



November 2020 Monthly Parish Newsletter



Visit suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus for health advice, service changes, business support and schools' guidance.

Keep up to date on the latest guidance on Covid-19 from central government here: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

A message from Councillor Matthew Hicks, Leader of Suffolk County Council, on free school meals

While Suffolk County Council is not providing the Government-funded vouchers to schools for Free School Meals over this half term week, we are supporting families and children in need as we don't want any child to go hungry.

In August, DEFRA awarded Suffolk County Council £770,000 as our share of the hardship grant. Suffolk Public Sector Leaders provided further match funding of £800,000 in September. So far, the Suffolk system has spent £600,000 and this covers:

- The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme that funds supermarket, food and fuel vouchers; school uniforms; essential furniture items; white goods; and oil heating refills.
- The Suffolk Advice and Support Service phone line.
- A donation of £100,000 to the Suffolk Community Foundation to provide grants to organisations to help communities with immediate hardship.

Some of the help provided to date by the hardship fund includes:

- Supporting families with food and fuel vouchers, paying utility bills, and buying school uniforms.
- Buying a bike for a man to get to his new job, after losing his old job due to Covid-19 and having to sell his car to cover expenses.
- Buying special boots for a child with disabilities, which the family could no longer afford.
- Covering rent arrears for people.

On top of this, Suffolk County Council has also committed £250,000 to Suffolk Foodbanks and awarded a further £60,000 to the Suffolk Community Foundation's emergency hardship fund.

Schools receive government funding to provide free school meals. For maintained schools, this funding comes through Suffolk County Council and is forwarded to our community and voluntary controlled schools annually. In Suffolk, there are now about 19,000 children receiving Free School Meals.

In the early summer, we widened the support given in Suffolk by providing vouchers to families once they apply for Universal Credit and giving vouchers to children entitled to Free School Meals but who are not in school. As you will be aware, the Government funded an extension of the provision of meals for children throughout the school holidays. At SCC we provided extra funding to ensure that children who qualified for FSMs after the Government's deadline still got the vouchers throughout the summer holidays.

Families who need help to feed their children or with any other financial concern can access support in many other ways in Suffolk. In the early days of the pandemic, one of our main challenges was helping those who were isolated and struggling for support. This was addressed through the Home But Not Alone phone line, which is ready to stand up again if needed. We recognise that the challenges that many families face now are financial – and many of these families will be facing hardship for the first time in their lives. The Suffolk Support and Advice Line has been set up to help address these issues. It can help with debt advice, budgeting, mortgage, rent or credit card problems and employment queries. The number is **0800 068 3131** and is manned Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. People can also go to: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/suffolk-advice-and-support-service/>

We appreciate that the needs of people across our county will change as we go into winter. We will work with our partners to ensure that we can adapt and flex to address these needs and offer the right support at the right time.

Council announces £228,000 for tree-planting, protecting hedgerows and verges across Suffolk

Suffolk's natural environment will receive investment for tree-planting, restoring hedgerows, and improving roadside verges for wildlife.

£228,000 from the Suffolk 2020 Fund will enable Suffolk County Council to enhance its work to protect and encourage biodiversity in the county. The authority will do this through a number of new schemes, as well as building on existing work.

Working with The Woodland Trust, Suffolk Tree Wardens, landowners, and county farm tenants, the funding will support the planting of around 100,000 trees, including replanting hedgerows in suitable locations across Suffolk over the next 18 months. It will also help establish around 10 community tree nurseries, which will support more planting in years to come. Local volunteers will be supported to collect seeds, set up nursery beds and grow trees in their communities.

The funding will also be used to trial better ways to manage roadside verges for wildlife. This includes exploring the use of new technology and cutting techniques, as well as developing new partnerships with parishes and landowners. The funding will help expand the existing Roadside Nature Reserve network managed by the council with the help of volunteers, seeing a 25% increase in the overall length of verges managed for wildlife.

Councils ready with Test and Trace Support Payment for most vulnerable

Councils in Suffolk are helping administer a Government scheme to provide financial help to those on low incomes and benefits who must self-isolate.

Details about the Test and Trace Support Payments, and how to apply, can be found on District and Borough Council websites.

If you have been contacted by NHS Test and Trace and told to self-isolate, you are under a legal obligation to do so, and could be eligible for a £500 Test and Trace Support Payment.

Those who are eligible will need to meet all the following criteria:

- Told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.
- Employed or self-employed.
- Cannot work from home and will lose income as a result.
- Currently receiving at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit; income-based Employment and Support Allowance; income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Support; Housing Benefit; and/or Pension Credit.

Applications are made for one person only and any further applications within the same household must be made by each individual. Payments are subject to tax but not National Insurance. People must make the application within 14 days of the last day of their NHS test and trace self-isolation period.

Applicants should ensure that they have the below information available before starting the application:

- NI number
- 8-digit test and trace ID number
- Recent bank statement, proof of self-employment, or wage slips.

If asked to do so by Test and Trace, you must self-isolate by law. Failure to do so will mean you are no longer eligible for the payment and steps will be made to recover the funds.

Please visit the [NHS Test and Trace](#) website for more details of the NHS Test and Trace self-isolation requirements for those:

- Testing [positive](#)
- Those who have been in [contact with someone](#) who has tested positive and now has been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace.

Visit your District or Borough Council websites for details on how to apply for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment:

- Babergh District Council www.babergh.gov.uk
- East Suffolk Council www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk
- Ipswich Borough Council www.ipswich.gov.uk
- Mid Suffolk District Councils www.midsuffolk.gov.uk
- West Suffolk Council www.westsuffolk.gov.uk