

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

October 2024

COUNCILLOR WENDY FREDERICKS - CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE SERVICES

For the period up to 30 September 2024

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Benefits

We are considering making changes to our Council Tax Support scheme from 1st April 2025. As part of these changes, we are undertaking a consultation so residents in North Norfolk can tell us about their views on them.

The Council Tax Support under review is the help provided for working age people on low incomes to pay for their Council Tax. Council Tax Support for low-income pensioners (66 years or over) is decided by central government and is therefore not affected by this.

Until April 2013 there was a national scheme called Council Tax Benefit. The Government made local Councils responsible for replacement schemes from 1 April 2013 and reduced funding to support the schemes. Since then, funding has further reduced. We also need to make changes to keep the Council Tax Support Scheme in line with Housing Benefit which we also administer to keep costs low.

Decisions about changes to the scheme need to be considered alongside the wider challenges being faced by local authorities.

As government funding continues to decrease, we need to strike a balance between a revised scheme that is fair and affordable for those who receive support, and for all our residents who receive council services. However, we remain committed to providing the maximum level of support for those with the lowest income.

In this consultation we are asking for views on several proposals to change the scheme. Options include:

- Introducing a flat rate non-dependent deduction of £10 per week for each adult.
- Removing the additional earnings disregard of £17.10 a week from earnings.
- Reducing the time we can backdate an award of Council Tax Support.

The consultation is published on the council's website and has also been posted to households who may be affected by the proposed changes. The consultation closes at midnight on Sunday 24th November 2024.

Benefits Speed of Processing

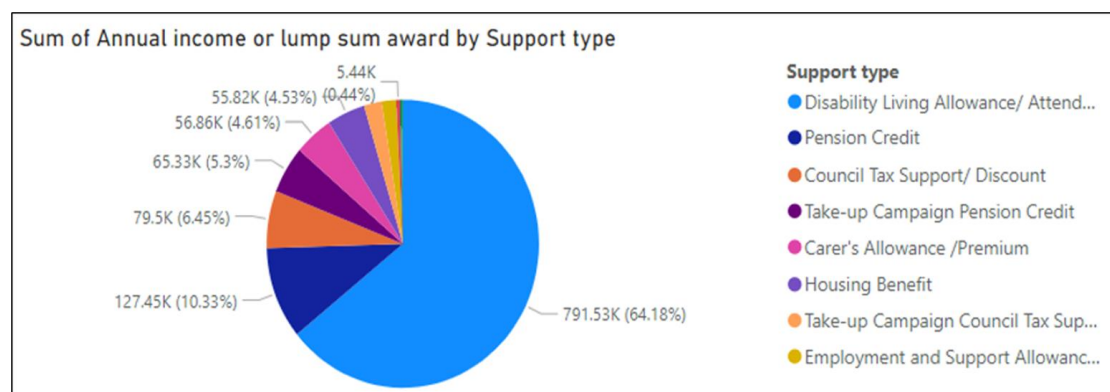
The Department for Work and Pensions have published the New Claims speed of processing figures for Quarter 1, the national average days to process is 22 days. North Norfolk's speed of processing of new claims for Quarter 1 is **7 days** which is the fastest in the County.

Financial Inclusion

To date, in this financial year, the team have claimed over £1.23 million* in missed benefits and/or funding for households across North Norfolk, with the highest amount of income being claimed for disabled households.

* Sum of income or lump sum award calculated on an annual basis.

Financial Inclusion	
Income Tracker 24/25	
Support type	Sum of Annual income or lump sum award
Carer's Allowance /Premium	56,862.00
Council Tax Support/ Discount	79,503.46
Disability Living Allowance/ Attendance Allowance / Personal Independence Allowance	791,528.40
Discretionary Housing Payment	2,307.07
Edenred/Argos Voucher	5,440.00
Employment and Support Allowance or Jobseeker's Allowance	21,304.40
Energy Bank Voucher	1,837.00
Household Support Fund/ Discretionary Household Support Grant	0.00
Housing Benefit	55,817.84
Pension Credit	127,446.80
Take-up Campaign Council Tax Support	25,823.67
Take-up Campaign Pension Credit	65,332.80
Total	1,233,203.44



We have recently run take up campaigns for Council Tax Support and Pension Credit through mailings, website information, and social media, to bolster low income households throughout the winter.

The team will be increasing their targeted work through the Financial Inclusion Triage Officer, a newly created post starting in November. The role will work closely with households in crisis, keeping people in their homes for longer.

This will provide a cost benefit to the council and to other public services as problems are unravelled and solved before they become too complex, or support is put in place as

early as possible for those with complex and ongoing needs.

