

## **December 2020 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks**

### **Current infection rates and pressure on county's hospitals among reasons for Suffolk entering tier two restrictions**

Suffolk's current COVID infection rates, local hotspots and pressure on hospitals are among the reasons why the county entered tier two local restrictions on Wednesday 2 December. Following the decision by central Government to place Suffolk in the High Alert tier, public sector organisations in Suffolk have set out their goal to get the county out of local restrictions as quickly as possible. They have also moved to help residents, business owners and employees to understand the restrictions that will apply across the county, and the reasons for them. Whilst Suffolk has so far seen comparatively lower levels of infection than elsewhere in the region and country, the current infection rate is more than double what it was when Suffolk entered tier one on 14 October. Parts of Suffolk, especially in Ipswich and Hadleigh, are seeing much higher numbers of positive COVID cases than anticipated. This all puts pressure on Suffolk's hospitals, which need to protect Suffolk's vulnerable residents whilst still treating non-COVID patients.

Stuart Keeble, Suffolk's director of public health, said:

"I fully understand that many people will be disappointed that Suffolk has not emerged from the national restrictions in a lower tier, or indeed no tier at all. I am too. Suffolk has done well at keeping our infection rates lower than many other areas in the country, and for that I would like to thank people for what they have done. "The facts facing us today are clear however. With current infection rates and pressure being put on health services, we need to do more of what we have been doing. We need to stick with it. "We know what we need to do to get Suffolk back on track. Every one of us needs to keep following the rules to stop the spread of COVID-19. We need to ensure our hospitals can continue to care for people who urgently need help, including those without COVID. We need to be responsible today for a better tomorrow."

### **Home, But Not Alone phonenumber goes live again**

The Home, But Not Alone free phonenumber, which supports vulnerable people in our communities who may be struggling with the impact of Coronavirus, went live again on 3 November. The service was paused in August because of low demand and the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. However, after the announcement of the second national lockdown, the service is up and running again. The phonenumber was absolutely vital during the first lockdown and it is only right that the same support is on offer. The phonenumber helped thousands of people and families, who often didn't have a network of family or friends to call upon, access emergency support such as food and medicine deliveries and befriending schemes. The telephone number is freephone 0800 876 6926 and is staffed from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. This Home, But Not Alone phonenumber complements The Suffolk Advice and Support Service phonenumber (0800 068 3131) which helps those with debt, benefits, employment, or housing worries. This phonenumber, also delivered by the Collaborative Communities Covid-19 Board, is staffed by the Citizens Advice Suffolk Alliance, which includes the eight Citizens Advice Bureaus across Suffolk, and Anglia Care Trust and Ipswich Housing Action Group. Call handlers use resources and information from across many Suffolk organisations and specialist providers, which are tailored to individual needs.

### **Suffolk County Council delivers its largest digital care support project in record time**

Suffolk County Council has successfully delivered the largest digital care project in its history - from procurement to delivery in just 16 weeks. Working alongside care technology specialists, Alcove and Rethink Partners, the council delivered over 750 Carephone devices to elderly and vulnerable people, both in and outside of formal care settings, to help them, their families and care providers stay in touch during the coronavirus pandemic. The Carephone service is provided through the Alcove Video Carephone, a simple communication device that allows people with little or no technological ability to have two-way video contact with care workers, family members and other

approved service providers. The project also delivered comprehensive training to both the user and their care providers on how to get the most use from this new technology. Real life success stories from the project include one from Jeni, an 83-year-old retired teacher who lives in Bury St Edmunds. Speaking about her experience using her new Carephone, Jeni said:

“The other day it was such a thrill as my niece showed me her granddaughter - who is just over a year old. She walked straight across the room and I saw her on the screen. It was really lovely to see her. It was the first time she had walked, and they gave me a call straight away so I could see her do it. I have only ever seen her in person once before, so it was such a pleasure.”

This technology is helping to keep families connected, easing the pain of separation that all families have felt at some point since the pandemic started. It also provides essential welfare reassurance for the family and is helping to reduce incidents of poor mental health on both sides of the call. There are indications that this technology can have a positive, measurable impact on loneliness in older and vulnerable people. The technology has also helped maintain and enhance the communication between care giver and care receiver. The benefits of this project continue to be felt and have provided clear insight into using this technology to improve care outcomes, especially over the coming winter.

### **Suffolk's SEND Service celebrate winning prestigious national award**

Suffolk's special educational needs and disability service (SEND) has won a prestigious national award at this year's Nasen awards. Nasen is a charity that supports and champions those working with, and for, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and learning differences. Each year, Nasen hosts an annual awards campaign, which looks to celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations within the SEND sector. Suffolk's special educational needs and disability service won the David Ryan Publication Award, which recognises an innovative publication (including e-publications) that have had a positive impact on children and young people with SEND. Suffolk won the award for the Suffolk SEND 16+ Transitions Guide. The guide, which was initially created in 2019, was developed to support young people aged 14-19 years to plan a successful journey towards adulthood. It was created following feedback from families of children with SEND, who said planning for adulthood was an extremely challenging and bewildering time. Developed with the support and input of SEND Young Persons Network, the Suffolk Parent Carer Network, and practitioners across the sector, the guide has been so successful that in February 2020, edition two was produced and the team are now looking to offer further guidance through parent-led workshops. The guide is being distributed to all Suffolk colleges and high schools, including special schools and PRUs, and is being used by SEND and Inclusion services in their work with young people. Winning this award is particularly special for us in Suffolk because of the challenging journey we have been on in developing our local partnership and transforming our services for children and young people with SEND. We are proud of the work we are doing to support young people in their journey to adulthood and to have our work recognised nationally will spur the partnership on to even greater achievements. Young people told us that they rely on their trusted adults, i.e. family, teachers, tutors, and support workers, to support them through their transition into adulthood and that these people need to be well informed about the process. That is why a clear, understandable guide was needed. Young people also wanted to share their experiences of transitions in the guide to support other young people and provide information that would help them to know what to expect. We worked closely with our Suffolk SEND Young People's Network and our SEND Champions, who had recently transitioned to college, to create some young people's pages within the guide offering their insights and advice.

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