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www.oxford.gov.uk



Offer of assistance and advice to those on boats

Dear boat dweller,

I hope this finds you all well and coping as best as can be expected during these difficult times. I write to reassure and offer as much support to those living on boats in the city as possible.

First, we must stress the importance of abiding by the government restrictions:

You may only leave your home for very limited purposes, such as buying food and medicine, exercising once a day and seeking medical attention. You can travel to and from work but should work from home if you can.

When you do have to leave your home, you should ensure, wherever possible, that you are two meters apart from anyone outside of your household.

The latest NHS advice is available via www.nhs.uk, but the current advice is:

- Maintain good hygiene. Regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds using soap and water or hand sanitiser

For anyone who believes they display symptoms, you should to self-isolate by staying at home if you have either:

- A high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back.
- A new, continuous cough.
- **Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital – the NHS is under extreme pressure and your attending may put others, particularly the vulnerable, at risk.**
- You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home.
- Testing for the virus is not needed if you're staying at home.
- If you have symptoms, stay at home for 7 days
- If you live with other people, they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms
- If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days.

As we enter a period where the number of infections and people falling ill is anticipated to rise, we offer support to everyone in the city. Full information is on our website here:

<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/communityassistance>

People at highest risk:

If you are one of the most vulnerable residents in Oxford, due to a serious underlying health condition, you will have recently received a letter from the NHS advising you that you are at the highest risk from coronavirus, and to isolate for 12 weeks.

If you, or someone you know, has received a letter from the NHS or GP to say you are at risk of severe illness from coronavirus please contact the dedicated team on 01865 24 98 11. This will ensure that you receive the right support.

Support for those in need:

The boating community is already working together to help and support each other, but there is more support available for all, particularly those most vulnerable.

A contact centre has been established to get support to those most in need. You can contact it via the telephone number **01865 249 811** or through an online form available via the link to our website <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/communityassistance>

The contact centre links in to a local response hub which co-ordinates resources from local partners and charities, with volunteers working to make sure support is reaching those most in need and particularly those who are unwell or who need to isolate. This includes helping with:

- Collecting / delivering shopping
- Food bank supplies
- Collecting prescriptions and medication
- Deliveries of food and medicine for the most vulnerable
- Access to volunteer support for the most vulnerable
- Accessing drinking water, sewage disposal, gas, fuel, laundry etc

It is very important that if you have symptoms or are in self-isolation, for your own health and for the safety of others do not leave your boat to seek supplies, please ask for help.

Local Street Champion volunteers – including those from the local boating community – will be allocated requests for assistance and will respond accordingly.

Access to services / navigation advice:

The Canal & River Trust and the Environment Agency have issued navigation guidance. Mooring restrictions/enforcements have stopped but also all non-essential boat movement is prohibited. You may make limited movements for essential services such as water or sewage. Assisted passage through locks has ceased and all are on self-service. Pay attention to stream warnings.

On the canal, usual public water/sewage points remain open. On the River Thames, the container water point remains open at Osney Lock, and sewage/water points at Abingdon, King's and Eynsham locks remain open. Ensure you wash your hands before and after using facilities, wear gloves if possible. Never take toilets to drinking water points. Maintain social distancing.

If you find yourself struggling to cope with living on board or accessing services, or if you are worried about someone else, please contact either me direct or the contact centre. We are here to give support and want to keep you and others in our community safe.

Yours sincerely,

Tim

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