Household Support Fund

The council has been allocated funding of £69k under round 6 of the Household Support Fund. This round of funding is for 6 months (Oct 24 to Mar 25). Households will be contacted by the Benefits team if they are eligible to support. The delivery plan is currently being finalised and detail will be published shortly.

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 2024/25, North Norfolk has been allocated funding of £103,037.00, and up to 31st October 2024 we have spent 71% of our allocation across 84 households. A further total of 157 applications (across 146 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 84 households can be seen below.

Single Working Age Households	
Number of successful applications	51
Rent Arrears	£4,655.61
Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£400.00
Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£33,542.42
Sub Total Expenditure	£38,598.03
Single Pension Age Households	
Number of successful applications	5
Rent Arrears	£0.00
Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£0.00
Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£6,451.68
Sub Total Expenditure	£6,451.68
Couple Working Age Households	
Number of successful applications	4
Rent Arrears	£2,034.73
Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£0.00
Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£822.38
Sub Total Expenditure	£2,857.11
Couple Pension Age Households	
Number of successful applications	1
Rent Arrears	£0.00
Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£2,154.00
Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£0.00
Sub Total Expenditure	£2,154.00
Family Working Age Households	
Number of successful applications	23
Rent Arrears	£2,527.26

Rent Deposit/Moving Costs	£1,661.95
Ongoing Rent Shortfall	£18,581.75
Sub Total Expenditure	£22,770.96
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	£72,831.78

Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention

Your Choice Your Home

As at the 31st October 2024 there were 2,334 households on the housing list with 489 (21%) being on the Housing Register – this register contains those qualifying applicants who have the most urgent housing needs.

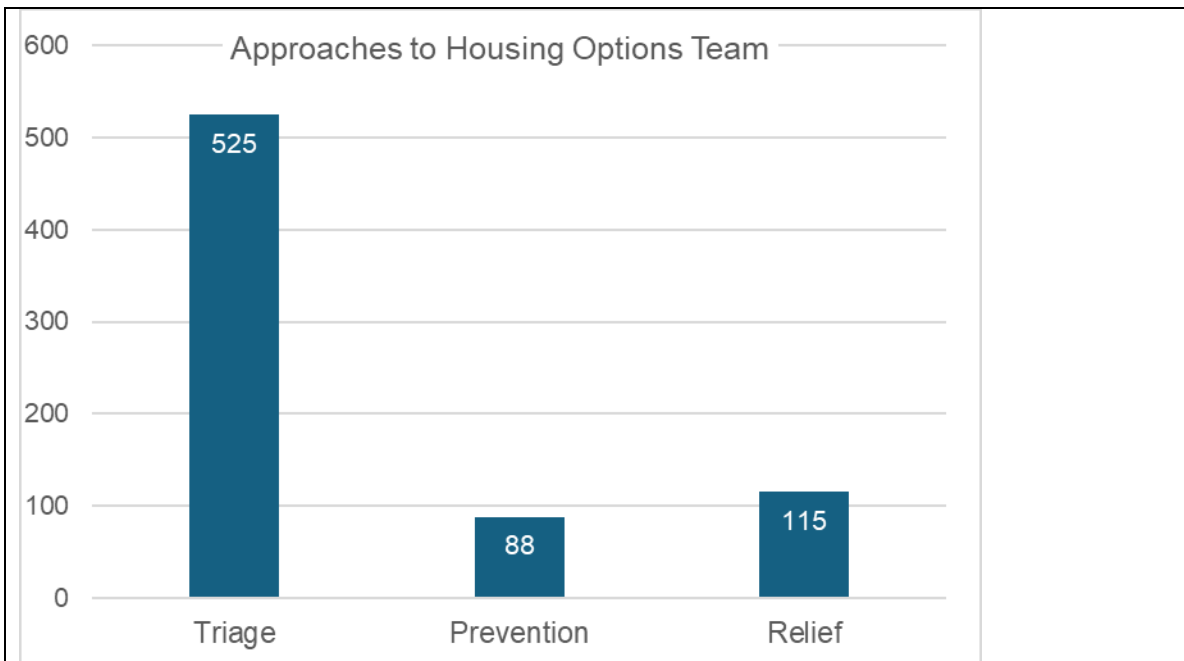
The tables below highlight the makeup of housing need and the size property that is required by applicants on the housing list. Although the greatest demand for housing is those with a 1-bedroom need, there are significantly fewer larger properties allocated with a current demand for 4 bed+ properties being 221 with out 1 four bedroom housing being let between 1st April to 31st October 2024.

