

Update on what the NHS in Norfolk and Waveney is doing to respond to coronavirus (21 December 2020)

Open letters to the people of Norfolk and Waveney from local health leaders

Health leaders across Norfolk and Suffolk published open letters to local people urging them to think carefully about their Christmas plans – just ahead of the government’s revised guidance issued at the weekend.

The letters acknowledge that the world is facing its biggest health emergency in living memory, and that health and social care colleagues have risen admirably to meet this challenge.

But with COVID-19 infection rates rising rapidly and families preparing for Christmas, health leaders have taken the unprecedented step of writing open letters urging residents to think carefully about their Christmas plans and to follow the guidelines to stay well.

The letters state: “The emergence of COVID-19 has confronted our National Health Service and its partners with its biggest challenge for generations. Our health and social care colleagues have risen admirably to meet that challenge and continue to do so, despite the incredible strain the virus has placed upon our staff and resources.

“However, this is not a quick win situation. Despite this incredible hard work, infection rates continue to rise and this Christmas – let’s be candid – we have a monumental challenge on our hands. A challenge that can only be won by each of us making further sacrifice.

“Sadly, we no longer have the capacity to lower our guard or lessen our resolve over the festive period. We must continue to live with caution and follow guidance fully.

“We, therefore, ask that you think carefully about your Christmas plans and to think twice before seeing your elderly or vulnerable relatives. As Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty has told the nation, one of the best ways to fight this virus is to limit contact with other people. This is on top of those things we already do well, such as washing hands, wearing a mask and social distancing.”

You can read the letter Norfolk residents [here](#) and to Suffolk residents [here](#), both published on 18 December prior to the Government’s announcement about changes to the Christmas rules.

First patients now receiving the COVID-19 vaccine at GP practices across Norfolk and Waveney

Eight GP practices across Norfolk and Waveney are now vaccinating patients against COVID-19.

The first practices in our area started delivering the vaccine on Tuesday 15, December, with more sites set to go live in the coming days and weeks.

The following eight sites are now acting as ‘primary care hubs’; vaccinating patients from their own practice as well as other neighbouring practices:

- Fakenham Medical Practice, Fakenham
- St James Medical Practice, King’s Lynn
- Lionwood Medical Practice, Norwich

- Falkland Surgery, Bradwell
- Swanton Morley Surgery, Swanton Morley
- Thetford Healthy Living Centre, Thetford
- Kirkley Mill Surgery, Lowestoft
- Cringleford Surgery, near Norwich

Those who are most at risk from COVID-19 are being prioritised first; members of the public who are over 80 years-old, care home workers and a small number for at risk frontline NHS staff.

GP practices work closely together with neighbouring practices in local groups called Primary Care Networks (PCNs). Each PCN will have a designated vaccination site, providing a good geographical spread of vaccination locations across Norfolk and Waveney.

Each of these sites will vaccinate patients from across a number of the PCN's member practices – not just those on their own surgery list. People in the 'at risk' priority groups will be contacted to make an appointment no matter which practice they are registered with.

Following the go live of the first GP practice vaccination sites, the local NHS is working with PCNs to mobilise additional large and small community sites over the coming weeks and months.

GP practices are working through their lists and booking in the first patients for vaccination appointments at either the hospital hubs based in Norwich and Great Yarmouth or at a local GP surgery site. All those being vaccinated will be asked to fill in a health screening questionnaire and consent form.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme has been planned extensively by the NHS so it can be rolled out as quickly and safely as possible. This programme of vaccination is the largest in the history of the NHS.

Dr Anoop Dhesi, a GP in Stalham and Chair of NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), said: "People are understandably eager to get vaccinated and colleagues in local NHS services will contact you when it is time for you to get your jab – please don't contact us, just wait for your invitation.

"Our GP surgeries in Norfolk and Waveney are supporting local hospitals in the delivery of the vaccine. This is really great news and a cause for optimism but there is still a long way to go. We can't afford to be complacent; this is a going to be a huge task and we would like to urge local people to bear with us and to be patient.

"The best thing we can all do to protect ourselves, our families and our communities is to keep following the guidance; wash hands, cover face, and make space."

Got questions about the COVID-19 vaccine programme?

We've set-up a page with the answers to some frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, which we're updating regularly – take a look: www.norfolkandwaveneyccg.nhs.uk/covid19-vaccination-programme.

You're not alone this Christmas: Mental Health Campaign is launched

A new mental health campaign, Not Alone, has been launched to help people who will find this Christmas particularly difficult to deal with.

Norfolk County Council, the Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, local mental health charity, Norfolk and Waveney Mind, and the county's NHS Norfolk and Waveney Clinical

Commissioning Group are working in partnership with the support of Archant to encourage people to reach out to those who may be struggling.

Christmas is often a difficult time of year for people and, with measures in place to prevent the spread of coronavirus, we may not be able to do the things we normally do and to be with friends and family, especially if they are vulnerable and feel they need to be alone to be safe, this year.

The campaign offers support and advice, via an e-card. This digital card can be sent to people who may be struggling, to show that they are being thought of and to signpost them to a range of services that can give them some extra help and support.

To send the e-card click [here](#)

One of the available services is the NHS Wellbeing Service, which offers a range of talking therapies, employment support, peer support and social activities by telephone, video call, instant messaging and webinar. The service is for anyone experiencing common mental health and emotional issues, such as low mood, depression or stress. People can self-refer by visiting www.wellbeingnands.co.uk or call: 0300 123 1503.

