health Matters – Contact Tracing	https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/13/expert-interview-what-is-contact-tracing/
PHE Health Matters - FAQs	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 spread of COVID-19 infection	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
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 - Non health Specific Guidance	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covid-19-guidance-for-non-clinical-settings-and-the-public
Gov.uk - Non health Cleaning 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