

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

January 2026

COUNCILLOR JILL BOYLE - CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE SERVICES

For the period up to 31st January 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Benefits

Caseload (January)

During January, the overall caseload increased by 25 cases compared to the previous month. The reduction in Housing Benefit claims reflects the migration of working-age households to Universal Credit. The deadline for migration was 31st December 2025. Some ESA cases with additional support needs are still to migrate but overall, we would now expect to see the reduction in the Housing Benefit caseload ease.

The number of households receiving Council Tax Support (CTS) can fluctuate over time. The Council undertakes targeted take-up campaigns to encourage eligible households to apply, helping to maximise income and ensure that residents receive the financial support to which they are entitled.

Alongside this, targeted reviews are conducted to identify and correct instances of fraud and error within the system, which can result in the removal of ineligible claims. Additionally, natural changes in household circumstances can lead to some residents no longer qualifying for support.

Caseload data for the period is presented in the table below.

	December	January	Difference
Housing Benefit only	243	236	-7
Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support	1,924	1,954	+30
Council Tax Support	4,789	4,791	+2
Total number of cases	6,959	6,981	25

Workloads and Speed of Processing (SOP) Times (January)

The table below illustrates the Council's processing times for December. The local target is **16 days** for processing new claims and **10 days** for processing changes in circumstances.

The service continues to prioritise changes that affect Housing Benefit to minimise overpayments. This approach helps to reduce the financial impact on customers, prevent potential losses in Housing Benefit subsidy, and avoid the need for costly recovery action.

In January, the team experienced a 46% increase in the number of new claims received compared to the previous month, which was mainly contributed to by take-up campaigns. The team saw a 51% increase in the number of changes in circumstances compared with the previous month. This is common to see at this time of year as we start to receive benefit uprating notifications for the new financial year.

News claims speed of processing improved during January, whilst there were no significant changes in the speed of processing performance for changes in circumstances. The current SOP performance is primarily attributable to increased workloads and lower staffing levels.

	Number received in January	NNDC number of days to process (January)
New claims HB	191	5.60
New claims CTS		6.90
Changes in circumstances HB	9,359	12.50
Changes in circumstances CTS		21.10

Financial Inclusion (Pro-active) Delivery Plan

We are continuing to deliver our Financial Inclusion (Pro-active) Delivery Plan.

Free school meals take up campaign	<p>By registering for Free School Meals, families can help their child's school receive over £1,500 in additional funding every year. This extra money can be used to provide more staff, resources, and support for all students. Even if the child is in Reception, Year 1 or Year 2 and already receives free school meals, completing the registration can still unlock vital funding.</p> <p>Households may be eligible if they receive certain benefits, even if their child does not have the meals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Households will receive a £15 monthly 'cost of living' voucher (until April 2026)✓ Helps fund more teachers, equipment, and learning support✓ Benefits every student at the school✓ It only takes a few minutes and makes a big difference! <p>The team contacted 965 households across North Norfolk to encourage take up of Free School meals. This campaign will be run monthly until April 2026.</p>
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Better Off Calculator	<p>The team is developing the Policy in Practice Better Off Calculator (www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/apply), a digital tool for residents and officers to support financial planning and improve household financial resilience. The tool helps users create action plans, set goals, and prepare for changes in circumstances.</p> <p>Since April 2025, 106 households have used the calculator, with 72 households identified as having unclaimed benefits totaling over £40k. This includes both households partially claiming benefits and those not claiming any.</p> <p>A majority of enquiries have come from residents who rent their home, and from unemployed and/or disabled households.</p> <p>Data from the calculator will be cross-referenced with the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) Dashboard to ensure missed benefits are claimed and households receive follow-up support. Household characteristics such as age, disability, number of children, tenure type, and employment status will inform targeted interventions.</p> <p>Engagement will be promoted through internal staff training, Council communications, and social media campaigns.</p>
Warms Homes: Local Grant	<p>Norfolk Warm Homes will be receiving around £500k additional funding under the Warm Homes Local Grant. The fund must be spent by 31st March 2026. The Benefits team is supporting the Climate & Environment team in targeting eligible households through data analytics using the Low-Income Family Tracker dashboard.</p>

Benefit take up campaigns

As part of our Financial Inclusion (pro-active) delivery plan, we are periodically running take up campaigns for Council Tax Support and Pension Credit. So far this year, the campaigns have realised yearly awards of over £51k in Council Tax Support and over £168k in Pension Credit.

Household Support Fund

Since April 2025, we have spent £83k under the Household Support Fund (round 7) leaving £7k to spend by 31st March 2026. Our allocations are shown below.

