

A message from Richard Flinton, Chief Executive

We are all working in an unprecedented period of interruption to the way we live our lives and run our businesses, but at the same time we must remain very much focussed on continuing to deliver the best public services possible and to direct our efforts towards those who need them most.

I fully recognise there are many questions and concerns and that we are all in a fast changing environment which is likely to continue for some time.

I will, therefore, aim to share this regular briefing note with you to ensure you are kept up to date with the latest information, help and guidance that North Yorkshire County Council has to share.

We have already undertaken detailed reviews of our business continuity plans to reflect the likely impact of COVID-19 on our workforce and working practices. These are robust and prioritise particularly the delivery of health and social care services, support for parents, families and the workforce at large, including, of course, our own dedicated staff. We are also working extremely hard to support North Yorkshire's people and businesses as well as the hugely important community and voluntary sector networks.

We are absolutely committed to continuing to work with our health, local authority and emergency service partners to plan and respond to a broad range of challenges, as you would hope and rightly expect. This means we can collectively understand the county's needs and target our resources where they are needed most.

We also have a big focus on communications and will update this new bulletin twice a week - or more if that is appropriate. I hope you will find it useful.

North Yorkshire County Council

Schools and childcare

School closures

We will work with all our schools, families and communities in supporting the decision by our Government to close schools from tomorrow.

We have set up a Covid-19 task group to support our school staff in their work with families to ensure that children's learning can continue in the home environment.

We are now working round the clock to address plans with schools and at a multi-agency level to help to protect our children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable, and to help to keep them safe in the period to come. It is an enormous task which will involve all our communities and resourcefulness and the cooperation of all

We fully support the mission for the children of key workers and those who are vulnerable to continue to attend schools and we are now working to make that happen. This includes working with schools, providers and suppliers to ensure that transport arrangements are in place and children are safeguarded and fed across North Yorkshire, particularly in areas where rural isolation is a factor.

Plans also include supporting private, voluntary and independent childcare providers in the county, such as nurseries and child minders and potentially sharing resources where necessary.

We are also considering how we utilise the full workforce available which will include county council as well as school staff. This workforce may need to work through the Easter holidays and for potentially several months ahead. We also need to consider how we mobilise the skills and experience of school staff who are well but fall into the 'vulnerable' and working from home category but who can offer much in the overall effort to provide the best learning opportunities possible for our children and young people and also care for their wellbeing.

The majority of children and young people will now be continuing studies at home, remotely and many of our schools have already been developing home learning and online learning packs.

In North Yorkshire we have well established, tried and tested partnership working practices which help us to manage the impact of very significant challenges. During this unprecedented challenge for our county and our nation we will focus our joint resources where they are needed most in protecting the future wellbeing of our young people.

It's important to have a single source of trusted information so we are using one web-page to provide information for all educational settings <https://cyps.northyorks.gov.uk/covid-19>

Support for people in isolation

We know that people across the county will want to help their communities and we're encouraging everyone to look out for anyone in their immediate area who might need help, whilst also keeping social distancing advice in mind. Although we need to be careful about physical contact, offering to call your neighbour who can't get out so they have someone to chat to on the phone could make all the difference.

We are taking a leading role with other local authorities up and down the county to ensure we help shield people who may be more vulnerable, such as those with underlying medical conditions as well as people over 70, who are self-isolating, over the coming weeks and months.

In addition to this, our stronger communities team are working with district and borough councils and volunteers to help people understand how they can get the help they need.

Our advice to anyone self-isolating is to firstly ask yourself:

- Do I have family, friends or a neighbour who I can call?
- Are you a member of a local club or church group?

If so, they may have volunteers in your neighbourhood who are offering to help with things like shopping or looking after pets.

For anyone who may not have this immediate support; we are encouraging them to contact one of our trusted voluntary organisations.

We are working with our community partners across the whole county to ensure that local support will be available for anyone who needs it so that no-one is left alone.

If there is anyone who has no help or support and is struggling we will help you, but we ask that, in the first instance, you turn to people around you – family, friends and neighbours - so that we can find and help those most vulnerable and at risk.

From **Monday 23 March**, the county council customer service centre will be providing support for those **people who have nobody** and find themselves in desperate need of help. This help can be accessed by

calling our hotline on **01609 780780**, the team will signpost you to the right support and ensure you are provided with the care you need.

We know North Yorkshire is a place of great kindness and we will be highlighting some of the stories that will illustrate that throughout this period.

Community support information is now live on our website at www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-community-support

Watch out for fraudsters

Unfortunately, nationally, there have been reports of frauds relating to the supply of face masks, primarily online and fraudsters posing as legitimate banks trying to persuade people to disclose personal information.

Our Trading Standards officers are encouraging family and friends to help to protect residents from potential scams.

Some claim to provide medical guidance, investment opportunities or a safe place to which to transfer money.

