

WELCOME FROM **Richard Flinton, Chief Executive**

What an extraordinary year this is! Every week seems to bring a fresh announcement or challenge and this one has not disappointed. In the coming days and weeks, we will see our partners in the NHS start to roll out the vaccine right here in North Yorkshire. This is without doubt extremely welcome news for very many people here. This programme will be carefully managed and phased, to ensure that the people who need to start their vaccination programme first are at the front of the queue. Amongst those people will be those who are over 80.

It's really important to understand how this will work so I hope this information is helpful. When it is your turn to get your first vaccination the NHS will contact you directly. That may be your GP or another NHS colleague. When you are contacted, you will be given an appointment. There will be a date and time and, of course, the venue. You are asked to help support the smooth running of the programme by NOT contacting your GP or going to a vaccination centre, unless you have been contacted and invited. If you cannot make your appointment, you are asked to let the NHS know so that someone else can get their first dose. You will then need a second dose and you will be given all those details proactively too. It will take months, not weeks, to vaccinate everyone who qualifies. We can help our NHS colleagues manage this process as easily as possible here in North Yorkshire if we follow these instructions.

Additional positive news is that rates of Covid infection in the county are continuing to stabilise on the whole. There are still fluctuations, but generally the number of cases continues to reduce and North Yorkshire remains below the England average. That said, we must not forget that today's rates are still 4 or 5 times higher than they were late August and early September and our public health team is still managing 350 outbreaks across a variety of settings in the county. You have been brilliant. We have come such a long way and many of you will be looking forward to the relaxation of the rules over Christmas so you can be with your loved ones for a few days. In advance of that, and to help us avoid a third wave of this awful virus, we are asking that you help us get that rate down even further. Let's give this one more push before Christmas and do it for North Yorkshire and everyone that matters to us. The lower the rates – the lesser the chance we may accidentally pass it on to someone we love. I know our county will continue to rise to this challenge.

This week is also an important one for North Yorkshire's economic recovery from the pandemic and its future prospects. Today we moved a step closer to understanding what local government will look like here in the future. Today has been the deadline to put forward final bids to reorganise public service delivery here and to pave the way for a devolution deal for the people and businesses of York and North Yorkshire. To be successful, bids need to demonstrate they meet the national criteria around improving local government in the area, representing a credible geography and having a good deal of local support. Our proposal would create a new single council here, delivering strengthened public services to every person and business in North Yorkshire. It would protect the county's globally recognised brand and its nationally acclaimed services for children and adults. We also support the City of York's position of remaining a separate authority serving its unique and urban population. By working more closely with York, our proposal also offers the

potential to save around £67 million a year to plough back into supporting local services and empowered communities. The alternative would break our county in half and split up these services. Our bid has the backing of North Yorkshire's health, police and fire services as well as many businesses, charities and the North Yorkshire branch of Unison. Many members of the public have also spared the time to support it and to help us shape it, for which we are very grateful. I invite you all to learn more about our bid on this link:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/news/article/strength-support-single-new-council-undeniable> .

You can hear from a few of the organisations and businesses that are backing it, so that you can make up your own mind: <https://youtu.be/lDysOKyQEeE> There is also an animation here if you would rather hear about the proposal in a different way: <https://youtu.be/r9cNVZLx5Nk>

Before I leave you, I just wanted to draw your attention to the latest great initiative from our libraries. There is an added incentive for youngsters to get reading this festive period with the promise of a free Christmas goody bag for children aged 4-11 who read 4 books or borrow a book bundle. We know how much you value your local library so I am delighted we have been able to reopen them safely following the end of the national lockdown. Personally, I find these cold dark evenings are much more pleasurable with a good read, so I hope our budding bookworms will enjoy this offer.

Until next week please stay safe and keep up your great working in bringing the virus infection rate down and playing your part in Team North Yorkshire.

Keeping in touch

NYCC's website has a dedicated area for all the latest news, see links below:

- COVID-19 related news: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-and-information>
- Devolution/Stronger Together: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/stronger-together>

Follow us on social media: @northyorkscs on Facebook and Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Public health and social care

North Yorkshire hands on the baton for public health leadership

North Yorkshire is thanking its Director of Public Health, Dr Lincoln Sargeant, who is moving to a new post in the south west of England after eight years in the county.

Dr Sargeant has been instrumental in establishing and leading the county's Public Health service since the transfer of responsibilities from the NHS to local government in April 2013. He is moving to become the new Director of Public Health for Torbay, in a board-level post.