Total spend by housing composition		Total crisis support spend		Households
Children	£ 15,172.00	Energy & water	£ 60,238.33	385
Pensioners	£ 8,532.00	Wider essentials	£ 8,039.49	13
Disabled	£ 16,839.58	Housing costs	£ 1,319.38	2
Other	£ 42,503.62	Food	£ 13,450.00	236
Total	£ 83,047.20	Other	£ -	0
		Total	£ 83,047.20	636

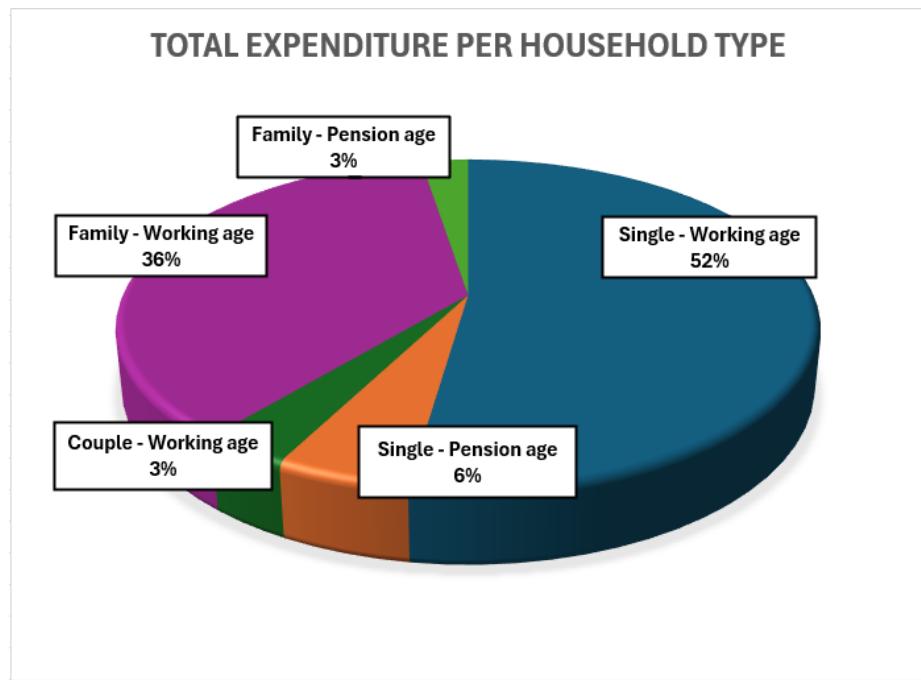
Discretionary Housing Payments

We continue to administer Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to support tenancy sustainment, homelessness, and to support people stay within the community.

For 2025/26, North Norfolk has been allocated funding of £103,037.00, and up to 31st January 2026 we have spent 87% of our allocation across 95 households.

A breakdown of how the expenditure has been allocated across the 95 households can be seen below.

Household Type	Number of Households paid	Expenditure across households
Single - Working age	50	£ 46,845.38
Single - Pension age	5	£ 4,792.46
Couple - Working age	4	£ 3,079.70
Couple - Pension age	0	£ -
Family - Working age	33	£ 32,539.35
Family - Pension age	3	£ 2,301.58
Totals	95	£ 89,558.47



Crisis Resilience Fund

From April 2026, the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments will be brought together into a single fund called the Crisis Resilience Fund. We are currently reviewing the guidance, and a full update will be shared with key stakeholders shortly.

Housing Options and Homeless Prevention

Your Choice Your Home

As of the 12th of January 2026, we have gone live with a new housing allocations scheme. The updated scheme sets out how socially rented homes are allocated to people on the housing register in the district. The overall aim is to make sure that people who are most in need are given priority, Taking into account local considerations and needs.

The Scheme contains a priority banding system to ensure that households who are eligible and qualify to join are placed on the housing register according to their housing need and complies with the reasonable preference categories outlined in s166A (3) Housing Act 1996, as inserted by s147(4) Localism Act 2011.

The new bands range from A-E with A being the highest priority, and band E reflects applicants who have limited need by are seeking specific housing, such as local lettings of age restricted properties.

Applicants who failed to register or no longer meet the new eligibility criteria were automatically removed from the register on the 12 January 2026.

The tables below reflect applicants (both existing who have re-registered and new applicants) who are eligible and qualify to join the register under the rules and details their priority (banding) and bedroom need (table 1). Table 2 details the homes that have been let during the month by property size and banding.

Table 1						
Housing List by Bedroom Need						
	PC	A	B	C	D	E
1 Bed	2	31	60	54	63	429
2 Bed	2	29	22	60	4	176
3 Bed		7	24	77	1	84
4 Bed		5	11	12		23
5 Bed +			1	2		1
Total	4	72	118	205	68	713

Housing Register Applicants as of 31 January 2026

Table 2						
Homes Let by Property size (Bedrooms)						
	PC	A	B	C	D	E
0	4	2				1
2	5	2				
0	1	0				
0	0	0				
0	0	0				
2	10	4				1

Homes let 01 to 31 January 2026

Homes Let Year to Date

Between 1 April 2025 and 31 January 2026, 265 properties have been let. Of which 37% were 1 bed, 43% were 2 beds. 17% were 3 beds, and 2% were 4 beds.

