

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

February 2024

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS – PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING & PEOPLE SERVICES

For the Period up to 31 January 2024.

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Benefits

Caseload

Since the start of the financial year, we are continuing to see a marginal reduction to the number of households claiming Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support.

We anticipate the marginal reduction will continue as households migrate from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit.

As of 1st February, 53% of the caseload is represented by working age households. We are seeing more households claiming Council Tax Support only as opposed to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support combined, due to the migration from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit.

| Caseload | Date |
|-----------------|-------------|
| 7419 | 03/04/2023 |
| 7422 | 02/05/2023 |
| 7412 | 01/06/2023 |
| 7317 | 03/07/2023 |
| 7282 | 01/08/2023 |
| 7260 | 01/09/2023 |
| 7256 | 02/10/2023 |
| 7273 | 01/11/2023 |
| 7266 | 01/12/2023 |
| 7242 | 02/01/2024 |
| 7243 | 01/02/2024 |

| Working Age | Pension Age |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 3835 | 3408 |

| Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support | Council Tax Only |
|--|-------------------------|
| 3359 | 3884 |

Cases assessed.

In January, the team handled nearly 8500 items of correspondence. We are in the process of live testing the automation of Universal Credit notifications which we receive via the Department for Works and Pensions each day. These notify us of changes to customers Universal Credit awards. The number of notifications we receive is increasing as more households claim Universal Credit. The introduction of automation will support improvements to service efficiencies and speed of processing times for Council Tax Support cases.

Speed of Processing (benchmarking) for January

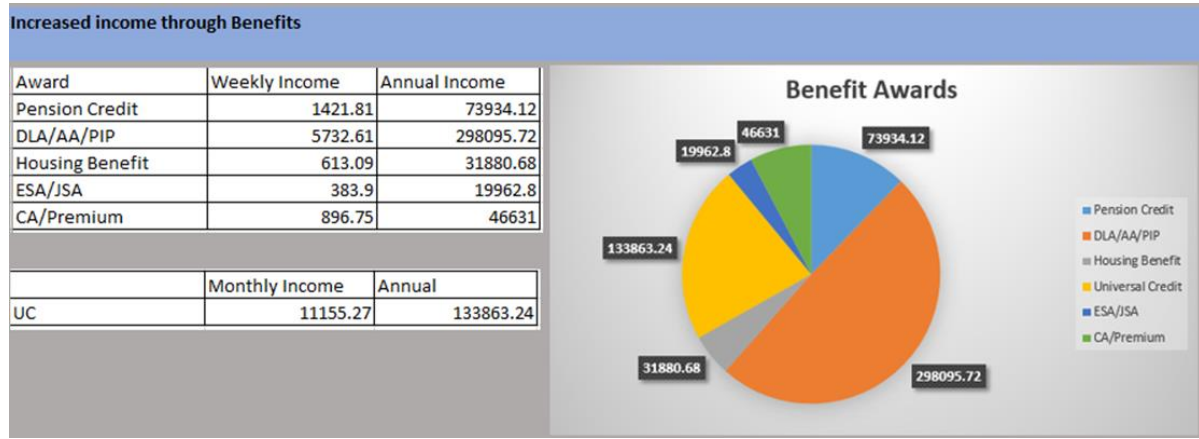
The table below represents our speed of processing data for January 2024, against the published data by the Department for Work and Pensions for Q2 (2023).

| | NNDC number of days to process | Benchmarked lowest number of days to process | Benchmarked mean number of days to process |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| New claims | 10 | 6 | 18 |
| Changes in circumstances | 8 | 2 | 8 |

Financial Inclusion Tracker outcome

The Financial Inclusion team is continuing to support low-income households become financially resilient by maximising their income through unclaimed benefits, premiums, and grants. We have also run two Pension Credit campaigns using data from the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) to target individual households. The outcome of the work undertaken by the team as at 19th January, is represented below.

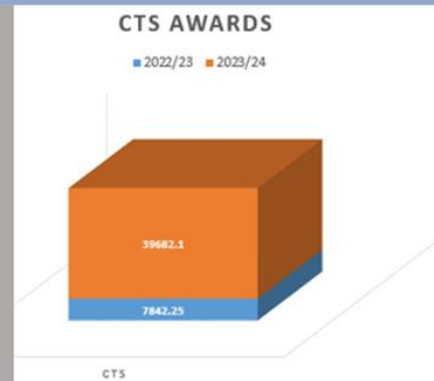
In total the team have generated over **£680k** in additional income across households in North Norfolk.