Louise Wallace will take up the post in North Yorkshire as interim Director of Public Health on 12 December. Louise was Director of Public Health for Hartlepool from 2012 to 2017 and is currently Assistant Director for Health and Integration in North Yorkshire. She will continue with her health and Integration responsibilities.

Dr Sargeant has played a key role in developing and improving North Yorkshire's nationally mandated public health services, such as sexual health and substance misuse, and in creating, funding and supporting critical prevention programmes.

More recently he has provided public health leadership and expertise in the response to the pandemic.

Richard Webb, Corporate Director of Health and Adult Services, paid tribute to Dr Sargeant and his contribution to developing the role of public health in the county. He said: "I am sure everyone will join me in thanking Lincoln for his crucial work over the last few years and in wishing him well for his future in the south west. We are also pleased that Louise Wallace will be bringing her extensive experience to the Director of Public Health for our county."

North Yorkshire Coronavirus Data

At 6th December, there have been 13,935 positive tests since 3rd March, with 1,222 new cases reported in the past two weeks. Over the past week, the average number of new cases is approximately 82 cases per day, but may be as high as 93 per day, allowing for incomplete data in the most recent days. Work continues to ensure effective monitoring of all areas, with support for incidents being provided across a range of settings, which are reviewed daily.

Further information on North Yorkshire data provided at county, district and local area level can be found here: <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus-data>.

Guidance for the Festive Period

The festive period is an important time for many people of all faiths and none, with people coming together over the holidays. The UK Government and Devolved Administrations recognise that people will want to be with their friends and family over Christmas, particularly after an incredibly difficult year. For this reason, the government is changing some social contact restrictions for a short period of time. When following these new rules, we must each continue to take personal responsibility to limit the spread of the virus and protect our loved ones, particularly if they are vulnerable. For many, this will mean that it isn't possible to celebrate Christmas in the way you normally would.

Between 23 and 27 December:

- you can form an exclusive 'Christmas bubble' composed of people from no more than three households
- you can only be in one Christmas bubble
- you cannot change your Christmas bubble
- you can travel between tiers and UK nations for the purposes of meeting your Christmas bubble
- you can only meet your Christmas bubble in private homes or in your garden, places of worship, or public outdoor spaces
- you can continue to meet people who are not in your Christmas bubble outside your home according to [the rules in the tier you are meeting in](#)
- if you form a Christmas bubble, you should not meet socially with friends and family that you do not live with in your home or garden unless they are part of this bubble

In terms of celebrating the festive period, the following rules are also applicable.

Christmas markets and shopping (including Boxing Day sales)

Santa's grottos are able to open in all tiers where they are located in venues otherwise permitted to open. Venues should put in place appropriate [COVID-secure measures](#), including social distancing.

The rules on who you can meet with in shops will depend on your tier. The rules might be different for indoor shops and open air shops, such as Christmas markets or Christmas tree markets.

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on who you can meet in shops will not change. This includes Boxing Day sales.

Attending events, including performances and Christmas lighting ceremonies

From 2 December, the rules on attending events, including performances and Christmas or other festive lighting ceremonies will depend on your tier. The rules might be different for indoor and outdoor events.

Between 23 and 27 December, the rules on indoor events will not change. You can attend outdoor events with your Christmas bubble.

Carol singing

Carol singing is allowed to take place.

Those performing or rehearsing in a professional capacity, or as part of a supervised activity for under 18s, are not limited in number and do not have to adhere to gathering limits but should still follow [performing arts guidance](#).

This means that if more than one household is performing or rehearsing indoors, they must not interact, 'mingle' or otherwise socialise together. You should maintain social distancing between groups or households at all times, including when entering or leaving the building or in any breaks

Door to door performances

Door-to-door carol singing can take place in a group of no more than six participants.

If there are more than six people in total, each 'group' must not interact, mingle or otherwise socialise.

Participants should adhere to public health advice, including to ensure that you maintain at least 2m distance from anyone you do not live with and at the threshold of any dwellings.

In addition, we all need to continue to follow the 'hands, face, space' guidance as much as possible to keep down the levels of Covid in North Yorkshire:

- **Hands** – wash your hands regularly and for 20 seconds
- **Face** – wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet.
- **Space** – stay 2m apart from people you do not live with where possible, or 1m with extra precautions in place (such as wearing face coverings)

Vaccinations and testing

This week's news of the first people being vaccinated against Covid is a huge milestone. However, with 65 million people nationally requiring vaccination, the roll-out will take some time. Certain high-risk groups of the population will be prioritised and the NHS will oversee local implementation. The County Council will work to support the NHS, local people and the care sector as the vaccinations come onstream.