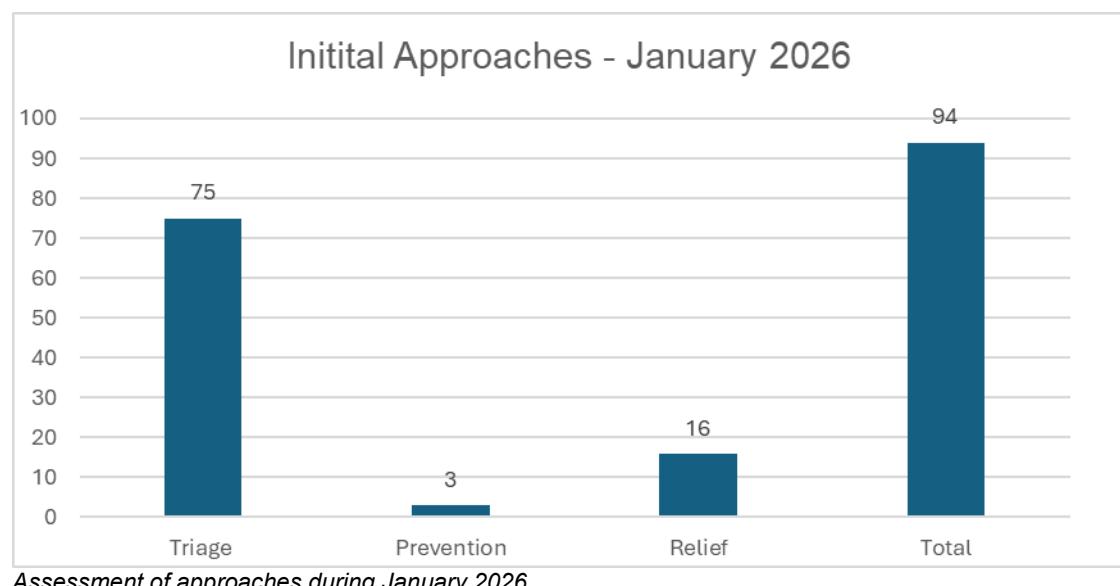
Households Assessed and Duty Owed

When a household becomes homeless, or at risk of homelessness, their local authority owes them a duty. There are three main types of

homelessness duties:

1. Prevention duty: Local authorities owe prevention duties to help stop households at risk of homelessness losing their accommodation.
2. Relief duty: If a household is homeless, the local authority owes them a relief duty to provide some sort of accommodation.
3. Main duty

During the month of January 2026, we opened 94 new cases with 19 households being assessed as owed a statutory duty to prevent (3) or relieve homelessness (16).



Causes of Homelessness

The three most common triggers of homelessness/loss of last settled home during the month were:

- Domestic Abuse (26%)
- Family/friends no longer able to accommodate (26%)
- Relationship breakdown (16%)

The Renters' Rights Act 2025 ('the Act'), which passed into law in autumn 2025, makes the biggest changes to private renting law in England for more than a generation. By ending 'Section 21', the act will fundamentally transform private tenants' protection from eviction, meaning evictions can only happen legally where a landlord is able to evidence one of a set list of legal grounds, such as rent arrears. Alongside this change a range of other measures are being introduced, from bans on 'rental bidding' and discrimination against tenants with children or receiving benefits, to a new national database of landlords and stronger investigatory powers for councils.

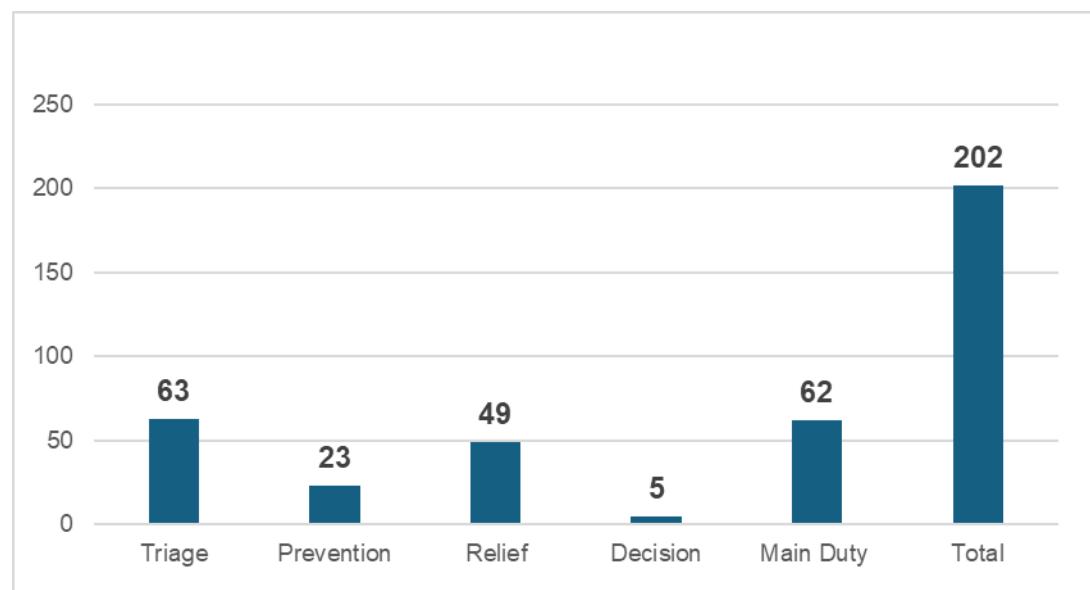
Reducing homelessness is an explicit aim of the abolition of Section 21 and the Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST). The ending of an AST has long been

one of the leading reasons that households present as homeless to NNDC and accounted for a 25% of households who were owed a homeless duty between 01 April to 31 January 2026.