	Housing List by Bedroom Need				Homes Let by Property size (Bedrooms)			
	Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer	Total	Housing Register	Housing Options	Transfer	Total
1 Bed	209	924	175	1308	60	1	6	67
2 Bed	100	354	89	543	78	7	7	92
3 Bed	82	107	48	237	16	1	3	20
4 Bed	89	95	37	221	1	0	0	1
5 Bed +	9	9	7	25	0	0	0	0
Total	489	1489	356	2334	155	9	16	180

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 1st April 2024 to 31st October 2024 we have opened 728 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).



The three most common triggers of homelessness were:

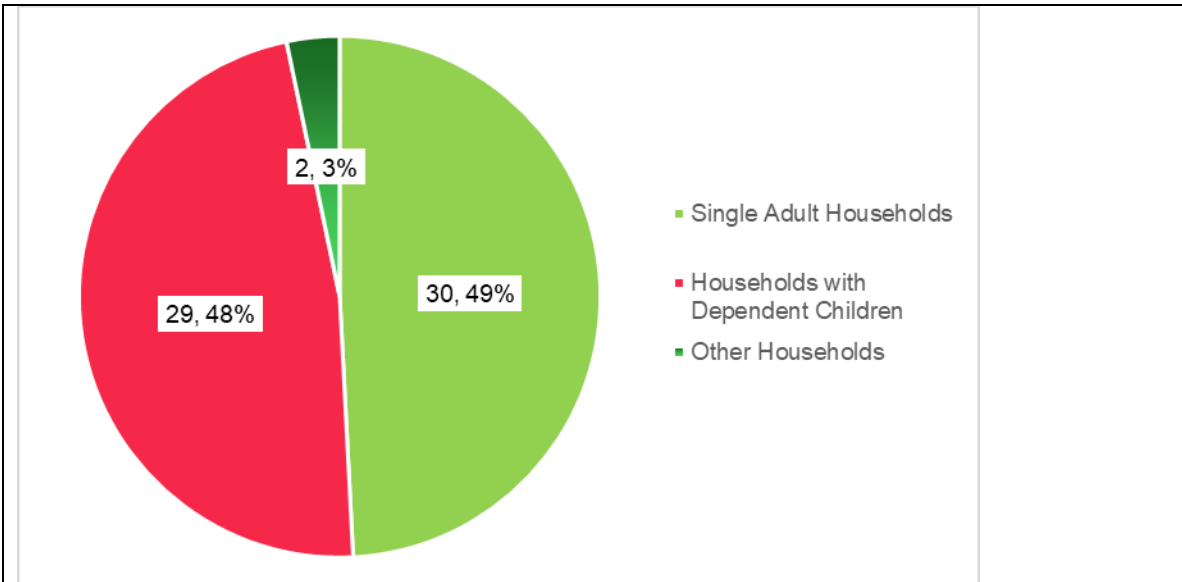
- End of Private Tenancy
- Family/friends no longer/willing to accommodate
- Domestic Abuse

As at the 31st October 2024 there were 223 open homeless cases. Of which 137 households were initially assessed as threatened with homelessness (68 – prevention Duty) or were homeless (69 Relief Duty), of these households 56 included (134) dependent children.

Temporary Accommodation

As at the 31st October 2024 there were 53 households in Temporary Accommodation. This is an overall decrease of 23% from the same date last year (31st August 2023).

Included in the 30 Family Households there are 77 children.



Rough Sleeping

During the month of October (at various points in time) 5 people were reported/verified as sleeping rough in North Norfolk, this includes 1 person with entrenched experience of rough sleeping and 4 people who have previously slept rough in the district. At the end of the month, 4 people remained sleeping rough.

DAHA Accreditation

North Norfolk District Council have been awarded an accredited status by Standing Together, a domestic abuse support charity.

DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation is the UK benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse.

The Council worked with DAHA to implement best practice as a housing provider/service, to ensure we are delivering a safe and effective response to domestic abuse.

[Housing Strategy](#)

Temporary Accommodation

The Council currently holds 25 units of Temporary or other homeless accommodation (including five units of move on accommodation for ex-rough sleepers). Some of these units have been partly funded using government grant, including Local Authority Housing Fund Grant (which has also helped to fund Flagship Housing to purchase 10 affordable homes).

Value for money analysis of our in-house TA has been completed and has concluded the homes do provide VFM, especially compared to expensive (and inferior) nightly paid accommodation.

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.

