


SPRING 2020 

Northumberland news

SPECIAL COVID-19 EDITION



NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

HOW TO GET SUPPORT OR HELP OTHERS

KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE

PROTECTING OUR SHIELDED RESIDENTS



Northumberland
County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk



INSIDE

- 3 Northumberland Communities Together
- 4 How to help your communities during COVID-19
- 5 Keeping yourself safe
Schools information
- 6 COVID-19 prevention methods explained
- 7 Protecting our shielded residents
- 8 Our pledge to domestic violence victims
- 9 Financial help during COVID-19
- 10 Government support for Northumberland businesses
- 11 Useful contacts
Service changes



KEEP IN TOUCH...

To keep up to date with the latest information on coronavirus, and stay informed on all our service developments, please follow us on our social media channels.

The County Council website www.northumberland.gov.uk is being updated each day to reflect the changing situation and is also a really good source of helpful information.



facebook.com/northumberlandCC



twitter.com/N_LandCouncil



instagram.com/NLandCC



youtube.com/NorthumberlandTV



“WE ARE WORKING ON WAYS THAT THE COUNCIL CAN HELP RESIDENTS ACROSS THE COUNTY, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN MOST NEED.”

FOREWORD BY COUNCILLOR PETER JACKSON

A MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER OF NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL

It's true to say that we are living in an unprecedented crisis, certainly the biggest known to many of us in peacetime, as the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak takes its grip across the world.

I know this is an incredibly difficult and worrying time for all residents and businesses across Northumberland, and I want to reassure you that we have plans in place to continue to deliver critical services to the best of our ability following guidance from the Government.

Our frontline Council services are, and will continue to be, challenged as this outbreak develops, and we are working tirelessly to respond and deal with COVID-19 - prioritising key services such as children's and adult social care, and essential services which are vital to our communities.

The response from residents and businesses in Northumberland has been nothing short of incredible, with communities coming together to support those most in need and at risk. To support these efforts we launched **Northumberland Communities Together**, to support our network of volunteer groups, to make sure that help is targeted exactly where it is needed, and that the most vulnerable in our communities are safeguarded and protected.

I am acutely aware of the economic impact this crisis is having on all our communities, and we are working on ways that the Council can help residents across the county, particularly those in most need.

Our teams are also working flat out to support businesses to help them access key grants and loan schemes that have been made available by the Government.

These financial measures to protect

jobs, incomes and businesses are certainly welcome economic interventions in this continued period of uncertainty.

Please be assured there is hope for the future. We are already working on a plan for recovery, exploring every possible opportunity to support our residents and businesses to thrive and grow. I'm confident we will come out of this stronger - stronger together.

However, to make sure we get there as quickly as possible, we all need to continue to support each other, and change our behaviour to help stop the spread of this virus. That is why it is so important that we follow the guidance from the Government and play our part. The decisions we make today affect all of us.

SO PLEASE STAY HOME. PROTECT THE NHS. SAVE LIVES.





NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, we've seen a phenomenal outpouring of community spirit across Northumberland.



Our voluntary and community organisations, our Town and Parish Councils, and local charities have all come together to rally support across the county, with many more new networks and groups being set up to support our most vulnerable residents through this difficult time.

To say we have been blown away by this would be an understatement - it is at times like this when our communities really demonstrate their compassion for their neighbours, friends and families who all need help.

We are incredibly proud and grateful to all of those who have stepped up and offered their support - what these groups are doing to help each other is simply amazing, and we are truly thankful. Many areas already have volunteers in place who are coordinating with local partners including supermarkets to ensure residents have access to vital supplies, including food shopping and picking up prescriptions.

Sometimes just a simple knock on the door to check up on those living on their own, particularly those in isolated or rural areas, can mean so much - being a good neighbour has never been more important. All our local heroes are playing their part in looking out for each other.

We can't thank you enough for being there for the people of Northumberland during this time. As a Council, we're doing our bit too. We have launched **Northumberland Communities Together** to strengthen and connect all the volunteering networks.

We are here to support residents, groups and volunteers with practical advice and help for

things like food supplies, access to resources for other essentials, as well as safeguarding information for our most vulnerable and at risk residents.

Northumberland Communities Together is intended to enhance the work of all our local community and voluntary groups, connecting the most vulnerable in our communities with the support they need, whilst making sure that they are safeguarded and protected. This is where the Council is playing a critical role.

We have mapped out where all this activity is taking place across Northumberland, to make sure support is coordinated, to target help exactly where it is needed, and make sure no-one falls through the net.