By increasing the security that tenants have from eviction, it is hoped that fewer of these households will ultimately lose their homes and become homeless. This should lead to fewer households presenting to councils for support but in the lead up to the new measures going live, we anticipate we may see an increase in landlords serving a section 21 prior to the 01 May and exiting the private rented sector, although data for the previous two months does not support this.

Open cases

On the 31 January 2026 there were 202 open cases.



Outcomes of homelessness duties 01 April 2025 to 31 January 2026

Outcomes of homelessness prevention duties:

Of the 136 households whose prevention duty ended in the period (April 2025 to January 2026) 54% (73 households) secured (existing or alternative) accommodation for 6+ months and 32% (43 households) could not have their homelessness prevented. Other reasons why cases are closed included contact being lost and applicant withdrawing their application.

Outcomes of homelessness relief duties:

Of the 284 households whose relief duty ended in the period (April 2025 to January 2026) 20% (58 households) found secure accommodation and 65% (184 households) were still homeless.

Outcomes of homelessness main duty assessments:

If we have tried to help a household through the homeless prevention and

relief stages but they are still homeless, we must make a final decision on their case. This is called issuing a statutory homeless or main duty decision. The help offered will depend on the decision that is made.

- **Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (main housing duty)**
We will have a duty to find the household a permanent home. If we have already provided temporary accommodation, this will remain in place until we find a suitable home. If we have not already provided temporary accommodation, we would provide if it needed. We will not owe the main housing duty if someone has refused a suitable offer of accommodation that was made at a relief duty, or we ended the relief duty because of someone's refusal to co-operate with us.
- **Eligible, in priority need but intentionally homeless**
We will not have a duty to find a permanent home. We will offer advice and assistance regarding finding accommodation.
- **Eligible, homeless but not in priority need**
We will not have a duty to find a permanent home. We will offer advice and assistance regarding finding accommodation.
- **Eligible but not homeless**
If we find that you are not homeless, no further assistance will be offered.

Where a relief duty ended between 01 April 2025 and 31 January 2026 the following decisions were made:

Homeless + priority need + unintentional	138
Homeless + priority need + intentionally homeless	9
Homeless + no priority need	36
Not Homeless	1
Withdrew prior to Assessment	1
Total	185

Ending a Main Housing Duty

Where a local authority has accepted a main housing duty to an applicant, Section 193 accommodation duty arises. This requires the local authority to ensure that the applicant has access to suitable temporary accommodation until the applicant is rehoused and the Section 193 duty is discharged.

This duty can be brought to an end in the following ways:

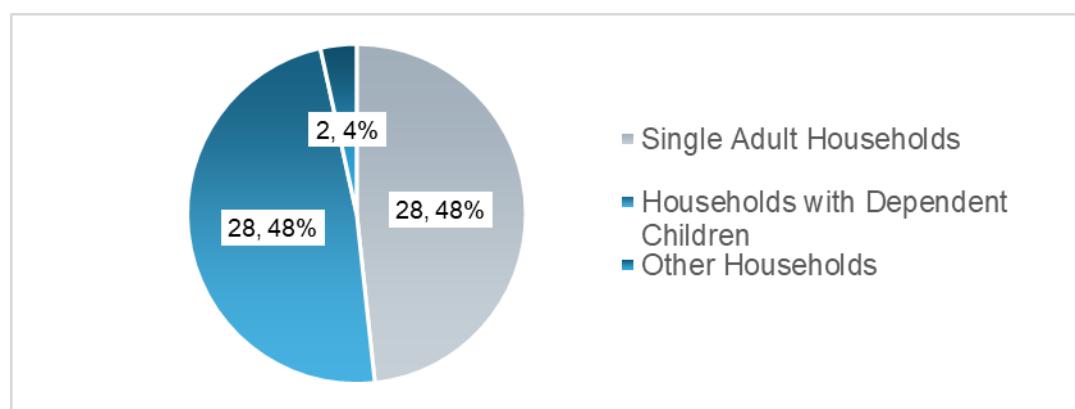
- An offer of suitable accommodation is accepted (this could be an offer of private rented or social housing)
- A refusal of suitable accommodation
- A refusal of temporary accommodation
- The customer ceases to be eligible for housing assistance

- The customer becomes intentionally homeless from temporary accommodation provided to them
- The customer ceases to occupy any temporary accommodation that has been provided

Between 01 April 2025 and 31 January 2026, 128 main duty cases have been closed with 105 (82%) of applicants securing social housing, 7 (5%) securing private rented accommodation. Other reasons why applications are closed include applicant withdrawing their application, becoming intentionally homeless from temporary accommodation or refusing a suitable offer of social housing.

