

January 2021

Dear resident,

These are unprecedented times and we recognise that going into a third national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic will be very difficult for many of you. We are writing to help you understand what this means for us all in North Yorkshire, and to make sure you know what support is available. We also want you to know that no one in North Yorkshire should feel alone.

What is the current risk?

The new variant of the virus moves between people much more easily. A small amount of exposure can lead to infection. We know that people mixing inside homes has been a key way in which the virus transfers, so please play your part and do not meet other people inside. Infection rates have been rising very quickly in many areas of North Yorkshire, regardless of how rural the communities are. It is important to remember that one in three people with Covid have no symptoms and can be spreading it without knowing.

Here is a summary of the key points of this national lockdown. You are only allowed to leave home to:

- shop for essentials for your household or a vulnerable person/people you are helping and this should be as locally as possible;
- go to work, or provide voluntary or charitable services, if you cannot do so from home;
- exercise with your household (or support bubble) or one other person, this should be limited to once per day and you should stay local;
- meet your support bubble or childcare bubble where necessary, but only if you are legally permitted to form one;
- seek medical help or avoid injury, illness or risk of harm (including domestic abuse); and
- attend education or childcare, for anyone who is eligible.

You can find out more about help and advice in this area at www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus

What is a support bubble?

If you live alone or you are a single parent who lives only with your children, you can meet with one other household without social distancing. This is called a support bubble. Not everyone meets the government criteria for a support bubble and you can check if you do at www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Symptoms

The main symptoms are a new and continuous cough, a fever, loss of taste and/or smell. For more about the symptoms, please visit www.nhs.uk

If you feel unwell, with even mild Covid symptoms, please protect your friends and family by behaving as though you are infectious - self-isolate and book a test. You can do this online via www.northyorks.gov.uk/covidtest or call 119.

When you dial 119 you will be asked where you are calling from. Press 1 to confirm that you are calling from England. You will then be asked if you would like to speak to someone in English or in a different language. If you would like to speak to someone in a different language, please press 2. Your call will then be put through to the coronavirus testing centre.

It's important that you ask for the help of an interpreter to help you understand the NHS test and trace service.

If you are required to isolate, you must comply for the full period required. This is ten days for anyone who tests positive **and ten** days if you live with, or have come into contact with, anyone who tests positive. You are increasing the risk for others if you do not.

Supporting each other

Thank you to everyone looking out for friends and neighbours, and the many thousands of volunteers helping people across North Yorkshire. Please keep checking on people who might need a hand with things like shopping, collecting medication or just having someone to talk to. A brief telephone chat can make a huge difference to people who may feel lonely or isolated. Please keep in touch with friends and neighbours by phone or online. You can find advice about how to help safely at www.northyorks.gov.uk/helpingduringcovid

We all know that mental and physical health is important. All of us are allowed to undertake daily exercise, outdoors, once a day if we can. As long as we keep 2m apart, then we can exercise with someone from another household too.

What to do if you need help

If you need help with shopping or other essentials, please let family, friends or neighbours know how they can help you. If you do not have anyone to help you, you can contact us and we will direct you to help in your area.

You can complete an online form to let us know what help you need at www.northyorks.gov.uk/covidhelp

We are currently dealing with a high number of phone calls, so please use this form if you can. If you do not have access to the internet, our contact centre is open seven days a week between 8am and 5.30pm so please call 01609 780 780.

If you call this number because you are isolating and need support, please press 1. You will then be transferred to our customer service centre. We may need to take your details and get back to you if you need the support of an interpreter, you can also ask someone else to make the call on your behalf.

Shielding

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable are being asked to shield again. If you are in this group, the government will write to you with the latest advice. We will continue to offer support to North Yorkshire residents who are asked to shield. There is an online form to let us know what support you need: www.northyorks.gov.uk/shielding If you do not have access to the internet, our contact centre is open seven days a week between 8am and 5.30pm so please call 01609 780 780.

Vaccine roll out

The NHS in North Yorkshire is working hard to roll out vaccinations across many sites that are equipped to deliver it. When it is your turn, your GP will contact you directly and give you an appointment. If you cannot attend, please let them know so they can re-arrange the appointment for you and vaccinate someone else. Surgeries and other NHS staff are really busy, so it is important everyone remains patient and waits for their invitation.

Team North Yorkshire

As well as working with a network of community support organisations helping people right across the county, North Yorkshire is fortunate to have a strong spirit of volunteering. There are hundreds of people out there who can help you so please do not feel alone. Thanks again for looking out for those around you. We know that many people will want to get involved in their communities and help where they can. If you have the time and want to volunteer, we can introduce you to local organisations in your own community. More information can be found at www.northyorks.gov.uk/helpingduringcovid

Buy Local

If you cannot get out, there are also lots of great North Yorkshire businesses standing by to deliver services and shopping direct to you. There has probably never been a more important time to support local businesses. We encourage you to shop locally to support jobs and the economy at this really difficult time. Please have a look at www.northyorks.gov.uk/buylocal for details of businesses in your area.

Thank you

Even with the new lockdown measures, we still have personal responsibilities to protect ourselves, our families, friends and neighbours. Please remain careful, whether at home or outside for the permitted reasons. Act as if you have the virus and Stay Home, Protect the NHS and Save Lives. Thank you.