Northumberland
County Council



JOIN US NOW...



www.northumberland.gov.uk/communitiestogether



01670 620 015 (9am to 6pm, seven days a week)



WANT TO HELP YOUR COMMUNITY DURING THE COVID-19 SITUATION?



Your communities are strong and resilient. There are simple things you can do to help them continue to thrive!



1 Check-in on vulnerable family, friends and neighbours

Just helping them with their shopping and checking they have everything they need can make a huge difference. Know someone self-isolating? Call or text them to check they're ok.



2 Volunteer with Northumberland Communities Together

To volunteer, visit:
www.northumberland.gov.uk/communitiestogether
or call **01670 620 015**
(9am to 6pm, seven days a week)

DO YOU NEED SUPPORT?



If you are in need of help or support, reach out to your community. You are not alone.



1 Call on your family, friends, neighbours or those you trust

Our communities have really come together during this difficult time. Most of us will have family, friends or trusted neighbours who can help. Just reach out!



2 Call on your local voluntary and community group, Parish or Town Council or local charity

If you are already in contact with any of these groups, call them and ask for help.



3 Call Northumberland Communities Together

The Council has launched Northumberland Communities Together to strengthen and connect our community and volunteering network. Our dedicated team can help you.

INFORMATION

If you are struggling with managing at home and need support for basic things like food, and have been unable to get help from family, friends or local community groups:



Call **01670 620 015**

(9am to 6pm, seven days a week)

KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE!

It can be difficult to know who to trust at this time. Unfortunately, there are some people who will try to take advantage of the current situation. **Be aware of scams and protect yourself and others!**



CORONAVIRUS AND SCAMS

- Coronavirus testing kits - these are only offered by the NHS.
- Vaccines or miracle cures - there is currently no vaccine or cure.
- Overpriced or fake goods to protect yourself from coronavirus such as anti-bacterial products.
- Shopping or medication collection services - asking for money upfront.
- Offers to clean your home of coronavirus.
- Bogus text messages.

Be aware of people offering or selling:

- Don't assume everyone is genuine. It's okay to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. If someone attempts to pressure you into accepting a service then they are unlikely to be genuine.
- Don't be rushed into making a decision, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Only buy goods or services from trusted sellers and think before parting with money or personal information.

We are also aware of people visiting properties pretending to be social workers or to enforce coronavirus guidelines. Only uniformed police officers can enforce social distancing.

- All social workers and care managers carry ID. If you are in any doubt, please call **OneCall** on **01670 536 400** to check their identity.
- All Northumberland County Council staff carry ID on them. If they don't have ID, don't allow them in. Anyone who is not a uniformed police officer claiming to enforce social distancing should be reported to Northumbria Police.
- **Protect yourself and others:** If you are unsure, check with family and friends before accepting offers of help.



For advice on scams call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **0808 223 1133**

To report a scam call Action Fraud on **0300 123 2040**



Contact your bank if you think you have been scammed

SCHOOLS INFORMATION

Northumberland schools have been closed to all children except those with key worker parents or carers, and the most vulnerable children.

Key workers include NHS staff, police and delivery drivers who need to be able to go to work. Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker and those with educational health and care plans.

In Northumberland, we have had a phenomenal response from our schools, who are proud to provide care and support at this time.

Many have made personal sacrifices to enable our key

Major changes were announced by the Government for schools on Friday 20 March and will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

workers, including healthcare colleagues, to do their jobs and ultimately save lives.

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication they have shown. We thank all our schools for their commitment and support in these difficult circumstances.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

We are working with schools to make sure that children who are entitled to means tested free school meals continue to get them. Schools are doing this in many ways from home cooked food, packed lunches and food parcel deliveries, as well as vouchers for supermarkets.

Parents should speak directly to their school for support.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

School transport continues to be provided for those that need it.



GOVERNMENT ADVICE

The Government has provided the following guidance:

If it is at all possible for children to be at home, then they should be.

If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.

Parents should not rely for childcare upon those who are advised to be in the stringent social distancing category such as grandparents, friends, or family members with underlying conditions.

Parents should also do everything they can to ensure children are not mixing socially in a way which can continue to spread the virus.

For children who are at home, schools have made arrangements to send out work packs to use as study aids.



