

[NCC Update.](#)

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County Deal – devolution update

Following the Government's decision to halt the £600 million devolution deal that Norfolk County Council had agreed with the previous administration, county council leader Kay Mason Billig has had talks with Local Government Minister Jim McMahon on a new way forward.

[Cllr Mason Billig said:](#) "We had a very good and detailed meeting with the minister. We discussed issues which were pertinent to Norfolk, the challenges we face and our aspirations for the future. There was a general accord that we should look for ways to deliver devolution for the county.

"The Government will not allow our previously negotiated level three deal to go ahead and have expressed a preference for a more regional approach in East Anglia

"However, there is still the potential for a level two deal for Norfolk, which would give us the adult skills funding, whilst we continue to explore further routes to devolution.

"Norfolk County Council agreed at its last full council meeting to talk to the Government to ensure as many positive aspects of our previous ambitious deal could be recovered, and that Norfolk did not move to the back of the queue.

"With that in mind, we will continue to pursue devolution options which are in the best interests of our county and will be having ongoing discussions with the Minister about what the next steps could be. As soon as we have further information and something which can be agreed we will let everyone know."

Increase in school places for SEND

As part of Norfolk County Council's Local First Inclusion (LFI) programme, 76 extra spaces have been created at Norfolk schools for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The places are being created in infant, junior and high schools across the county.

The schools are already home to a developing network of [Specialist Hubs of Inclusive Practice \(SHIPs\)](#), operating within existing Specialist Resource Bases (SRBs) in Norfolk mainstream schools. SHIPs provide children who have co-occurring special educational needs with an enhanced offer of support and a personalised, child-centred approach to learning and development.

The £100m LFI programme pledges to deliver hundreds of new specialist education places across Norfolk. It also aims to provide significantly more advice, support, and funding for mainstream schools to support inclusion with the 15 new school and community support teams that were introduced in September 2023, to give early help and support to both parents and schools.

Further details about the SEND initiative and the locations of the extra spaces are available [here](#).

The initiative contributes towards our [Flourish](#) ambition for Norfolk to be a county where all children and young people can flourish

Norfolk Market Towns conference update

The recent conference to attract more visitors to Norfolk's market towns brought together more than 100 people from businesses and organisations across the county.

Swaffham Assembly Rooms was packed out for the event organised by Norfolk County Council and sponsored by Lovell, with representatives from 22 market towns in attendance to hear success stories celebrated and challenges explored.

Separate panel discussions explored sharing best practice on the regeneration and placemaking of Norfolk's market towns as well as opportunities for business and skills support.

Further information about the conference discussions is available [here](#).

Further information about the business support services available in Norfolk is available [here](#).

Nourishing Norfolk

Nourishing Norfolk has recently been [cited as a good practice case study](#) by the NHS confederation.

The [Nourishing Norfolk programme](#) is a community-driven initiative that addresses food insecurity across Norfolk by establishing affordable food hubs that provide nutritious groceries and holistic support services, empowering local communities to lead and sustain their own development.

The initiative is run by the Norfolk Community Foundation, an independent local charity which is supported by Norfolk County Council.

Norfolk County Council web pages provide links to the Nourishing Norfolk hubs , as well as to a range of other resources across Norfolk that help with those struggling with living costs, including those struggling to afford and buy food. A link to the pages is available [here](#).

National updates

Natural England Report - The State of Natural Capital

Natural England's State of Natural Capital Report, published on 9 October, highlights vital links between nature and England's health, wealth and security.

The Chair of Natural England's launch comments say that "Nature isn't different from growth – it's at the heart of it, you cannot grow the economy if we don't grow nature. According to recent estimates the current value of the UK's natural wealth was just over £1.5 trillion."

He also sets out the case for change and his view on a need to act differently.

The report brings together the best available evidence on the state of England's natural capital.

It also introduces a new Risk Register, which investigates the threats nature faces, and how they could impact on a range of policy areas, such as the push for net zero, climate adaptation, food security, water security and health, and setting out the actions that need to be taken to address these risks to nature and the benefits it provides.

The report finds that all ecosystem assets, and almost all the benefits they provide, are at high or medium-high risk.

Further information and a link to the report is available [here](#).

NHS Confederation Report – Paving a new pathway to prevention

A new report, the fourth in the NHS Federation's Value in Health series, explores the impact on prevention of selected interventions with the highest return on investment.

The report [has found that the top 20 interventions by return on investment \(ROI\)](#) were community based, but noted that the public health grant to councils, which funds many preventative services, had effectively been cut by 28% per person since 2015-16.

The report found that Injecting more money into prevention could deliver an extra £11 billion ROI based on the £5 billion that is currently spent on the public health grant by local authorities and on health inequalities by the NHS.

This further reinforces the key messages from the previous Value in Health research and highlights the importance of consistent working across NHS, local government and other partners.

The analysis by the NHS Confederation and Carnall Farrar identified providing free leisure services to residents and adapting homes to prevent falls as among the top five interventions in terms of return on investment.

However, one particular area of note was the impact of intervention on children and young people – including those related to education. When considering ROI by age, there was no variance by age for interventions. The implication of this is that investment in children and young people returns at least as much as older people and is likely to exceed the stated ROI given the lasting effects of childhood health on adult health, employment and socioeconomic status.

Ofsted report highlights important of early years education

Ofsted has published the final part in its series of Best start in life research reviews relating to early years education. [Their report](#) focuses on what progress looks like for pre-school aged children in the 4 specific areas of learning – literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, and expressive arts and design.

They say that the research is clear: early education is too important to be left to chance. A high-quality early years curriculum is particularly important as not all children get the same start in life – for example, due to differences in the level of help they receive at home.

The report also highlights their findings that the help children get at home has a big impact on what they know and can do. They note that shared reading at home, together with

activities like visiting the library, is associated with better achievement throughout schooling, regardless of family income.

Law Commission consultation – disabled children’s social care

The Minister for Children and Families has agreed that the Children Act 1989 should be updated to remove offensive language and confusing and contradictory rules.

The Law Commission is currently reviewing the legal framework governing social care for disabled children in England to ensure that the law is fair, modern and accessible, allowing children with disabilities to access the support they need. They say it would be fair to describe the current legal rules as a ‘system of baffling complexity’ that creates ‘additional tiring and frustrating work’.

The Law Commission have recently published a [consultation paper](#) asking people to tell them about their experiences of the current system and setting out their provisional proposals on how it could be improved.

They invite responses from anyone with experience of, or interest in, social care for disabled children. They particularly encourage responses from children and young people, parents and carers, and social workers and local authorities.

Responses can be provided using the online form that is available [here](#).

The consultation is open until 20 January 2025.

First Council of the Nations and the Regions convened

The Prime Minister is convening leaders from across the UK for [Council of the Nations and Regions](#) on 11 October. He will be accompanied by Sue Gray, who has recently been given a new role as envoy for regions and nations.

The Council brings together First Ministers, Northern Ireland’s First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and the regional Mayors from across England.

The Council will focus on maximising opportunities to deliver investment and growth across the UK, ahead of the International Investment Summit on 14 October at which the Prime Minister will bring together up to 300 industry leaders to catalyse investment in the UK.

The new council is expected to meet every 3 months.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

james