

NEWS RELEASE

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Support still available for Norfolk's most vulnerable residents SENT ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE DELIVERY GROUP – PART OF THE NORFOLK RESILIENCE FORUM

The ways in which extremely vulnerable people in Norfolk are supported will change next week, as Government pauses the advice for people to shield from Saturday 1 August.

Since March people at risk of experiencing severe complications if they catch Covid-19 have been advised to stay at home. But in July things began to ease and those shielding were able to start meeting up with people outdoors and could form a 'support bubble' if they lived alone.

From 1 August the Government's advice changes again and means that those residents identified as the most vulnerable no longer need to shield. Instead the advice will be to adopt strict social distancing. This means residents that have been shielding will be able to;

- go to work, if they cannot work from home, as long as their place of work is COVID-safe;
- go outside to buy food, to places of worship and for exercise but they should maintain strict social distancing
- children who are clinically extremely vulnerable can return to their education settings if they are eligible

This change means that the government's National Shielding Service will no longer be in place to deliver food boxes to extremely vulnerable people and pharmacies will be discontinuing some delivery services. The Community Response Hubs which were set up in each local district and have been providing food and medicine delivery for many residents will be scaled back, but Norfolk residents can be reassured that support will still be available, including for those who are isolating as a result of test and trace.

The Community Resilience Delivery Group which was set up by the Norfolk Resilience Forum as part of the local response to Covid-19 – has representatives from district councils and the voluntary sector. This partnership is continuing to work together to support residents through the next stages of the pandemic to ensure we have the best support available for people across Norfolk.

Tom McCabe, Managing Director for Norfolk County Council said; "It is good news that our extremely vulnerable residents can now start to live more normally and have greater freedom and for many this will come with relief. However, we know that for some the easing of restrictions may cause anxiety and stress and the option of going out and about may just not be possible. If that is the case, we want to reassure these residents that help is still available and to call us on 0344 800 8020. It's really

important that people remember that coronavirus is still with us and it's vital that everybody, especially those classed as extremely vulnerable, continue to take precautions to protect themselves against infection which in turn protects others and protects Norfolk."

The support that is in place will be delivered by the volunteers who came forward to support others during lockdown and are still giving time to help, coordinated by Voluntary Norfolk. This can include help to collect shopping or supporting you to get shopping delivered, collection of medications and befriending for those who may be particularly lonely or isolated. This compliments the fantastic support that numerous community groups and local services have given and continue to give to communities and neighbourhoods across the county.

Alan Hopley, Chief Executive of Voluntary Norfolk and Better Together, said; "More than 3400 people have come forward to volunteer across Norfolk since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic which shows incredible generosity. Although things are starting to ease across the country, we know that normal life is still a way off. Our volunteers are vital in our road to recovery and we are thankful that we have them now and for the future to help support Norfolk residents through the continued impacts of Covid-19."

As well as the support available in accessing food, medicine and befriending services, there is also help available for people who may be struggling financially, due to the effects of Covid-19 or otherwise. This is through the Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS) which aims to support people through difficulty by awarding funding, which can be a cash donation or used to make specific purchases. People should apply directly to the scheme by calling 01603 223392 (option 5) or visiting the [website](#).