Meanwhile, we have continued to expand testing capacity at fixed sites across the county. At the same time, we are working with care providers to ensure the effective roll-out of lateral flow testing where it is appropriate to use it. Lateral flow tests can work well where they are undertaken by trained people, in controlled conditions, with back-up from more comprehensive swab and laboratory testing. The County Council, NHS and care providers will issue joint advice and guidance about lateral flow testing shortly and this advice will be published on the County Council's website.

Be careful and be kind at Christmas

Director of Health and Adult Services Richard Webb has issued a call to everyone to be careful and to be kind to each other in the run-up to and over Christmas.

Richard said: "As we try to be more joyful and more hopeful as we go into Christmas, we also need to be careful, particularly around how we catch up with loved ones.

"If you are planning to spend Christmas Day with an elderly or disabled relative, please plan ahead. If at all possible, try to minimise your social interactions in the 14 days leading up to seeing a potentially vulnerable friend or relative and keep yourself as safe as possible up to that time, because in doing so you will protect your friend or loved one.

"And I know how difficult this will be, but I would ask you to avoid kissing and hugging. You need to try to keep that distance to protect people throughout the Christmas period. It's about following the rules and keeping everyone safe.

"Be careful and be kind to each other. Let's look after each other. We can get through this. We have seen a dramatic reduction in the infection rates, but we need to keep going with the aim of reducing the virus even further."

Working together towards recovery

Skipton local testing site to open at weekend

A permanent Covid local testing site is set to open in Skipton on Saturday 12 December, to support the ongoing expansion of testing capacity.

The site will join those already operating in Harrogate, Northallerton, Scarborough and Selby.

The Skipton site will be in Cavendish Street car park. Craven District Council has written to car park permit holders advising them of the closure and asking them to use Coach Street car park instead. Nearby businesses and residents are also being contacted.

The site will be operated on behalf of the Department for Health and Social Care by G4S.

Local testing sites are indoors and allow walk-in appointments. People do not need to arrive in a vehicle, unlike drive-through mobile testing units. The sites offer Covid testing from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week. Appointments must be booked in advance. Book a test on the County Council's website, www.northyorks.gov.uk/book-coronavirus-covid-19-test, or by calling 119.

Local testing sites take bookings from within a radius of 10 miles. Mobile testing units will continue to run alongside these with a range of 75 miles.

Testing

Testing sites in North Yorkshire, as elsewhere in England, are operated and managed by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and private contractors employed by them. We try to help the department by promoting the Mobile Testing Site locations and hosting information on how people with symptoms can book a test via the national government portal. **We do not manage the national booking system or laboratory testing process.**

Indications are that lab testing capacity is improving but, if you are unable to book a test at a local site straight away, please keep checking as availability varies during the day.

We are also supporting the DHSC in asking the public only to get a test if they are directed to do so by NHS Test and Trace or other NHS services – OR – if they have symptoms, to ensure that those people who need tests the most can be prioritised.

Before you attend you must book a test. Tests can be booked from 8pm the night before.

Testing sites operated and managed by the Department of Health and Social Care will be running at the following locations over the coming days, between 11am and 3pm:

- **Every day - Harrogate** - Dragon Road Car Park, Dragon Road, Harrogate, HG1 5DB
- **Every day - Scarborough** - William Street Car Park, Scarborough. YO12 7PL
- **Every day - Northallerton** – The Forum, Bullamore Road, Northallerton, DL6 1LP
- **Every day - Selby** – Portholme car park, Crescent Car Park, Selby, YO8 4QH