Council Tax Support awards

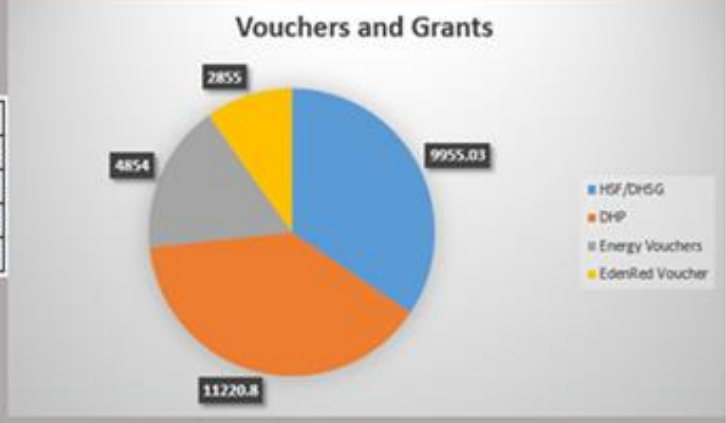
For the financial years 22/23 and 23/24 a total of £47524.35 has been awarded

| CTS | 22/23 | 23/24 |
|-----|---------|---------|
| | 7842.25 | 39682.1 |



Support through grants, funds and vouchers

| Grants | Award |
|----------------------|---------|
| HSF/DHSG | 9955.03 |
| DHP | 11220.8 |
| EdenRed Vouchers | 2855 |
| Energy Bank Vouchers | 4854 |



Discretionary Housing Payments

We continue to administer **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)** to support tenancy sustainment, homelessness, and to support people to stay within the community. Cases are worked on as a panel which includes officers from the Benefits Team and Housing Options.

For 2023/24, North Norfolk has been allocated funding of £103,037, and up to 31st January 2024 we have spent 83% of our allocation across 97 households. A further total of 191 applications (177 households) have been refused as the circumstances of the household are outside the scope of the scheme. Where we have not been able to provide support through the DHP scheme, the team will consider other funding options and signpost the customer accordingly.

A breakdown of how the expenditure has been allocated across the 97 households can be seen below.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Single Working Age Households | |
| Number of successful applications | 62 |
| Rent Arrears | £3,249.51 |
| Rent Deposit/Moving Costs | £210.00 |
| Ongoing Rent Shortfall | £51,729.08 |
| Sub Total Expenditure | £55,188.59 |
| Single Pension Age Households | |
| Number of successful applications | 7 |
| Rent Arrears | £0.00 |
| Rent Deposit/Moving Costs | £0.00 |
| Ongoing Rent Shortfall | £2,559.76 |
| Sub Total Expenditure | £2,559.76 |
| Couple Working Age Households | |
| Number of successful applications | 4 |
| Rent Arrears | £0.00 |
| Rent Deposit/Moving Costs | £0.00 |
| Ongoing Rent Shortfall | £3,269.11 |
| Sub Total Expenditure | £3,269.11 |
| Couple Pension Age Households | |
| Number of successful applications | 1 |
| Rent Arrears | £700.00 |
| Rent Deposit/Moving Costs | £0.00 |
| Ongoing Rent Shortfall | £0.00 |
| Sub Total Expenditure | £700.00 |
| Family Working Age Households | |
| Number of successful applications | 24 |
| Rent Arrears | £800.00 |
| Rent Deposit/Moving Costs | £1,694.99 |
| Ongoing Rent Shortfall | £21,340.51 |
| Sub Total Expenditure | £23,835.50 |
| Family Pension Age Households | |
| Number of successful applications | 0 |
| Rent Arrears | £0.00 |
| Rent Deposit/Moving Costs | £0.00 |
| Ongoing Rent Shortfall | £0.00 |
| Sub Total Expenditure | £0.00 |
| Total Expenditure | £85,552.96 |

Discretionary Housing Payments Take Up

We are continuing to use data insights to proactively target low-income households who have rent arrears, rent shortfalls, or who are at risk of homelessness.

