

Wells-next-the-sea : County Councillor

Report: Michael Dalby - January 2022

COVID-19

Given the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 the government has launched the Get Boosted Now campaign to encourage people to get a booster shot as soon as they can – anyone over the age of 18 is now able to book a booster. This will help to avoid the NHS being overwhelmed and to keep the economy open.

Since the 14th December, in England people who are fully vaccinated and identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 should take an NHS lateral flow test everyday for 7 days and must test negative on day 6 and day 7 with a 24 hour gap between tests, instead of having to isolate.

From Tuesday 11th January, people who test positive for COVID-19 on an Lateral flow test won't need a follow-up PCR to confirm that an asymptomatic person has COVID-19.

The most recent **verified data on cases in the UK and Norfolk** is available from **Public Health England** and **Norfolk Insights**.

Adult Social Care

Plans to support Adult Social Services with the expected "winter pressures" have been proposed. Adult Social Services received 20,279 calls for support between April and October last year – an increase of 9,400 over four years.

Action being taken by the Council includes:

- Expanding action to support people at home or, where appropriate, in short term residential settings
- Stepping up the council's care recruitment campaign, to tackle staff shortages
- Providing wrap-around support for care settings
- Providing assistive technology, with 100 video phones sent out to homes
- Improving capacity in the Norfolk First Response service
- Supporting mental health services, with three new step down services

A total of £1.4bn will be made available over three years to help increase the fee rate local authorities pay to care providers.

Following from last week's announcement of £300m the government regarding funding for workforce recruitment and retention to help tackle low staffing levels due to the mandatory vaccination that took effect on the 11th November 2021.

Winter Flooding

NCC has issued guidance about simple, practical steps that can mitigate flood risk and reduce the likelihood of flood water entering properties, by ensuring water can drain away from homes, keeping domestic drains, ditches and watercourses clear and allowing water to flow freely. By checking the drains on their own property for any blockages such as mud, leaves and stones, residents can help mitigate the impact of flooding.

Outside, if residents spot any blocked or broken drains on Norfolk's highways' they can report it, via www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding, allowing Norfolk's Highways Team to clear them and keep roads open.

Ditches and watercourses are another area where the free flow of water can help keep flooding at bay. Under UK law, landowners have a responsibility to keep watercourses on their property clear, even if only a few feet of ditch pass through their property. These duties, known as Riparian responsibility, do not show up on property searches, which can leave landowners unaware of this important role. Hedges or fences that are erected within the boundaries of a property can even prevent owners knowing they have a watercourse to maintain.

This winter, all property owners are being urged to check ditches and watercourses on or adjacent to their land, to confirm what their responsibilities are, and keep the ditches clear. Even smaller watercourses which may be dry for most of the year, play a key drainage role in wet weather. Keeping ditches clear of fallen trees, branches, bushes, garden refuse or rubble and litter will help water flow and lower the risk of flooding. The guidance asks, could a fish swim through the ditch or watercourse? If the answer is no, it needs clearing.

Information about Riparian responsibilities is at www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding

To report a flood, or find out more about how to prepare for flooding, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding

In an emergency, residents across Norfolk can report flooding by telephone via [0344 800 8013](tel:03448008013).

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