

Communication from Cllr Matthew Hicks – Leader of Suffolk County Council

HOME, BUT NOT ALONE

Suffolk urged to rally together as new local COVID-19 app and phonenumber launched to connect volunteers and people who need help

A new Suffolk-focused community service has been set up to support people who need help during the COVID-19 pandemic

Called 'Home But Not Alone', the service has been launched to help connect people who want to volunteer in their communities with neighbours who are most in need.

The service will mean willing volunteers, charities, town and parish councils, community and religious groups can all log their details and offers of support on an app, while people who need help can phone to request support. As the number of offers and requests grows, they will be matched so that the right help can be given where it's most needed. This support could include delivering groceries, medication or essential household goods, in line with Government social distancing guidelines.

The free app, called Tribe Volunteer, can be downloaded from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. The telephone number for those in genuine need of help is freephone 0800 876 6926 and will be staffed from 09:00 to 17:00, seven days a week.

The Home, But Not Alone service was created by partners from Suffolk's councils, police, health bodies and charitable organisations which come together as the Collaborative Communities Board. Chrissie Geeson, the board chair, said:

"In these challenging times, it has been incredibly heartening to have so many people volunteer to help others. In villages and towns across Suffolk, people have taken it upon themselves to mobilise a small army of volunteers to do what they can for people in need.

"The support service will encompass this work but will bring structure and routine to these offers of help. This is just the start of this new service, so we expect the number of offers and requests to grow. People who want to help, or need help, should let us know and we will do the rest.

"It is testament to the hard work of all Suffolk organisations and sectors that we are able to offer this invaluable help."

The telephone line is not a general information line for COVID-19 queries, but those in need can seek information on support with care needs, loneliness and to connect with community support. This is a new service and will be adapted to demand over the coming weeks. People are still being urged to check gov.uk for the latest guidance on a wide range of issues and changes caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.