Please visit our website for help and advice: www.northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus/schools



SELF-ISOLATION VERSUS SOCIAL DISTANCING

COVID-19 PREVENTION METHODS EXPLAINED

SELF-ISOLATION

SOCIAL DISTANCING

1 WHO IS THE ADVICE FOR?

- Anyone who develops symptoms (defined as a new continuous cough AND/OR a high temperature) and all other household members.



- Everyone **MUST** remain at home.
- If you are leaving for unavoidable reasons such as buying groceries or essentials, then follow social distancing rules remaining two metres apart.

2 HOW LONG IS IT FOR?

- Individuals with symptoms **MUST** self-isolate for 7 days.
- Household members must self-isolate for 14 days.



- Likely to be in place for many weeks.

3 WHO CAN YOU INTERACT WITH?

- Remain home. **DO NOT** go to work, school or public areas and **DO NOT** use public transport or taxis.
- **DO NOT** go out to buy food or essentials, ask friends or relatives to help.
- **DO NOT** invite or allow social visitors to enter your home.



- Avoid contact with anyone displaying symptoms.
- Avoid non-essential use of public transport.
- Avoid large gatherings.
- Avoid gatherings with friends and family.

4 WHAT CAN I DO?

- Stay in touch with friends and family via phone or social media.
- Things such as cooking, reading, online learning or watching films.
- If you feel well, light exercise in your home or garden.



- Work from home where possible.
- Exercise or go out for a walk if you stay more than two metres away from others.
- Go outside in the garden.
- Keep in contact with friends and family via phone or social media.
- Stay two metres apart when outside your household.

Health at home

We know that staying at home for a prolonged period of time can be difficult, frustrating and lonely for some people.

During this challenging time, it's important to take care of your mind as well as your body. We have created a dedicated page to help you stay healthy while you're at home.

The tips and advice here are things that you can do now to help support your health and wellbeing if you are having to spend extended periods of time at home.

THESE ARE OUR **TOP FIVE TIPS**:

- 1 Stay virtually connected with friends, family and neighbours** – pick up the phone or have a conversation online through social media apps.
- 2 Keep active** – look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the NHS website or visit www.activenorthumberland.org.uk to access home workout videos.
- 3 Eat well** – try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals and drink plenty of water.
- 4 Activate your brain** – do things you enjoy such as reading, cooking, learning a new craft, or mindfulness exercises.
- 5 Keep to your normal routine as much as possible** – set your alarm, eat at regular meal times and go to bed as usual.

Health advice

NHS information states that COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus.

Everyone must stay at home to help stop the spread of coronavirus. This includes people of all ages – even if you do not have any symptoms or other health conditions.

You can only leave your home:

- **To shop for basic essentials** – only when you really need to.
- **To do one form of exercise a day** – such as a run, walk or cycle, alone or with other people you live with.
- **For any medical need** – for example, to visit a pharmacy or deliver essential supplies to a vulnerable person.
- **To travel to and from work** – but only where this is absolutely necessary.



PROTECTING OUR SHIELDED RESIDENTS

The Government has set up a system to ensure our shielded residents receive free essential food parcels delivered to their front doors.

The Council is supporting the national effort with a local supply of emergency food parcels being delivered to doorsteps, to make sure that those that are shielded and at the highest risk can stay at home at all times to prevent exposure to the virus.

A community shielding hub has been established with a dedicated team of Council staff, redeployed from their

usual day jobs, with support from Active Northumberland.

Shielding for clinically extremely vulnerable residents is part of a national programme. It includes people who have had recent organ transplants, have certain cancers or severe respiratory conditions, and pregnant women with significant heart disease, congenital or acquired.

SUPPORT WITH MEDICATION

If you need support with getting medication, you can do this through your local community pharmacy / chemist directly.

You can find your nearest pharmacy at:

www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-pharmacy

SEEING YOUR GP

You are still able to access GP services, however, there may be changes to opening times and short notice closures given the circumstances, which means patients will need to be seen at neighbouring practices. Please contact your GP or check their website for information.



NEED MORE INFORMATION?

If you think you fall into the category of clinically extremely vulnerable and you have not received a letter or been contacted by your GP, you can register online at:

www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable



Find out more information at www.northumberland.gov.uk





OUR PLEDGE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS DURING LOCKDOWN

Sadly, coronavirus lockdown has led to some people living in fear - fear of abuse. If you feel at risk of domestic abuse during the lockdown, please remember, you are not alone and help is available for you.

USEFUL NUMBERS

If you are in danger but unable to talk on the phone, please call: **999 followed by 55**, and you will receive police assistance without having to speak.