In 2024/25 we expect Housing Associations to provide 59 new affordable homes in the district – this is a lower figure than previously reported as one scheme will now begin handing over homes in early 2025/26. So far in 2024/25 23 new homes have been completed, including well-received Exception Schemes in Northrepps and Hindringham.

Recently Planning has been approved for a site of 47 affordable homes in Bacton and 50+ homes on Station Road in North Walsham.

Development of affordable homes in Sheringham (Westwood), Warham, Salthouse and West Beckham are also on site, as well as affordable homes as part of a market site at Beresford Road, Holt.

North Norfolk recently gave a presentation on our success in delivering affordable homes through rural expectation schemes at a national Rural Services Network event.

Social Prescribing

Referrals have increased significantly in October. There has also been a number of complex cases this month, requiring professional's meetings, which have been led by the Team Leader.

October 2024:

Referrals received into SP = **54**

Total number of issues/concerns supported by SP = **130**

Total number of referrals discussed at North Norfolk Help Hub = **40**

YTD: (figures from 01/04/2024)

Referrals received into SP = **305**

Total number of issues/concerns supported by SP = **781**

Total number of referrals discussed at North Norfolk Hep Hub = **159**

Note: all cases raised at the North Norfolk Health Hub meeting are complex cases with multiagency working practices in place

Community Hub

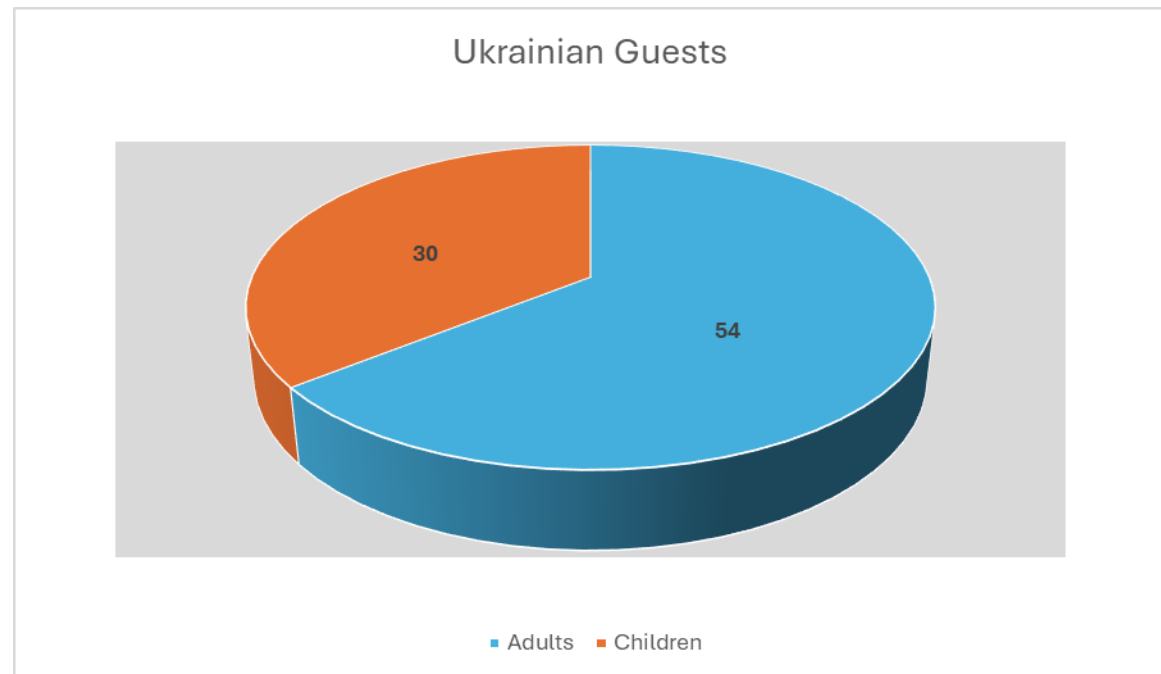
4th meeting held on Thursday 17th October with over 50 agencies represented. Presentations received from:

- Help Alert – a care and falls alarm agency
- NHS Smoke Free – NHS Health Checks – Reed
- Adult Learning from NCC
- Health & Wellbeing Web page – Catherine Van Battum

The next newsletter due to be released Friday 8th Nov 2024.
Next meeting: Thursday 21st Nove (Focus on suicide prevention)

Homes for Ukraine (H4U)

There are currently eighty-three Ukrainian guests being supported in North Norfolk, of which fifty-four are adults and twenty-nine are under the age of eighteen, in thirty-four host settings.



IHAT

Continue to promote IHAT and discretionary grants available throughout 2024-25.