To utilise our budget for 2023/24 and to ensure we assist as many vulnerable households as possible before the end of March 2024, we have sent a mailshot out to 72 households who have been identified to have a shortfall in their income against their expected costs and could therefore be eligible for additional support towards their housing costs, who have not claimed a Discretionary Housing Payment previously.

Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention

Your Choice Your Home

As at the 31 January 2024 there were **2546** households on the housing list with **521** (21%) being on the Housing Register – this register contains those qualifying applicants who have the most urgent housing needs.

| | Housing List by Bedroom Need | | | | Homes Let by Property size 01 April to 31 January 2024 | | | |
|---------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------|-------|---|-----------------|----------|-------|
| | Housing Register | Housing Options | Transfer | Total | Housing Register | Housing Options | Transfer | Total |
| 1 Bed | 217 | 1025 | 201 | 1443 | 83 | 6 | 4 | 93 |
| 2 Bed | 117 | 393 | 99 | 609 | 81 | 3 | 4 | 88 |
| 3 Bed | 96 | 109 | 41 | 246 | 14 | 0 | 1 | 15 |
| 4 Bed | 85 | 86 | 44 | 215 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 5 Bed + | 6 | 18 | 9 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 521 | 1631 | 394 | 2546 | 179 | 9 | 9 | 197 |

Overall, the total number of lettings has decreased by 30% when compared to the same period in 22/23. We continue to see an increased demand for homes suitable for families. Over 33% of the total homes had a minimum age requirement.

Households Assessed and Duty Owed

Our Housing Options Service offers advice to anyone who has a housing problem, and offers support and assistance if someone is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, within the next 56 days.

Approaches to the service remain high and between 01 April 2023 to 31 January 2024 we have opened 926 new cases. Each case represents a household who has contacted us as they have some sort of housing need, and we are still seeing an increase in homeless households (relief cases).

As at the 31 January 2024 there were 187 open homeless cases. Of which 120 households were initially assessed as threatened with homelessness (prevention Duty) or were homeless (Relief Duty), of these 69 households included dependent children.

The three most common triggers of homelessness during the period were:

- The loss of a private tenancy (32)
- Households no longer being able to stay with families and friends (15)
- Domestic abuse (12)

Temporary Accommodation

As at the 31 January 2024 there were 61 households in Temporary Accommodation. This is an overall decrease of 20% from the same date (January) 2023.

- 40 (66%) Family Households have dependent Children
- 19 (31%) Single Adult Households
- 2 (3%) Other Households (includes couples and households with older children)

The number of Households with dependent children has increased by 21% compared to January 2023. Included in the 40 family households, there are 81 dependent children.

Rough Sleeping

For the month of January (at various points in time) we recorded 7 people sleeping rough in North Norfolk, this includes one person with entrenched experience of rough sleeping, 5 people who have previously been seen sleeping rough in the district and 1 person who was new to rough sleeping.

During the month the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) has been in place and helped 6 people access emergency accommodation.

At the end of January 3 people were still rough sleeping, 3 people are being assisted under Homeless legislation and are in Temporary Accommodation and 1 person has returned to area they have a connection with.

Housing Strategy

Local Authority Housing Fund

In the first round of funding, Government offered the Council up to £1,245,210 to provide eleven additional affordable homes in the District by December 2023 – initially to house Ukrainian and Afghan refugee households. Cabinet (on 6/3/23) agreed to accept the money and work with the Flagship Housing Group to deliver the homes. The Council will own one (purchase now complete and home occupied) and Flagship Housing will own the remaining ten (the first of these have now been advertised on Your Choice Your Home and the remainder will be ready before April 2024).

The Council accepted a further £560,000 of funding to provide four further homes. Three will initially house Afghan refugee households. The fourth will house a homeless household. Offers to purchase have been accepted on four properties, two of which have completed and will be ready for occupation shortly, and the remaining two purchases will complete by March 2024.

In the long-term, all fifteen homes would be available to households on the Council's housing list, either as temporary accommodation for homeless households, or as a long-term affordable home.

New Affordable Homes

We have a healthy affordable housing scheme pipeline, many of which are 'rural exception' housing sites at various points in the development process. There are over twenty developments which will, subject to approvals, yield more than 350 new affordable homes in the next few years.

In common with most of Norfolk, 'Nutrient neutrality' is a delaying factor for many sites within

the district. Officers have worked with Broadland Housing Association to get in-principle support from Homes England (the Government's funding agency for affordable housing) to fund a package of five 'exception' sites in North Norfolk to be delivered over the next two to three years.