Temporary Accommodation

On the 31 January 2026 there were 58 households in Temporary Accommodation. Households with dependent children made up 48% of placements and included 63 children.



Snapshot of households in temporary accommodation 31 January 2026

The table below looks at the households by temporary accommodation placement type. 31% of households were in temporary accommodation owned by North Norfolk District Council.

Nightly paid, privately managed accommodation (Shared facilities)	17
Nightly paid, privately managed accommodation (Self-contained)	17
Accommodation within NNDC stock	22
Accommodation within registered provider stock	2
Total	58

The table below looks at temporary accommodation numbers taken as a snapshot at the end of each month and provides a comparison with the previous year.

	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
2025-26	64	62	59	54	54	60	63	64	60	58
2024-25	57	60	57	51	52	53	61	60	60	65

Rough Sleeping

During the month of January (at various points in time) 11 people were reported/verified as sleeping rough in North Norfolk. At the end of the month, 7 people remain sleeping rough in the district.

During the Month our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) has been activated on one occasion and 3 people who were believed to be rough sleeping was accommodated and offered assistance.

Housing Strategy

Temporary Accommodation

The Council now holds 30 units of Temporary or other homeless accommodation (including five units of move on accommodation for ex-rough sleepers). The demand for TA continues and, with funding from the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund Grant (£588K) and Second Homes Council Tax Premium, we are purchasing seven units of homeless accommodation in 2025/26. The LAHF was originally intended to deliver four homes, but we have increased this to seven through use of additional funding from Second Homes Council Tax. Five of these homes have already been purchased (included in the 30 above) and are now in use. A further home should complete shortly, and we aim to secure the remaining home in the next 2-3 months.

We await confirmation from MHCLG of the level of LAHF grant we will receive for 2026/27. The grant will enable us to purchase at least 4, but hopefully if we receive the higher grant award, 6 further homes for TA.

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 twenty developments which are on site, having planning approval or are at an advanced planning application stage. These sites will deliver more than 650 new affordable homes. There are a further 12 earlier stage projects where we are expecting planning applications or have available land which is being explored for development – and project the delivery of over 200 new affordable homes on these sites.

Current schemes include the following:

- An innovative development is in early stages in Mundesley, with collaboration between NNDC, Flagship Housing Association and Mundesley Bowls Club, to create an all-affordable housing development in the centre of the village with approximately 11 new homes.
- Flagship Housing Association have submitted a planning application for 9 affordable homes in Pudding Norton at Green Lane.
- Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society continues to work in partnership with Broadland Housing Association to deliver 8 affordable homes. The planning application has now been submitted and is expected to be determined soon.
- In Walcott, 23 new affordable homes are in the last stages of building work and are expected to be completed in March 2026.
- In Bacton, 47 new affordable homes are in an advanced build stage, 19 of which are for sale as Shared Ownership. On the afternoon of 21 January, Flagship held a well-attended drop-in session for those interested in the Shared Ownership homes which approximately 50 people attended.
- In North Walsham, planning permission has been fully approved to build 54 affordable homes on the former sports ground on Station Road, also known as Paston Field. It is hoped that building will commence in the summer.
- Building of the 61 extra care apartments in Stalham is progressing well and we expect a start on site soon for the 34 affordable homes on the adjoining land.

71 new affordable homes have completed so far this year, and we expect a total of 94 new affordable homes to be completed in 2025/25.

Other issues

Option agreements with Flagship Housing Association or Broadland Housing are being drafted by Eastlaw for Highfield Road in Fakenham, land behind Mundesley Bowls Club and adjacent to the existing exception housing scheme in Edgefield.

We have received a response from Flagship Housing Association after raising concerns about a number of homes they are disposing of – there are now 48 homes where disposal has taken place or has been agreed this financial year already. A meeting is now being arranged.