- **Thursday 10 December - Whitby** - Whitby Marina Car Park, Langbourne Road, Whitby, YO21 1YW
- **Thursday 10 December - Richmond** - Round Howe Car Park, Reeth Road, Richmond, DL10 4T
- **Thursday 10 December - Malton** - Wentworth Street Car Park, Smithson Ct, Malton, YO17 7BQ
- **Friday 11 December - Sherburn in Elmet** - Pasture Way Car Park, Sherburn in Elmet, LS25 6LY
- **Friday 11 December - Thornton Le Dale** - National Trust Car Park, No.5. Chestnut Avenue, Thornton Le Dale, Pickering, YO18 7RR
- **Friday 11 December - Easingwold** - Easingwold Town AFC, Stillington Rd, Easingwold, York, YO61 3DZ
- **Saturday 12 December - Selby** - South Entrance, DRAX Power Station, New Road, Selby, YO8 8PH
- **Saturday 12 December - Settle** - Greenfoot Car Park, Settle, BD24 9RW
- **Saturday 12 December - Filey** - Filey Country Park, Church Cliff Drive, Filey, YO14 9ET
- **Sunday 13 December - Scarborough** - Scarborough Park and Ride, Seamer Road, Scarborough, YO12 4LW
- **Sunday 13 December - Richmond** - Round Howe Car Park, Reeth Road, Richmond, DL10 4T
- **Sunday 13 December - Thirsk** - Millgate Car Park, Marage Road, Thirsk, YO7 1PE
- **Sunday 13 December - Thornton Le Dale** - National Trust Car Park, No.5. Chestnut Avenue, Thornton Le Dale, Pickering, YO18 7RR

Watch this video to find out what to expect and how to prepare for the test:

<https://youtu.be/QawyKwllfKQ>. See the latest dates and locations, find out more and how to book at www.northyorks.gov.uk/testing

Supporting our schools and childcare

Attendance at schools across the county remains strong at 89%. The number of schools closed or partially closed in North Yorkshire has reduced this week. We currently have two primary schools that are closed and no secondary schools closed. A further 20 schools have a partial closure, either classes or year groups.

We are pleased that closures remain low and attendance remains strong across the county in the run up to the Christmas holiday.

Schools in North Yorkshire will close on 18 December, though many schools are expected to use Friday 18 December for staff training. Most children missed a significant proportion of schooling in spring and summer this year. We want to minimise any further disruption and it is important children continue to attend school for their academic progress, their mental health and their wellbeing.

We have acted quickly to distribute Covid Winter Grant Scheme funding to schools, academies and early years providers to help families hardest hit by the pandemic. This will ensure that children eligible for free school meals and others in need in North Yorkshire will continue to have access to meals over the Christmas holidays and into the next school year. Schools, colleges and early years settings will distribute supermarket vouchers to families identified as in need. These are equivalent to £20 per child per week.

The response to this issue, of all schools and education and childcare providers across the county has been tremendous. We could not do this without their co-operation and support, so we would like to give our thanks to each and every provider.

Parents who experience any difficulties with the voucher scheme during the school holidays are asked to contact the County Council's customer service centre on 01609 780780. The centre is open seven days a week from 8am to 5.30pm.

Teamwork to support our residents

With Christmas just two weeks away, community support organisations are continuing to help people plan ahead. Volunteers have been helping to make sure North Yorkshire residents who have relied on support with shopping and other essentials have everything they need over the festive period.

Keith Davy has been volunteering through Hambleton Community Action since long before Covid-19 even reared its head, and was kept even busier once the first lockdown started.

With the second lockdown over, Keith reflects on the challenges now compared to the summer.

Keith said: "I must admit it was a lot easier in the summer, you could go out in your garden and things. It's not so easy now with it being so wet and damp and cold – it's always going to be more of a challenge in the winter to be honest. If it starts to get even colder, and snowy and wet and icy, it's going to be a bit more difficult for people."

Life would have been a lot more difficult for so many people this year without the volunteers who stepped up to and provide vital support, and have kept on giving through the second wave of the pandemic.

Keith added: “Strangely enough, I was saying to my wife Jane, I quite missed it and I’m quite happy to do it again. It gets me out of the house, gives me something to do, and keeps me motivated and stimulated, which is good. They do a sterling job in lots of different ways – they do befriending and what have you. Volunteering is just a way of giving back and it gives me an interest as well. The more I do it the better for me to be honest.

“I’ve done it because I think it’s a nice thing to do, it is nice to chat to people when I drop their stuff off, just ask how they are doing and if there is anything else I can do for them. It’s a pleasure and I get a lot of joy out of doing it anyway to be honest – its stops me being too bored.”

Keith also told us how people in his own village have pulled together, “It was very evident in the first lockdown - there was a lot of goodwill in the village and lots of different things happening and people helping each other out.”

People who need support with shopping, prescriptions and other essentials but don’t have anyone to call on, or anyone concerned about the welfare of someone else, can contact North Yorkshire County Council’s customer service centre on 01609 780780. The centre is open seven days a week 8am to 5.30pm. People can also contact us by email or live chat at www.northyorks.gov.uk/contactus.