Advice and support is available by calling: **01670 820 199** or visiting: www.placesforpeople.co.uk/supported-living/domestic-abuse

Freephone 24h National Domestic Abuse Helpline: **0808 247 2000**

Further support around domestic abuse and COVID-19 can be found at: www.safelives.org.uk/news-views/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19

Women's Aid offers a confidential online chat service, available here: www.chat.womensaid.org.uk

WORRIED ABOUT THE WELFARE OF A CHILD OR ADULT?

If you are worried about the welfare, health or wellbeing of a child or adult living in Northumberland call **Onecall: 01670 536 400** or email: onecall@northumbria.nhs.uk

Onecall brings together a range of key partners whose priority is providing help at the earliest opportunity before the situation becomes more serious.

Our experienced team includes social workers, district nurses, therapists, early help workers, or specialists in mental health, telecare or home improvement depending on the nature of the enquiry.

WHEN DO I USE ONECALL?

- Living safely and independently at home.
- Looking after someone who is ill or disabled.
- Caring for a child or young person.
- Family support if you are concerned about a child or young person.
- Reporting abuse or neglect of a child or adult.
- Finding alternatives if you can't live at home.
- Recovering from an illness or injury at home.



**AT HOME
SHOULDN'T
MEAN AT RISK**
#YOUARENOTALONE





FINANCIAL HELP DURING COVID-19

During the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, many residents are likely to be under increased financial pressure. Here we provide you with some key information to help you through this period of uncertainty.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The Government has announced a wide range of measures to help people and businesses during this period. Full details of the support being offered can be found on www.gov.uk/coronavirus

MORTGAGE PAYMENT HOLIDAYS

Mortgage lenders have agreed they will support customers through payment holidays of up to three months. Please contact your mortgage lender directly if you wish to consider this option.



COUNCIL TAX

If your circumstances have not changed, it is really important that you continue to pay your Council Tax as this money is used by the Council to provide essential services to our communities. Please pay by Direct Debit wherever possible.

If you cannot set up a direct debit then payments can be made online at:

northumberland.gov.uk/selfservice/pay (choose the pay Council Tax option) or via the automated telephone line **0345 600 6400**.

COUNCIL TAX HARDSHIP FUND

The Council Tax Hardship Fund will be allocated to residents already receiving

Council Tax Support. This is an additional £150 of funding for those who already receive support due to their financial situation during COVID-19.

The fund will help towards the cost of Council Tax for people on a low income or those who claim certain benefits including Universal Credit. It means that those who may have lost work or money due to coronavirus, could now benefit from this means of help.

If you are experiencing financial difficulties, you can apply for additional support. Visit: northumberland.gov.uk/coronavirus/FAQs

BENEFITS SYSTEM

If your income has been reduced you may be entitled to additional income through the benefits system. Information about what is available and your eligibility can be found at gov.uk/browse/benefits

BENEFIT CHANGES BECAUSE OF CORONAVIRUS

The Universal Credit standard allowance and working tax credit basic element will both be increased by up to £1,040 a year for 12 months. The amount you will get depends on your circumstances including household income. For more information visit: understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus

NATIONAL FREE SCHOOL MEALS VOUCHER SCHEME

If your child normally receives free school meals and your school is not currently able to provide them, don't worry - they can now provide you with a weekly shopping voucher to spend at supermarkets. Please contact your school for more information.

COUNCIL TENANTS

If you are a council house tenant and you lose your job or get into financial difficulties then please speak to your income officer by emailing income@northumberland.gov.uk or calling **0345 600 6400**. We will be able to provide you with support and advice.

We'd also like to reassure tenants we will **NOT** be evicting people who are in rent arrears as a direct result of the coronavirus.

COMMUNITY BANK

Northumberland Community Bank offers secure savings and loan facilities as a local, friendly alternative to high street banks and lenders.

Call **01670 522 779** (Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm) or visit: northumberlandcommunitybank.org.uk

DEBT

Don't ignore a debt problem - doing nothing could make things worse.