We urge everyone:

- Not to deal with cold callers at any time, either by phone or at the door, but particularly those who may seek to exploit the current situation.
- Not to respond to unsolicited emails.
- To take extra care of elderly and disabled residents to protect them from such scams.
- To report all frauds to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040, or through their website www.actionfraud.police.uk

Local economy

NYCC

We are working hard with our district council colleagues and the LEP to help our businesses to access the range of financial support mechanisms announced by Government this week and there will be more details to follow on that. However, as part of our commitment as a County Council to our local suppliers, we are also taking dynamic action to help our small and medium-sized businesses. In recognition of the value we place on our local suppliers and the difficult times they are facing, we will be fast-tracking payments for invoices – which means they will receive payment from us more quickly. We hope that will be of some assistance during this difficult time.

The latest measures announced by the Chancellor The Right Hon. Rishi Sunak MP this week are welcomed in North Yorkshire where nearly 90 per cent of our companies are micro (0-9 employees) and 10 per cent are SME (10-250). The district councils are leading on the administration of a number of aspects of this work, further details are on the links below.

York and North Yorkshire LEP

Everyone in our region is facing unprecedented challenges, including our businesses. As a LEP, we will help those organisations navigate their way through this difficult period, ensuring that they remain healthy now and into the future.

Some businesses in the region are thriving due to the pandemic; others are experiencing difficulties with cash flow and staff. We see many adapting their businesses to this new reality with ingenuity and resilience.

The Chancellor has set out a package of temporary, timely and targeted measures to support public services, people and businesses through this period of disruption caused by COVID-19. Highlights of the packages can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>.

Whilst it will take a little time for this support to be provided, it will be delivered and as the Chancellor said, together we will do whatever it takes to assist those in need.

Keep up to date with latest news on our website www.businessinspiredgrowth.com or encourage businesses to sign up to our e-newsletters so they receive any updates directly.

You can also find out more at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

Social care and the NHS

The County Council is working closely with the NHS and over 500 providers of public health and adult social care services to ensure that essential services keep running and that they prioritise people with the greatest needs.

We are working hard with the NHS to help some of those most vulnerable people who will need hospital care to free up North Yorkshire's share, what is estimated nationally to be 30 000 hospital beds.

We are also working with home care, day services and direct payments providers and residential and nursing homes, as well as specialist public health services (including children's services, sexual health and substance misuse) to keep people safe and well. We have asked all of them to use their contingency plans to ensure they are able to prioritise their workloads. A weekly bulletin is being provided to these services and dedicated support is being offered from the Council's Quality and Monitoring Team and Public Health teams.

We are working with Public Health England and local service providers to supply and distribute protective clothing and equipment for frontline workers who are working with people with Covid-19 symptoms.

The Council's local social care teams are meeting daily to review people's cases, respond to urgent situations and ensure essential work is prioritised.

If people have queries or concerns, they should contact the county council's customer service centre on 01609 780 780 Monday – Friday 8:00am to 5:30pm, or go on line to find out about on-line services <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/>

Communications

We have been supporting Public Health England's and NHS public information campaigns for many weeks and we have now developed a more detailed area of the staff intranet and public website where all the latest information, advice and guidance can be found. We have undertaken regular and comprehensive communications with managers within the council and the whole workforce. Understandably there has been a high level of engagement with social and health care staff and providers as well as education and child care settings. Details of all service changes including schools and libraries can be found on the blue NYCC button above this text labelled Communications.

GOV.UK

This is a fast changing environment and The Prime Minister is holding daily press conferences. The highlights of these are published by government on the Gov.uk link above this text.

The latest health advice

The latest NHS guidance is available on this button **NHS**

In summary:

What to do if you develop COVID-19 symptoms

The two most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a fever (i.e. temperature about 37.8 OC) and/or a new continuous cough.

The situation is constantly evolving so it's important to check for the latest guidance where possible on the gov.uk website. The current guidance (correct as of 16th March) advises that:

- If you live alone and you develop symptoms of coronavirus illness (COVID-19), however mild, stay at home for 7 days from when your symptoms started.
- If you live with others and you or one of them have symptoms of coronavirus, then all household members must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. The 14-day period starts from the day when the first person in the house became ill. All household members who remain well may end household-isolation after 14 days.
- For anyone in the household who starts displaying symptoms, they need to stay at home for 7 days from when the symptoms appeared, regardless of what day they are on in the original 14 day isolation period.
- After 7 days, if the first person to become ill feels better and no longer has a high temperature, they can return to their normal routine. If any other family members become unwell during the 14-day household-isolation period, they should follow the same advice - that is, after 7 days of their symptoms starting, if they feel better and no longer have a high temperature, they can also return to their normal routine.

More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Keeping physically and mentally well

Staying at home for a prolonged period can be difficult, frustrating and lonely for some people. It's important to remember to take care of your mind as well as your body and to get support if you need it. Stay in touch with family and friends over the phone or on social media. There are also sources of support and information that can help, including:

Mind – <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>)

WHO factsheet – https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8

Every Mind Matters – <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

Corona-19 UPDATE

There is more information on how to stay fit and well on the NHS web pages

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-advice/>

The BBC also has a range of useful stories, advice sheets and videos

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/world-51939591>

