

Suffolk Resilience Forum news release
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Launch of new support line to help those with financial, job or housing worries

A phonenumber will go live tomorrow <October 1st> to help people across Suffolk access information or support relating to debt, benefits, housing or employment.

This support service is in response to the financial impact that Covid-19 has had, and continues to have, on families across Suffolk. It is estimated that the number of people claiming Universal Credit in Suffolk has increased by 75% (approx. 24,000) since March and there has been an 238% increase in the amount of food handed out to single adults and families from Suffolk's foodbanks. There are also 104,000 people still furloughed from their jobs.

Citizens Advice Suffolk Alliance, which includes the eight Citizens Advice Bureaus across Suffolk, and Anglia Care Trust and Ipswich Housing Action Group will deliver advice and support to people through a single phone line. Call handlers will use resources and information from across many Suffolk organisations and specialist providers, which can be tailored to individual needs.

The phonenumber is funded by Suffolk Public Sector Leaders and has been developed by Suffolk-wide partners on the Collaborative Communities Covid-19 Board, which is part of the Suffolk Resilience Forum.

The phonenumber, **0800 068 3131**, is open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Chrissie Geeson, chair of the Collaborative Communities Covid-19 Board and Head of Localities and Partnerships at Suffolk County Council, said: "More than ever it is essential that people who find themselves in difficulties - many for the first time - know that there is somewhere to go for help.

"This service is non-judgemental, impartial and fully clued up on what help is out there so that people find the right solution.

"The extent of the support on offer has been made possible by the success of our partnership work across Suffolk, which has been strengthened by our response to Coronavirus."

Nicky Willshere, Chief Executive at Citizens Advice Ipswich and Lead for the Suffolk Advice Alliance, said: "Trained advisers from Citizens Advice and other advice agencies across Suffolk are waiting to hear from people hit by the side effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. We can help you and your households find a way through the hardships caused. Just call us on 0800 068 3131 to get impartial, confidential and free advice to find a way forward."

Matthew Hicks, Leader at Suffolk County Council, said: "This service has been devised and delivered in a matter of weeks. The Suffolk system recognised the changing nature of problems that people found themselves in because of Coronavirus and we responded to that need. This is true partnership work at it's best.

"I know it will be huge support to hundreds of people who may otherwise have struggled to know where next to turn."

The phonenumber is one element of the Suffolk Advice and Support Service which pulls together work of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme, which can assist with food vouchers and

furniture donations, the Warm Handover, which enables fast referrals between support organisations, Suffolk foodbanks and Infolink.

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Note to editors

Suffolk Resilience Forum

The information above has been issued on behalf of the Suffolk Resilience Forum. The forum is comprised of the Suffolk's NHS, Emergency and Public Services, working together to keep the county safe.

For more information about the Suffolk Resilience Forum, visit www.suffolkresilience.com