Cllr Bill Borrett, Norfolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board said: "I am very pleased to be working with health colleagues over this festive season to convey this very important message; it's okay not to be okay.

"Many people experiencing a mental health problem will speak to their friends and family before they speak to a health professional, so any support you can offer would be really valuable. If someone tells you that they are struggling, it's common not to know what to do or say, but you don't need any special training to show that you care. Just being there and doing little things can make a difference. That's exactly what this campaign is about – helping us all to be there for others – and telling us all where to find support services should they need them."

Diane Hull, Chief Nurse at Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust, said: "Christmas can be a joyful time of the year, filled with festivities and seeing loved ones. However, for some people, it can also be one of the hardest times of the year - this so more than ever as we have to learn to celebrate differently.

"If you start to feel unsafe, distressed or worried about your mental health you can call the First Response helpline on 0808 196 3494 - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all through the festive period."

Use your NHS wisely this Christmas

With Christmas and New Year fast approaching people in Norfolk and Waveney are being reminded to Think 111 First if they need medical care over the festive period and to make sure they request their regular medications early.

Those who take regular medication should make sure they have ordered enough to last through the holiday period or ask their GP practice for a new prescription.

Planning ahead is very important to help stay well and it also helps the NHS at a time when services are busy.

Dr Anoop Dhesi, Chair of the Norfolk and Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group said: "It's essential to plan ahead at this time of year. If you have a long-term health condition you should make sure you have enough medication for the holiday period, but please don't attempt to stockpile more than you need.

“Ordering and collecting new prescriptions can take several days. So, if you or someone you care for needs medicines regularly, please make sure you order and collect repeat prescriptions in good time. If you have elderly relatives or neighbours, ask them if they need help collecting their medications.”

Winter illnesses such as colds and coughs, sore throats, and upset stomachs can easily be treated at home with medicines available at low cost from your local pharmacy.

Dr Dhesi added: “Pharmacists are experts in medicines and can give advice about minor illnesses so you can care for yourself at home. They are available on every high street and at some supermarkets, with many open evenings and weekends.”

Be sure to stock up on winter self-care essentials for your medicine cabinet: take advice from your pharmacist before purchasing if you take other medicines.

- pain relief (paracetamol)
- cough and sore throat remedies
- first aid kit
- upset stomach treatment
- rehydration treatment
- heartburn and indigestion treatment

Winter is a busy time for health services and patients are being asked to choose services wisely and help ease the pressure on the local NHS.

For life-threatening emergencies call 999, otherwise:

NHS 111

If you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do, contact NHS 111 first.

If you think you need A&E, just contact NHS 111 first. The NHS will help you right away and if you need urgent care, the NHS can book you in to be seen quickly and safely.

Contacting NHS 111 first will help NHS urgent and emergency care services maintain social distancing and ensure that patients receive the right care in the right place, in a timely and safe way.

People with life-threatening illnesses or injuries should continue to dial 999 and anyone who arrives at A&E without calling NHS 111 will still receive medical care, with those needing emergency treatment prioritised.

You can use NHS 111 either by visiting the website <https://111.nhs.uk> or by calling 111

The NHS111 Service is free to call and available 24 hours-a-day, seven days-a-week. Your call will be answered by a trained call handler, whose job it is to ensure you can access the most appropriate local service. You can call 111 first if:

- you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency
- you think you need to go to A&E or need another NHS urgent care service
- you need to see a GP urgently when your practice is closed. NHS 111 can arrange for an emergency out-of-hours doctor to help if necessary

- you don't know who to call or you don't have a GP to call
- you need health information or reassurance about what to do next

You can call 111 on your telephone/mobile, you can use the online service <https://111.nhs.uk> or you can use the NHS App on your smartphone or tablet.

Your GP surgery

Your GP surgery will be able to offer appointments with different clinicians, including a doctor or nurse, depending on your needs.

Walk-in Centre and Minor Injuries Unit

[Norwich Practices Health and Walk-in Centre](#) is open seven days-a-week between 7am and 9pm.

It is based at Rouen House, Rouen Road, Norwich, telephone 01603 677500. The [Minor Injuries Unit at Cromer Hospital](#) is open seven days-a-week between 8am and 7.45pm, in Mill Road, Cromer, telephone 01603 646230.

Your pharmacy

Pharmacy opening times over the holiday period are available [here](#).

You can find your nearest surgery or pharmacy by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/>

Mental Health support available for the public

- It's important that we look after our mental wellbeing during this time – for tips and advice visit www.everymindmatters.co.uk.
- If you are worried about your own mental health and wellbeing call First Response, a free 24/7 helpline offering immediate support, on 0808 196 3494.
- 11 to 25 year olds in Norfolk and Waveney can get support and online counselling via www.Kooth.com. The service provides support or advice on any topic, including managing your feelings during the pandemic.
- JustOneNorfolk has a wealth of information and links to support the health and wellbeing of your family: www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk



NHS
Norfolk and Suffolk
NHS Foundation Trust

First Response
Call: 0808 196 3494
(Freephone)

A 24/7 service for people of all ages in Norfolk and Suffolk requiring mental health care, advice and support.



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