It is anticipated that thirty-eight affordable homes will be completed in 2023/24. Much of this delivery is in the last quarter (January to March 2024).

Grant for Energy Efficiency Improvement Works

North Norfolk District Council is part of the Norfolk Warm Homes Consortium of five Norfolk districts.

The consortium has been successful in a bid for £3,933,000 to improve the energy efficiency of 'off-gas' homes. Eligibility criteria for future grants have been simplified and will include any home within the most deprived areas in the UK (measured by the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation income deciles 1-3) if privately owned or privately rented, provided the Energy Performance Certificate is rated D-G and the households has no more than £100,000 in savings. This will open up the grant to many more eligible households – across Norfolk there are 603 postcode areas covering 2,600 properties believed to meet the criteria and 23% of these are in North Norfolk.

The Council's Energy Officer, working with Norfolk Warm Homes, has been promoting the scheme in the Stalham area. The local community, Town Council, shopkeepers, schools, etc. have been very supportive. The approach of sending targeted mail followed by door knocking has worked very well. As a result, the projected spend in North Norfolk for 2023/24 will be 40% of the total for Norfolk Warm Homes. We plan to replicate this approach in other parts of the District in 2024.

Integrated Housing Adaptations Team (IHAT)

IHAT has successfully implemented all the IT infrastructure to administer all the new discretionary grants.

We continue to receive a large number of referrals for Disabled Facilities Grants into the service from NNDC front door, internal referrals, community health and referrals from Adult social services.

Our core focus throughout 2023 and 2024 remains on improving the customer journey and overall wait times (start to finish), which we continue to make positive progress on.

IHAT has been actively exploring options to further streamline the service to improve accessibility and utilise resources more efficiently, whilst also considering our impact on the environment and how we can be more environmentally sustainable.

Figures – Disabled Facilities Grant

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| New contacts | 42 |
| YTD total Contacts | 478 |
| Total approved grants | 125 |
| Total approved grants value | £108,894.02 |
| YTD Approval value | £1,094,280.16 |
| Completed adaptations | 9 |
| Total spend for period | £147,356.98 |
| YTD Completed cases | 99 |
| YTD Spend | £1,147,608.68 |
| YTD Housing needs reports completed | 40 |

Overall Figures – Discretionary Grants

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| Total Number of active cases | 19 |
| Completed grants | 8 |
| Completed grant value for period | £33,417.00 |
| YTD Approved value | £38,087.52 |
| YTD Spend | £33,417.00 |

Individual discretionary grant figures

| Grant | Total No of cases | Approved value | Completed | Spend for period |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Architects & surveyors fees | 3 | £750.00 | 0 | £0.00 |
| DFG Contribution | 3 | £1,743.52 | 0 | £0.00 |
| Fast track end of life | 4 | £7360.00 | 3 | £7360.00 |
| Home repairs | 9 | £28,234.00 | 5 | £26057.00 |
| Minor adaptations | 10 | £5,145.50 | 0 | £0.00 |

Community Connectors

The Community Connectors work across North Norfolk spending time in community settings to signpost and support residents and community group leaders. Our work is focused at groups which support the most vulnerable, for example, community lunches and cafes, wellbeing walks, warm spaces, the library and foodbank.

We support the group leaders with information about funding streams, ideas on how to recruit volunteers and raising awareness of the fantastic work that they do. This supports the sustainability of their vital community work.

We support residents by listening to their concerns and signposting them to appropriate support. This might be by sharing details about a charity or statutory organisation offering the advice and guidance they need, or it might be by making referrals into our social prescribing, housing or financial inclusion teams for bespoke support.

The Community Connectors, alongside their regular presence at community groups, warm spaces and other events, attended four sessions with the WOW bus, one lunch event, attended the Norfolk Area SEND Strategy Community Engagement Event in Sheringham and supported two Coastwise café events in Walcott and Trimmingham

<https://www.poppylandradi.co.uk/shows/community-connectors> shows recorded covering the following topics:

- Arts and crafts for wellbeing
- Equal Lives
- Norfolk Knitters & Stitchers

Social Prescribing

January 2024:

- **57** Referrals into Social Prescribing identifying 137 concerns.

