

News

North Yorkshire pulls together community to meet coronavirus challenge

North Yorkshire is beginning the huge logistical challenge of co-ordinating the county's community response to help those isolated by the coronavirus pandemic.

In a coordinated joint effort with district councils, North Yorkshire County Council is working with 23 community organisations the length and breadth of the county who will work with the voluntary sector in their locality.

“We want to make it clear that people first and foremost should turn to family, neighbours and friends for help with things like getting in groceries or collecting medication or in delivering a hot meal,” said Cllr Carl Les, North Yorkshire County Council's Leader, speaking on behalf of all seven district councils and the county.

“If this network is not available to them we would then ask them to make contact with church organisations, clubs, voluntary sector organisations they are supported by or societies they belong to. But North Yorkshire is known for its great spirit of generosity so that for those with no immediate network of support, we are working with district council colleagues and selected community organisations to deliver that support in their local area.”

The 23 community support organisations will be the single point of contact for the county and district councils and working with the local voluntary sector.

People needing help should contact the County Council's customer service centre on **01609 780780** which will direct them to the contact point in their area.

The role of the community support organisation in each locality is as follows:

- The single point of contact for those who are alone and isolated by the pandemic
- Signposting to what local support is available in the community;
- Act as local hub for individuals and groups wishing to volunteer in the community response;
- Provide information on local shopping options and trusted suppliers who are delivering directly to those who are self-isolating;

The Community Support Organisation will work with local voluntary sector groups to arrange:

- Collection and delivery of shopping using local volunteering resources. Shopping will be delivered in line with the safety guidelines and left on the doorstep or in a safe place, in order to avoid close physical contact;
- Collection and delivery of prescriptions using local volunteers. Prescriptions will be collected by a nominated person or organisation with the agreement of the GP or pharmacist;
- Caring for pets, for example walking a dog.
- Regular social contact via telephone, FaceTime, Skype or other methods that avoid physical contact with an individual in self-isolation.
- Delivery of books and magazines or materials to support hobbies, such as wool or knitting or art materials

The first thing people wanting to help should do is to think about and talk to family, friends and neighbours who may need help. The county council is also urging them to contact local voluntary groups already known to them mindful that the Government's regulations must be observed at all times.

"We don't want volunteers travelling long distances to help out," said Cllr Les. "They need to remain within their local area. Nor do we want them to put themselves or others in personal jeopardy. Like all of us, volunteers must follow the Government's safety guidance on keeping a two metre distance from people and the regular washing of hands.

"If volunteers have specific or specialist skills to offer, again they should be in contact with local groups. They can also contact the county council customer service centre which can direct them to their local community support organisation which can process their offer of help."

The county council is working with the community support organisations to bring in North Yorkshire Volunteer ID cards in line with Government guidance.

"The biggest help is maintaining contact with people who are alone and isolated" said Cllr Les. "We will be looking for volunteers above all who will be able to ring people up and chat with them.

"We want the community response across North Yorkshire to be as coordinated and effective as possible and one which observes the Government's strict guidance on coronavirus. We have a massive task ahead of us and we do not underestimate the challenges or the complexities of what we face. These are unprecedented times for all of us and so it is critical that we do even more to pull together in the right way to get through this crisis."

Dos and don'ts:

- Only leave home for essential shopping and for medical needs and one form of exercise a day;
- You can go to and from work but only if absolutely necessary;
- Public gatherings of more than 2 people are banned, excluding people you live with;
- Don't visit other people's homes or socialise outside your home;
- Keep your distance if you are out – always stay at least two metres or 7 feet from other people;



- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and hot water; this is still the most effective way to keep the disease at bay.

Please Note – People in urgent need of help who have no friends, family, church or clubs to turn to should get in touch with North Yorkshire County Council’s Customer Service Centre of **01609 780780** or go for more information to North Yorkshire County Council’s website www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus

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