You can find lots of helpful advice at northumberland.gov.uk/tax/debt

COUNCIL CONTACTS FOR FINANCIAL MATTERS

For matters relating to Council Tax billing, including changes in circumstances, discounts and exemptions please contact Counciltax@northumberland.gov.uk

For matters relating to Council Tax arrears, including court action and enforcement agents please contact recovery@northumberland.gov.uk

Please continue to check the Northumberland County Council website for further updates as new information becomes available: www.northumberland.gov.uk



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR NORTHUMBERLAND BUSINESSES

The Council has established a specialist team to support businesses and employers both during and after the coronavirus crisis - the **Northumberland Business Hub**



“

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS CRITICAL TO THE FUTURE PROSPERITY OF NORTHUMBERLAND

CLLR PETER JACKSON
COUNCIL LEADER

”

The Northumberland Business Hub is helping people to access available support, providing advice and guidance, and finding out what the key issues are for the business community.

The information collected will be used to feed into future policy and support initiatives, and the Council is already working on an economic recovery plan.

The Government has announced significant support for businesses that are suffering from hardship

due to coronavirus, and the Council is supporting the implementation of these, as well as delivering some directly within Northumberland.

Councillor Peter Jackson, leader of the Council says: “The business community is critical to the future prosperity of Northumberland.

“We know that these are extremely difficult times for businesses and employers, and we want to assure

them that as a Council we are doing everything that we can to provide help and support throughout.”

Through the Northumberland Business Hub, the Council is

working with Government, regional agencies and together with its

partners at Advance Northumberland.



GOVERNMENT MEASURES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO BUSINESSES:

- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- Self-employment Income Support Scheme
- Deferring VAT and Income Tax payments
- Statutory Sick Pay relief package for SMEs
- 12-month business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality, leisure and nursery businesses in England
- Small business grant funding of £10,000 for all businesses in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- Grant funding of £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000
- Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme offering loans of up to £5 million for SMEs through the British Business Bank
- New lending facility from the Bank of England to help support liquidity among larger firms, helping them bridge coronavirus disruption to their cash flows through loans
- HMRC Time To Pay Scheme



You can find full and up to date information here www.northumberland.gov.uk/businesshub



Northumberland County Council

USEFUL CONTACTS

ONECALL

If you are worried about a child or adult's immediate welfare (health or well-being) please call:
01670 536 400

NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

For anyone struggling to access basic support needs, such as food, and who is unable to get help from family, friends or a local support group due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Call **01670 620 015** between 9am and 6pm, seven days a week.

If you want to volunteer and offer support, register your interest at:

www.northumberland.gov.uk/communitiestogether

CONTACTING THE COUNCIL

If you need to contact the Council in relation to Council Tax, bin collections, housing queries, or report, apply, or pay for something.

In the first instance, please use the Council's website, to allow our teams to respond to coronavirus:

www.northumberland.gov.uk

NORTHUMBERLAND BUSINESS HUB

If you have a business, employer, or are self employed in Northumberland visit:

www.northumberland.gov.uk/businesshub

DOMESTIC ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICE NORTHUMBERLAND

This service is available 24 hours a day, providing confidential support and advice for women and men who are at risk of domestic abuse.

01670 820 199

COUNCIL SERVICE CHANGES

OPERATING AS NORMAL

All the Council's essential services are operating as normal at this time. These include all bin collections, including garden waste, street cleaning, grass cutting services and adult and children's social care.

IMPORTANT BIN INFORMATION

If someone in your household is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 please double bag your waste, tie the handles and leave it for 72 hours before putting it in your bin. This will keep our bin crews safe and this vital service running.

CLOSED SERVICES

Following Government guidance, we have temporarily closed some Council services. These include:

- Household waste recovery centres and bulky waste collections
- Libraries, leisure centres, customer service centres, tourist information centres and public toilets
- Car parks at key tourist destinations
- Bolam Lake, Plessey Woods and Druridge Bay Country Parks
- Playgrounds

Many services are offering an online service, please visit our website www.northumberland.gov.uk for more information.

DIGITAL LIBRARY SERVICES

Although our libraries are temporarily closed, we are offering lots of exciting digital options to make sure you don't miss out on your favourite books or club.

Anyone with a library card can access hundreds of eBooks, eAudio as well as more than 20 eMagazines on their digital libraries. If you're not already a member sign up today at:

www.mylibrary.co.uk



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT **WWW.NORTHUMBERLAND.GOV.UK**



OR CALL US **0345 600 6400** (OFFICE HOURS ONLY)

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL • COUNTY HALL • MORPETH • NORTHUMBERLAND • NE61 2EF



HM Government

NHS

CORONAVIRUS
STAY HOME
TO HELP US
SAVE LIVES

**IF YOU GO OUT,
YOU CAN SPREAD IT.
PEOPLE WILL DIE.**

STAY HOME ► PROTECT THE NHS ► SAVE LIVES