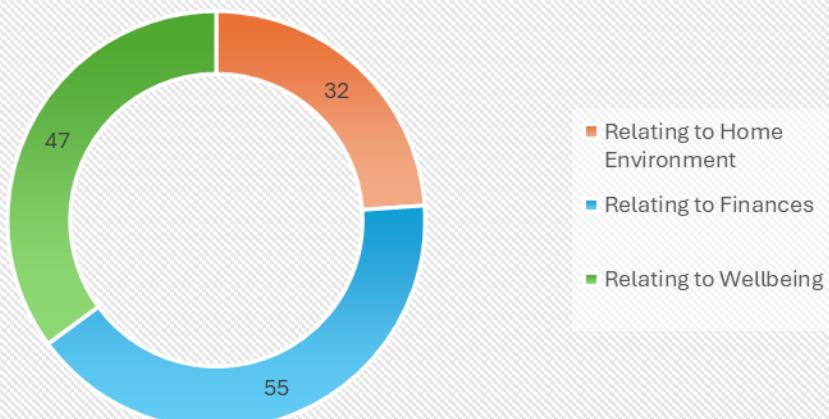
Social Prescribing

Early Help & Prevention

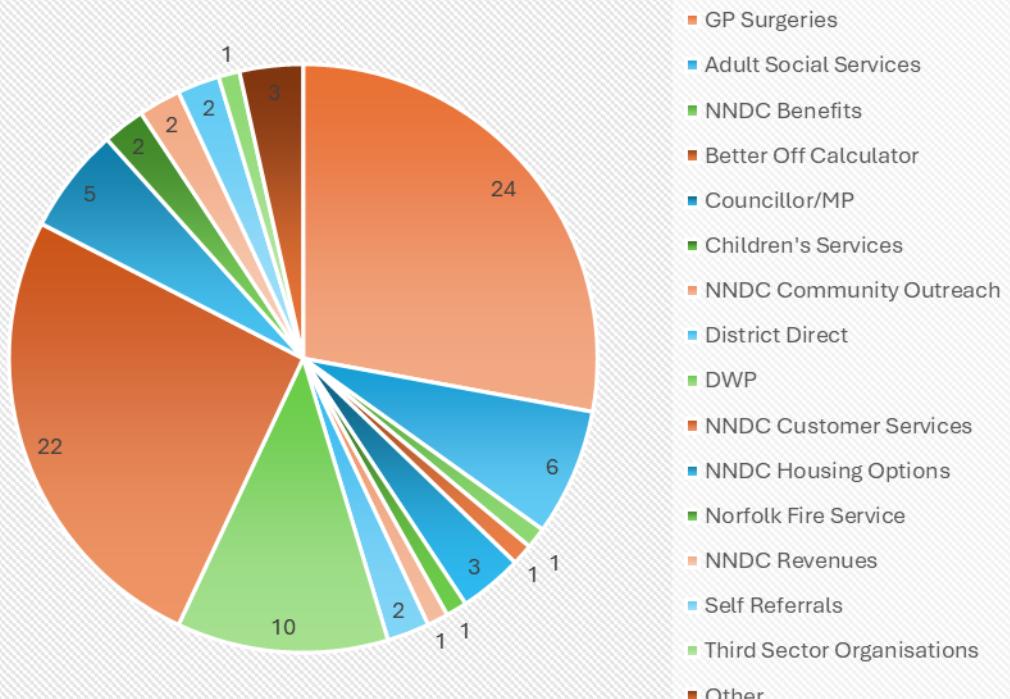
From January 1st – 31st 2026:

TOTAL REFERRALS RECEIVED: 86

Referrals into Early Help & Prevention



Referral Sources



Financial Inclusion Case Study

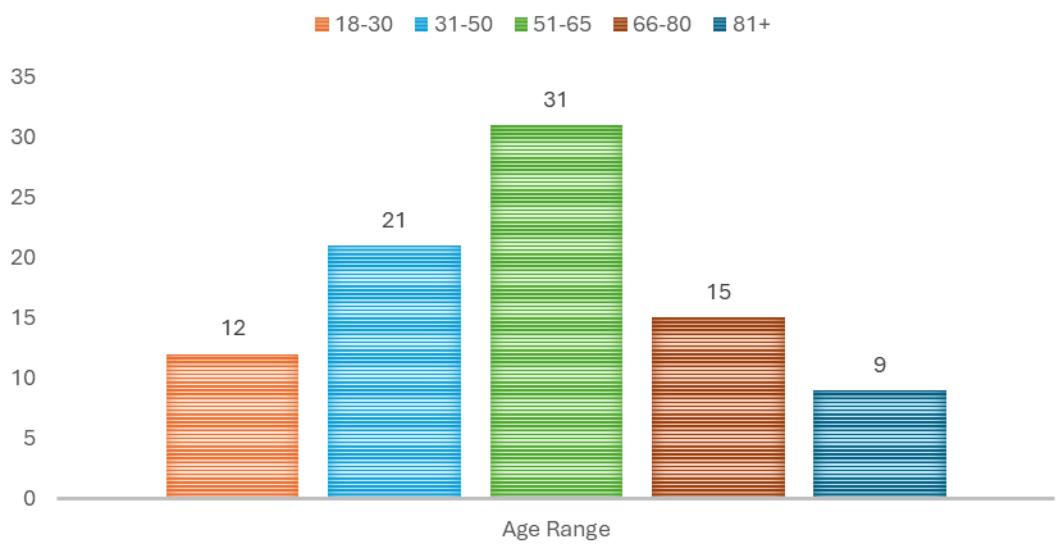
Miss H is a single parent. Following leaving an abusive relationship, she had become financially unstable and was having issues with budgeting. She also was experiencing issues with alcohol misuse and emotional vulnerability as a survivor of Domestic Abuse.

