

Coronavirus Flash Briefing

Community Support

Wednesday 18 March



Please note this is an evolving situation. This information is correct as of 18 March.

This briefing is designed to support you and your community during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

It contains information on how local community groups can respond to the evolving situation, information on useful networking tools, a list of key contacts and details of PHE resources which we hope you will be able to share with your community to support each other as much as possible.

What can you do as a community?

During this difficult time, we want to make sure that our residents look out for one another to help everyone to stay safe and healthy.

Our community and voluntary sectors will play a key role over the coming months and we're working hard to provide up-to-date health information and advice to these organisations.

Offering support and thinking of one another makes neighbourhoods and communities stronger together. This is particularly important for those who are more vulnerable and isolated.

If you are low risk and healthy, consider offering help and support to others in your community.

Become a Compassionate Community Connector

Bath & North East Somerset Council is working with our local 3rd sector infrastructure organisation 3SG and Virgincare to support communities and the most vulnerable in their own homes during the coronavirus pandemic.

3SG is recruiting volunteers through its #CompassionateCommunities scheme to offer support to community groups and charities as they work to help the elderly or vulnerable people self-isolating.

More than a thousand people from all walks of life from across Bath and North East Somerset have already registered to volunteer.

You can sign up to be a Compassionate Community Connector and help others in your community, please register your interest [here](#).

Charities and community groups who would like support from the #CompassionateCommunity volunteers can [**post their requests on 3SG.**](#)

How can community groups help?

People in every community will face the challenges of COVID-19 in some way – from needing basic provisions to help while they are unwell. Community groups can help by:

- Helping people to understand when and why they need to stay at home following the NHS guidance and signposting people to [**stay at home and how to self isolate advice.**](#)
- Encouraging people to reach out to neighbours and check on those who are most at risk. As self-isolation increases, we need to stay in touch for our physical and mental wellbeing. If you know someone who is self-isolating, contact them via phone and text and check that they're ok.
- Considering adopting a buddy system
- Collecting provisions/medication for those self-isolating – leaving supplies at the door
- Encouraging people to make the most of local online groups, keeping up-to-date and sharing accurate information.
- Supporting people who may be anxious about COVID-19. Sign post them to the correct advice from Public Health England and encourage people to follow the correct hygiene practices.

Please be respectful of anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 as it's likely to be an anxious time for them. Due to patient confidentiality their details will not be publicly confirmed, so please do what you can to respect and protect their privacy, and do not speculate with the local media or on social media.

Local networking tools

There are a number of useful networking tools available online:

Next Door is a free social networking platform for local communities and neighbourhoods, focusing on connections to your near neighbours.

There are already over 3,000 members in the Bath area and a number of discussion threads on how to support each other in response to coronavirus. Here are **instructions on how to join Next Door** and link up with people in your community.

WhatsApp is a free mobile phone messaging service through which you can set up groups to enable up to 256 people to have collective discussions by text. You can also do video calls which could be very useful for people feeling isolated. You can download WhatsApp on your phone or computer by going to the app store or go **here**. Here are **instructions to set up a group**.

Even if there isn't a specific COVID-19 support group in your area there are already in existence a number of **Facebook pages/groups for local communities** through which you could start the discussion.

Key Health Advice

The NHS has some simple advice to avoid catching or spreading COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, **especially** after using public transport, when you arrive at work or arrive home. Use a sanitiser gel if soap and water is not available.
- Always carry tissues with you and use them to catch your cough or sneeze. Then bin the tissue, and wash your hands, or use a sanitiser gel.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are unwell.

Useful links

The following links provide useful, factual and regularly updated information on COVID -19:

Overview of COVID-19 – what is it? Common questions and answers on COVID-19 including advice for families, prevention, how it's caught and spread, self-isolation, test and treatment, and foreign travel

Number of COVID-19 cases in the UK, including the affected areas

NHS 111 – Check if you have symptoms

This sort of incident could cause undue pressure and anxiety. **The NHS Every Mind Matters website** has some really useful tips and advice to support good mental health.

Public Health Campaign Resource Centre (you will need to register) for the latest posters, videos and social media graphics.

Useful Contact Numbers

You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home, instead use the online 111 coronavirus service:

- If people feel they cannot cope with their symptoms at home
- their condition gets worse
- their symptoms do not get better after 7 days

Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

The DfE have set up a new helpline to answer questions about COVID-19 related to education. Staff, parents and young people can contact the helpline as follows:

- Telephone: 0800 046 8687
- Email: **DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk**
- Opening hours: 8am to 6pm (Monday to Friday)

Social Media

Social media is a valuable tool at a time like this, but it can also contain misinformation and rumour, which isn't helpful. The following Twitter (www.twitter.com) accounts will be regularly posting the latest factual advice and information related to COVID-19:

- Public Health England - @PHE_UK
- Department of Health and Social Care – DHSCgovuk
- Bath & North East Somerset Council - @bathnes
- NHS England - @nhsENGLAND
- Avon & Somerset Police - @ASPolice
- Avon Fire & Rescue Service - @AvonFireRescue

For updates about Bath &
North East Somerset Council
services as we respond to the
Coronavirus Covid-19 visit:
[https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/
coronavirus](https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/coronavirus)

We have also set up a
dedicated email address:
[Covid-19incidentcomms@
bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:Covid-19incidentcomms@bathnes.gov.uk)

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**