- Production of literature to better promote DFG and Discretionary Grants within local community groups and residents of NNDC.
- Attending relevant Positivitea and occupational therapy events to promote and network with local organisations and groups.

Key objectives

- Increase adaptation output, we have increase demand within the system at present and are actively looking for ways to efficiently progress less complex cases more rapidly by utilising resource we already have within the team.
- Aim to increase spend through the amount of approved cases and completed adaptations.

Figures 2024/25 – Disabled Facilities Grant

Budget for 2024/25 £1,754,615.00 (minus 15% top slice for staff costs)

Quarter 1 & 2 YTD grants awarded (completed)	82 cases/grants awarded, 130 individual adaptations undertaken
Quarter 1 & 2 YTD total value	£860,367.53
Quarter 1 & 2 YTD total DFG contacts	268
Quarter 1 & 2 YTD recommendation for adaptations completed	119
2023/24 brought forward approval value/outstanding cases YTD (expected to complete 2024/25)	£314,724.85 / 26 approves cases
Cases awaiting assessment for adaptations	77

Figures 2024/25 – Discretionary Grants

Quarter 1 & 2 YTD grants awarded (completed)	43
Quarter 1 & 2 YTD total value	£50,982.48

Discretionary Grants key highlights from quarter 2

- 19 minor adaptation grants (*adaptations costing under £1000, non means tested*) awarded totalling £5624.00 (average spend per grant £296.00). This has included applicants who may not be financially eligible for DFG and also lower level adaptations that have prevented the need for DFG meaning savings within DFG budget and also relieving some of the pressure/demand on the DFG process.
- 7 home repair grants awarded totalling £27,279.00 (average spend per grant £3,897.00) these have included repairs and replacement boilers/heating systems inc. hot water with some properties and residents being without these basic utilities for 2+ years. Grants have also been awarded under home repair that have helped facilitate a DFG for adaptations in addition to Discretionary including upgrades to electrical systems to allow for the installation of stair lifts and level access showers. Without the grant these upgrades would have prevented an adaptation if the client was unable to fund prior to DFG application submission.
- 12 architects and surveyors grants awarded totalling £15,444.85 (average spend £1,287.00). These grants have enabled complex cases to progress to DFG through taking away the expensive upfront cost required away from the family/applicant and offering support to applicants through the architect and survey or grant. Without the introduction of this grant less than 10% of our complex cases were able to progress previously due to financial implications.

3 Meetings attended

September	October	November
Anglian Water Workshop	Cabinet	Cabinet
Visit to Water Lane Mundesley re improvements	Business Planning	Business Planning
Cabinet and Comms meeting	Norfolk Citizens Advice	Laying Wreath at Mundesley

Mundesley Golf Club Meeting regarding Net Zero discussion	Neurodivergence in Local Government	LGA Training Risk Management Warwick
LGA MP Parliamentary Reception Whitehall	Trunch Parish Council	Armistice Day at NNDC
Ripple Catchup	LGA Finance Training Refresh 2 sessions	Social Value Calculator Meeting
Planning Briefing	Video of 25 th unit of TA	Overview and Scrutiny
LGA Transformation Refresher	Portfolio Catch up with Peoples' Services	AGM Libdem
Cabinet	Portfolio Catch up with Housing Strategy	Business Planning
Business Planning	Development Committee	Southern Hill Meeting
Meeting with Solo Housing Association	Libdem Meeting	Flagship Strategic Partner Meeting
Victory Housing Meeting	LGA Conference Harrogate Oct 21 st – 24 th	Portfolio Catch up with Housing Strategy
Meeting with Rentplus	MPC and NNDC Meeting	NNDC Full Council
Patient Reference Group	Beam Foundation Meeting	Housing Conference London 26 – 28 th November
LGA comms Training	Visit to Stiffkey Affordable Housing Site	District Council Network presentation HOP Westminster
Rural Fair Funding and Economy Webinar	BBC Radion Norfolk Housing interview	Homestead Charity Meeting
Southern Hill Hospital Meeting		Energy Hub Meeting
Rural Affordable Housing Webinar		Business Planning & Budget Meeting
Data Support Catch-up		LGA Audit Training on line
Overview and Scrutiny		Planning Training Refresher
MPC Housing Meeting		Mundesley Christmas Lights Switch on
Rural Health and Care Webinar		PH Catchup Peoples Services
Beam Meeting		Site Visit to Warham with Flagship
Holt Land Discussion		
Norfolk Wind offshore event		
MPC Full Council		
Meeting the new PCC NNDC Full Council		
Public Meeting with Denbury Homes		