To find local businesses offering food deliveries and takeaways, go to the Buy Local directory at www.northyorks.gov.uk/buy-local.

People can also find details of local voluntary and community groups offering support at www.northyorkshireconnect.org.uk.

For more information about the help available go to www.northyorks.gov.uk/coronavirus.

Growing our local economy

Buy Local: Christmas food shopping can be stressful, but it doesn’t have to be!

[Buy Local](#) is our one stop shop for local businesses, including nearly 200 food retailers offering in store or online shopping, click and collect or local delivery.

From cheese to cakes, and hampers to beer, all can be found on Buy Local.

Wensleydale Creamery joined Buy Local to promote their range of foods and Christmas gifts. Sandra Bell, Marketing Manager said “When you shop with us you are also supporting 40 local farmers who supply us with milk, as well as our Yorkshire cheese partners Shepherds Purse and Yorkshire Halloumi, plus fantastic local food producers and craftsmen who create our unique cheeseboards and gifts.”

Search Buy Local and make your Christmas shopping count.

Covid-safe businesses can register for free advertising on the site – sign up today!

LEP News: Major rail project completed

A £9.8million upgrade to the railway between Harrogate and York has been completed.

The project has been carried out by Network Rail and funded by North Yorkshire County Council and the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership supported by Government funding from the Local Growth Fund.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: “The completion of these vital upgrades at Cattal and along the Harrogate-York line is fantastic news for passengers across North Yorkshire, creating a more modern, reliable and resilient railway for years to come.

“By enabling improved connections between Harrogate and York, as well as stations along the route, it will help this region build back better, boosting the local economy and supporting tourism.”

Read the full story here: <https://www.businessinspiredgrowth.com/news/network-rail-completes-multi-million-upgrade-to-north-yorkshire-rail-route/>

York & North Yorkshire Intelligence Update

The latest intelligence update is now available with contributions by representatives from the county and district councils, businesses organisations (such as the Chamber, FSB & CBI), key high street organisations (i.e. local BIDs) and Department for International Trade (DIT).

The report shares business sentiments and the impact of Covid and the EU Exit on our region: <https://www.businessinspiredgrowth.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/YNY-COVID19-intel-report-07.12.20.docx>

FSB issues ‘Small Business Christmas’ rallying cry

Shoppers in Yorkshire are being urged to buy from, and celebrate, their local and independent businesses in a pre-Christmas campaign led by Britain’s biggest business representation group.

The 'Love Your Small Independent Business' campaign is asking people to actively support their local independent businesses online by using the hashtag #ilovesmallbusiness, and also to share images of their purchases and recommendations of small shops and businesses by using the hashtag #ShopHereThisChristmas.

It also calls on people to place reviews of their favourite businesses online as well to persuade others to ‘shop small’ and think local first, in line with the current high-profile Google ‘Dear Local’ advertising push.

EU Transition: Employment law changes you need to be aware of – 14 December, 12pm

In partnership with employment law specialists, Thrive Law, this webinar will explore the employment law changes coming into force from 1 January 2021 and what you need to do to prepare.

In this free webinar, Thrive Law will cover:

- the changes to employment law from January;
- what employers need to do; and
- other factors that employers should consider.

Booking link: <https://www.ynygrowthhub.com/events/employment-law-changes-you-need-to-be-aware-of/>

Leadership Series: Communicating with Impact -15 December, 12pm

Led by leadership and employee engagement specialist, Michelle Mook, this free webinar will support leaders in identifying what is needed to be a strong communicator.

In this one-hour workshop, you will learn:

- your preferred way of interacting/communicating;
- how to adapt your style to have more impact; and
- communication with different styles to build rapport.

Booking link: <https://www.ynygrowthhub.com/events/leadership-series-communicating-with-impact/>

Staying informed

As always, we are keen to promote the following as main sources of business support information:

- GOVERNMENT: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>
- Y&NY LEP: <https://www.businessinspiredgrowth.com/covid-19/>
- Y&NY GROWTH HUB: <https://www.ynygrowthhub.com/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/>

Creative lockdown ideas

North Yorkshire libraries are inviting children aged 4-11 to read four books or borrow a 'book bundle' over the festive period from their local library. In turn, they can collect a free goody bag including stickers and activities, and there's also a special treat for pre-schoolers in participating libraries.

The goody bag giveaway will end at lunchtime on Christmas Eve, or the final opening day of individual libraries. The scheme runs while stocks last and families are asked to check their local library is taking part.
