

Dear stakeholder,

I am delighted to report that our system in north east Essex has managed to close down 20 confirmed outbreaks of COVID-19 in care homes over the past two weeks. A further 54 potential or confirmed outbreaks were closed across Suffolk. A care home reporting one or more cases or deaths in residents or staff, with respiratory symptoms, anosmia or fever is defined as an 'outbreak'. This now includes asymptomatic residents or staff who test positive. Care homes are required to notify Public Health England if they have symptomatic or confirmed COVID-19 residents and once 28 days has passed, provided there are no new cases, the outbreak is regarded as closed. Much support and training has been delivered to care home colleagues that has complemented the huge amount of hard work carried out by their staff. This has been a fantastic system-wide effort.

Our Strategic Partnership Forum, whose membership includes our union colleagues, was updated earlier on how we have been supporting frontline services with emergency supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE). They were given an update from the two leads – Jane Garnett and Jane Taylor – who described the processes of how they procure emergency PPE and how the equipment is distributed. This has been a key element of our system's response to COVID-19.

I am delighted to learn earlier that Colchester Borough Council is introducing a new planning process for temporary buildings, structures and changes of use to help businesses recover from the effects of the coronavirus crisis. The changes are intended to make it easier for firms to accommodate more physical space to adhere to social distancing rules – including placing more tables and chairs outside bars and cafes. I'm sure this will go a long way to help businesses within our system recover from the crisis.

New analysis from West Suffolk Council has revealed pollution levels are approximately 45 per cent lower across the area for April compared to the same month last year. Pollution at the worst affected site was less than half of that recorded during the same month in 2019. This comes as a British Lung Foundation survey found around 16 per cent of people living with lung conditions in the UK said their symptoms had improved as a result of the fall in air pollution levels.

Monday sees the start of Armed Forces Week when we will all remember and recognise the enormous contribution of serving and retired personnel. Our armed services carry out so many roles, such as defending the UK, delivering aid, tackling drug smugglers, and, more recently helping us to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. Across Suffolk and north east Essex we are very fortunate that so many of our military personnel base themselves here. We pay tribute and thank all of them and their families.

Finally, I would like to pass on my congratulations to my colleague and friend, Dr Mark Shenton, who has been appointed as Professor of Integrated Care at the University of Suffolk. Mark's role will incorporate his front-line practice, integrated care system leadership for population health management and CCG chair role, so that his research is grounded in local provision and commissioning of healthcare. Mark has been a partner of StowHealth in Stowmarket for the past three decades and has chaired the NHS Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG since 2013. Congratulations, Professor Shenton!

Stay safe,

Ed.