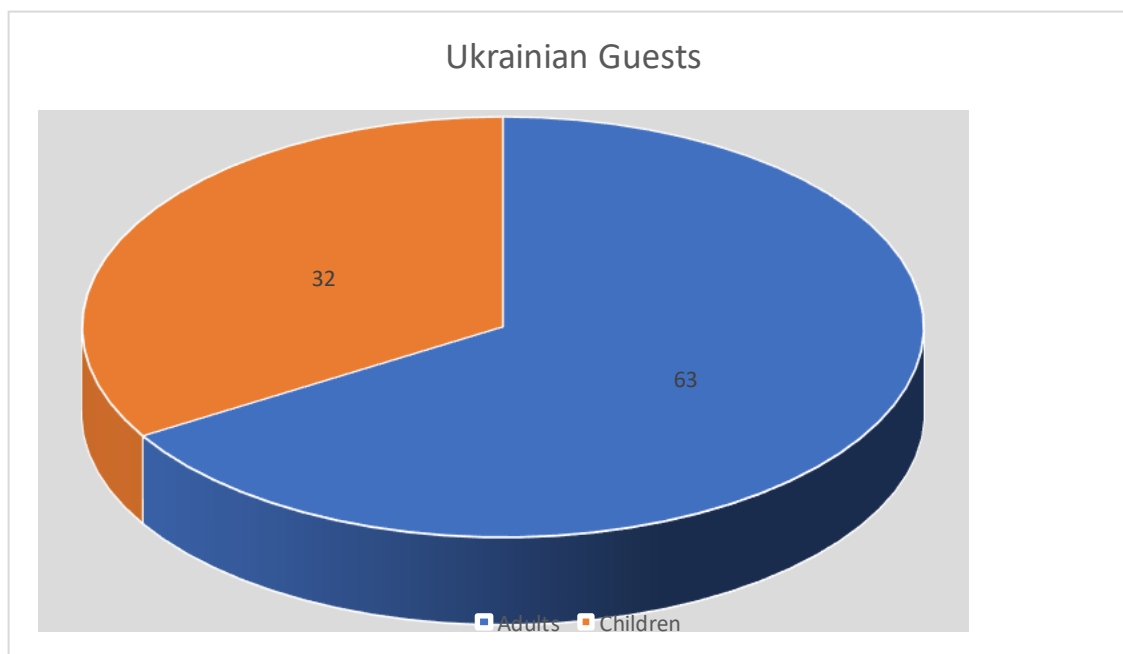
April 2023 - Present

- **529** Referrals since April
- **1288** different concerns raised by residents.

One of the most prolific issues for 2023 has been hoarding. 40 cases were raised in 2023 and of these 12 cases were rated level 3 where the case should be reported appropriately as a potential safeguarding adults concern.

Homes for Ukraine (H4U)

There are currently 95 Ukrainian guests being supported in the North Norfolk, of which 63 are adults and 32 are under the age of 18.



There are 35 hosts, of which four are hosting 2 separate families/un-related single guests.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Business Planning
Holt business meeting
Broadland Housing Association Northrepps
Meeting with MND Association
DCN Fuel Poverty
Site visit to Holt
Overview and Scrutiny
Mundesley Medical Centre Patient Group
Portfolio Holder Catchups
Carbon Literacy Training
LGA Dealing with abuse training
LGA health in an ageing society
Broadland Housing Association Meeting

3 Meetings attended

December 2023

Cabinet
Business Planning
Leeds Building Society on Mortgages for holiday lets
ICB Chairs Meeting

Portfolio Meeting regarding Ecoflex
Bidwells meeting discussing the affordable homes report
Mundesley Parish Council Parking
North Walsham Development Briefing
North Norfolk Health and Wellbeing Partnership
North Norfolk Collaborative Meeting with Headway
Portfolio Holder Meeting
Group Briefing
Cabinet Pre-agenda Meeting
NNDC Full Council Meeting
Portfolio Holder Meeting Housing

January 2024

Cabinet
Business Planning
Social Housing Webinar
NNHWBP Task and finish meeting
Norfolk Citizens Advice Meeting
Group Briefing
Training on Corporate Peer Challenges with the LGA
PH Catchup Housing
NNHWBP Taks and Finish Group
District Councilors Network Summit on Temporary Accommodation London
National meeting on Afghan resettlement.
NNDC Business Breakfast
Housing Strategy Refresh meeting
LGA Charing skills training