

Update on what the NHS in Norfolk and Waveney is doing to respond to coronavirus (16 September 2020)

Access to COVID-19 testing

The national testing programme, commissioned by the Department for Health and Social Care, and managed nationally, is experiencing continued and exceptionally high demand. NHS Test and Trace figures show that between mid-June and the end of August the number of people getting tested for the first time (via the national testing programme) rose by 63%. Demand for testing increased significantly again last week and the level of demand is expected to remain high for the next two weeks.

Drivers of the increased demand include:

- The prevalence of COVID-19 is rising, and an increasing number of areas are now on the Contain watchlist.
- The return of schools.
- Members of the public seeking testing when not symptomatic, sometimes inappropriately advised by schools, workplaces or for travel purposes. (A recent survey at testing sites suggests around a quarter of people who have accessed tests did not have symptoms.)

The national programme is advising that anyone who is unable to book an appointment through the national gov.uk website portal or are directed out of area should wait a few hours and try again. Appointments are centrally controlled and released as the national test and trace programme manages demand.

Here are some key messages regarding testing – your help sharing these would really help:

- The main symptoms of coronavirus are: **a high temperature, a new, continuous cough and a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste**. Most people with coronavirus have at least one of these symptoms.
- If you have COVID-19 symptoms, get a test. It's really important that anyone with COVID-19 symptoms can get a test. This will help us stop the spread of the virus. If you don't have COVID-19 symptoms and you are trying to book a test, do not come forwards for a test – **you could be taking a test away from someone who really needs it**. This is increasingly important as we head into autumn and winter and more people will get colds and the flu. Only if you have one of the three symptoms should you book a test.
- Do not stockpile tests – we have plenty of stock and if you develop symptoms in future you will be able to book a test. There is no need to order a test in case of future use.
- If someone in your household starts to have symptoms, then that person must get tested and the rest of the household should self-isolate with them whilst they wait for the results. If you or other members of the household don't have symptoms, then you should not get a test – only people with symptoms should get tested. The vast majority of people who are tested in person get their results the very next day. [Full guidance on self-isolation is available on gov.uk](#).
- If you are self-isolating or in quarantine, then a negative test result does not mean you can end isolation early. The virus can take time to develop and so a test early on does not prove that you won't go on to develop the virus. That means you could still be at risk of spreading the disease to other people.
- If you have symptoms and need to book a test, you can do this online or by ringing 119. We have been seeing more people trying to ring 111 about testing but we need to make sure that 111 is protected for people who are ringing about other medical and health issues.

- Schools have been issued with national [guidance on testing](#) and the advice for parents and teachers. It is very important that this guidance is followed. Schools should not advise pupils or teachers to take a test unless they exhibit one or more of the listed symptoms. If there is a confirmed case then schools should not advise entire classes or year groups to get tested. Only those with symptoms or those advised by their clinician or council should get a test. Schools must not require students to provide evidence of a negative test before letting them back to school.

Getting help from your GP practice

GPs are working hard to provide care safely. GP practices have remained open to patients throughout the pandemic and have offered appointments based on clinical need. These appointments are sometimes face to face, sometimes remote through online, video or telephone consultation. NHS Norfolk and Waveney CCG has invested significantly in supporting digital solutions in practices to enable them to offer these services to patients.

We know from research that we've done recently, that many people really value remote appointments. For example, people have told us they like them because it means that can take a quick break from work, have a call with their GP and go back to work, rather than have to take time off and travel to their surgery for a ten-minute appointment.

Face-to-face appointments are available for people that need them. The CCG has conducted an audit of practice websites and telephone messages to make sure they are clear about the availability of appointments.

Here are some key messages about how people can get help from their GP practice – your help sharing these would really help:

- Before turning up to your GP practice contact them online, by an app or by phone to be assessed. If appropriate, you will receive advice or care via video or over the phone.
- Please follow your practice's safety advice if visiting your GP for an appointment. Do not go to your GP practice if you have symptoms of coronavirus or are self-isolating.



To protect you from coronavirus, your GP practice will try to help you remotely and then see you face-to-face if needed.



Launch of #WeCareTogether – Norfolk and Waveney People Plan 2020-25

The health and care workforce, both paid and unpaid, has responded incredibly to the pandemic. Just prior to the pandemic we were finalising our workforce plan, having reflected on the last six months, we have now completed and published #WeCareTogether, the Norfolk and Waveney People Plan for 2020-25.

#WeCareTogether is a culmination of 18 months' work with over 1,000 local people to design an ambition plan to ensure Norfolk and Waveney is the best place to work in health and social care.

Our vision is for our people to be happy, healthy and provide excellent compassionate care, which we will achieve through:

- Creating new opportunities for our people
- Promoting good health and well-being for our people
- Maximising the skills of our people; and
- Creating a positive and inclusive culture for our people

Our plan mirrors the key themes of the national NHS People Plan and considers the impact of the pandemic on our health and care system.

We are establishing a Norfolk and Waveney People Board. The Board will take the lead in ensuring the aims of the national NHS People Plan and the local Norfolk and Waveney #WeCareTogether People Plan are delivered.

Read #WeCareTogether [here](#).

Protecting each other

Wash your hands to reduce risk. Cover your face to reduce risk. Make space to reduce risk. Do all three to save lives. It only takes two seconds to put on a mask.



Locally supported contact tracing for COVID-19

Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council are both setting-up new locally supported contact tracing services to ensure more local input and knowledge into this important activity. Public Health England has approved this new way of working to enhance the current service carried out by NHS Test and Trace.

Norfolk County Council's local contract tracing system launched on 11 September – here's how it will work:

- The locally delivered service will step in when NHS Test and Trace teams cannot contact new cases within 24 hours. Specially trained local call handlers from Norfolk County Council will make further attempts to contact cases, including checking local information to clarify and improve data details. The new service then extends out to ground teams at all of the district councils who can further enhance the chances of engaging with local people. This is a great example of collaborative working across our public services.

- Dr Louise Smith, Norfolk County Council’s Director of Public Health, said: “Having the information ourselves will help us identify trends and sharing information at an earlier stage will most definitely speed up the tracing process, and give us early flags around what could become an outbreak.”

More information about the Norfolk County Council service is available [here](#).

Linked to this, all evidence suggests the outbreak of COVID-19 at Banham Poultry has been contained. The overall seven-day average daily number of cases in Norfolk is reducing. On 8 September it was 8.7 per 100,000 population (6.2 excluding the known Banham Poultry worker cases), down from a peak of 18.3 at the height of the outbreak.

Mental health support available

- 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.



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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