The Officer provided ongoing support to Miss H to ensure she was in receipt of all benefits she was entitled to, thus maximising her income. They worked together to identify her priority bills and essential household costs, and put together a manageable budgeting plan, with strategies for avoiding arrears and managing unexpected expenses.

The officer also worked with Miss H to establish connections with specialist support services around her alcohol misuse, and recovery following her separation.

The officer will be maintaining regular check ins with Miss H as she establishes her new routine, to help ensure her ongoing success.

REFERRALS BY AGE RANGE



Social Prescribing Case Study

Mrs G was referred to the service by her GP as she was struggling with a new life-changing diagnosis and the issues that this had brought with it. Mrs G also recently had a couple of bereavements which were adding to her poor mental health. Mrs G had been in touch with her GP regularly saying that she was unable to cope and she was hospitalised following a suicide attempt.

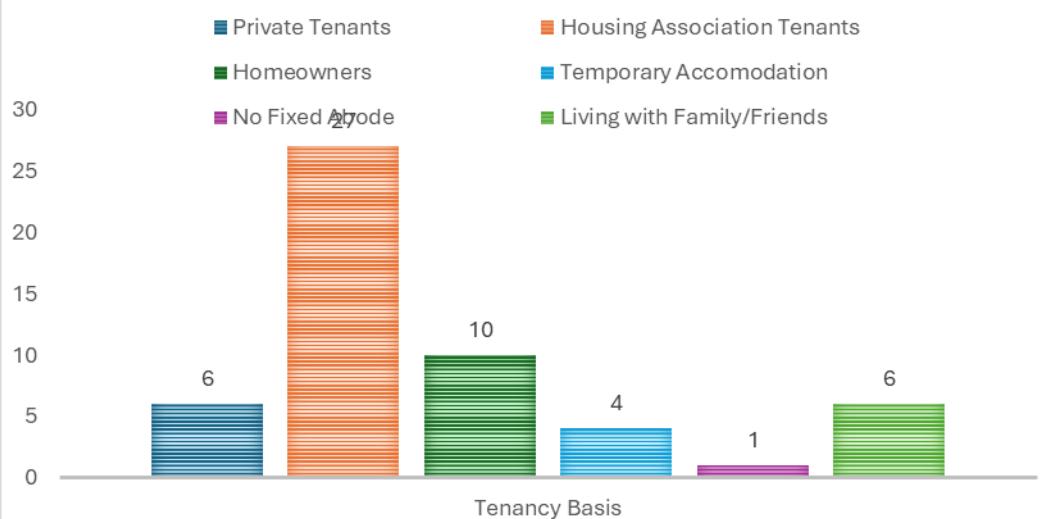
The Social Prescribing Officer visited Mrs G a number of times and had regular phone contact offering support and reassurance. Therapeutic listening was key with Mrs G, to allow her time to voice her worries and find support that felt comfortable to her.

The officer worked with Mrs G to contact various support groups and assisted in building her confidence so that she could reach out for support and help at home independently.

Mrs G is now receiving help from a cleaner, who also takes her out shopping and to get out of her house. Work was completed to clear her garden and a gardener arranged to begin in the spring to help Mrs G access her outdoor space.

Mrs G is also receiving a weekly visit from a volunteer group who are visiting her in the home or supporting with taking her out into the community, thus building her support networks and improving her overall wellbeing.

REFERRALS BY TENANCY BASIS



Number of Referrals where children live in the home:

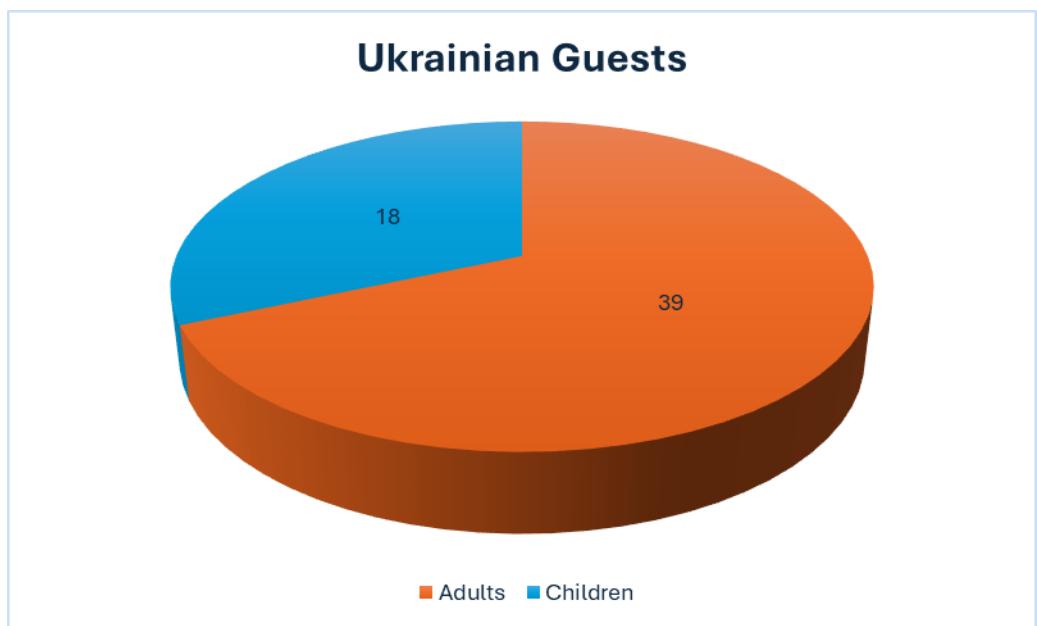
19

Food Support:
Foodbank Vouchers
Issued: 37
Supermarket Vouchers
Issued: 10

Energy Bank:
Referrals Made/Support Provided: 18

Homes For Ukraine

There are currently 57 Ukrainian guests being supported in North Norfolk, of which 39 are adults and 18 are under the age of eighteen. These guests are accommodated over 24 host arrangements.



During January, our Ukrainian Support Officer has been supporting guests and families with making applications for visa extension, council tax support and tenancy support.

Our Ukrainian Support Officer continues to complete initial and review welfare visits, helping with applying for visa extension permission scheme, housing applications, council tax support applications, tenancy support, etc. In addition, the officer also investigates potential visa fraud cases as provided by NCC.

In cases of breakdown in relationship between hosts and guests, the officer liaises with both sides to make sure that process of relocating guests is done in timely and coordinated manner.

IHAT

The council has a statutory duty to provide financial assistance to those who qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to contribute towards adaptations which help them to safely access their home and the facilities within it.

The funding is provided as a capital grant from the government via the Better Care Fund. Total budget made available for DFG Adaptations & Discretionary grants for 2025/26 is **£1,828,729**.

The actual spend to date, including partially completed adaptations against

the budget is **£1,000,509.93** in mandatory DFG's and **£102,406.54** in Discretionary Grants. A total of **£787,298.38** is outstanding in approved grants and committed funding to date for an additional sixty-two mandatory DFG approved grant applications (not incl. Discretionary Grants).

Discretionary Grants Breakdown to Date:

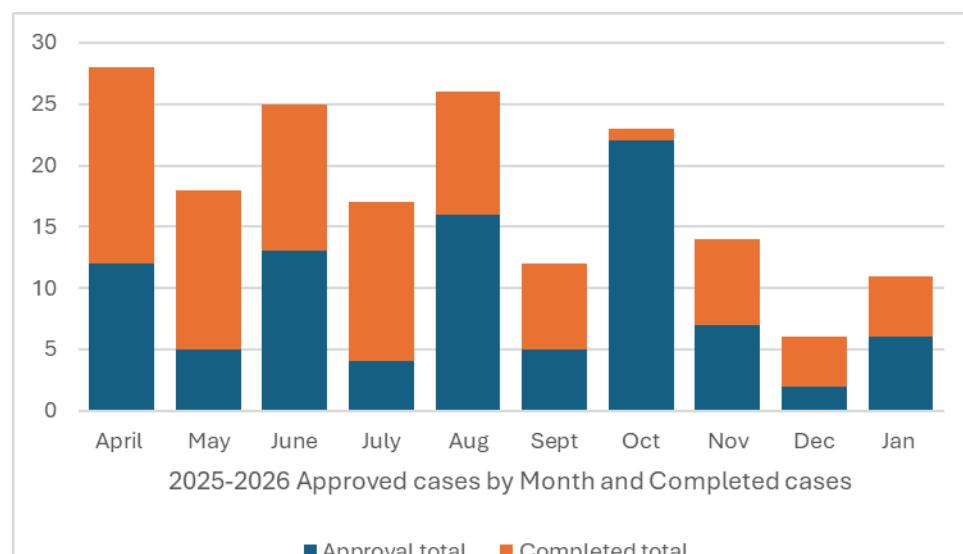
Grant Type	Total
Minor Adaptations	34
Architect's fees	21
Home repairs	6
Top up	3
Fast track	2
Forget me not	2
Contribution	1
Grand Total	69

A Breakdown of the DFG Outcomes to Date by Tenure

95 adaptations have been completed to date for 2025/26. A breakdown of the property tenure and total spend for completed cases/adaptations is shown below.

Tenure	Sum of Total grant award
Registered	£493,025.97
Social LL	
Owner Occupier	£272,205.19
Private rented	£60,630.81
Grand Total	£825,861.97

Chart showing the total approved and completed cases per month for 2025/26



3 Meetings attended

Bacton Shared Ownership Scheme Open Event
Overview & Scrutiny
Cabinet
Portfolio holder meeting
Meeting with Solo Housing
Building more council homes: Insights challenges & Support
Delivering Neighbourhood Health
Connecting the dots
HAZ meeting
National Trails
Planning training
Right to build task force
LGA Leadership Academy
Bids for social homes