

Norfolk County Council updates

Digital Switchover – help keep people who are reliant on Assistive Technology connected

Our teams work with some of the most vulnerable people in Norfolk, some of whom rely on Assistive Technology such as telecare services, personal alarms, fall monitors or lifelines. That gives our officers an opportunity to make sure vulnerable residents stay connected as our telephone lines change.

Over the next year and a half, the UK's telephone network is being upgraded. By the start of 2027 the old analogue copper telephone landline network will be switched to digital, meaning that all phone calls will go through the internet, and everyone will require broadband to make landline phone calls.

This means that people who use technology that is reliant on analogue telephone connections may need to upgrade their devices.

If you meet or visit people who rely on Assistive Technology, this may be an opportunity to make sure they are aware of and ready for the change.

Please share the news and advise those who may be working closely with vulnerable residents that they can find additional information [here](#).

Calls for more foster carers during Foster Care Fortnight

Five children in Norfolk come into care every week and Norfolk County Council is calling for more people to come forward to give them a loving home. There are more than 1,200 children in care in Norfolk and, although numbers have stabilised in recent years, the council needs more carers to provide stability and safety for the children it looks after.

The council is using Foster Care Fortnight to urge more people to consider fostering and encourage more businesses to become Fostering Friendly Employers. Fostering Friendly Employers support their staff by giving them flexibility to take their foster child to medical appointments, attend parents' evenings and sports day, or to work from home if the child is sick.

Norfolk County Council has recently become accredited as a Fostering Friendly Employer and has 30 employees who are also foster carers with Norfolk Fostering Service. Foster carers are self-employed. Many continue working at their usual place of employment at the same time as being a foster carer.

For more details about the Fostering Friendly scheme, please visit [here](#).

Have your say and help Norfolk make more space for nature

Norfolk County Council, along with 47 other local authorities, is working on a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) as part of a national effort to protect biodiversity in England.

We launched a survey on 13 May to find out which aspects of nature are most important to people in Norfolk which will help to ensure the strategy represents local views.

The survey, which is open for the next seven weeks, will ask residents which aspects of nature are important to them, where their favourite places to visit in the county are, and how easy it is to get there. It will also seek opinions of which habitats and species should be included in the strategy.

Residents can take part in the survey online until 30 June. For more information, go [here](#).

Norfolk County Council appointed to lead Music Hubs for Norfolk and Suffolk

Norfolk County Council has been appointed by Arts Council England to lead both the Norfolk and Suffolk Music Hub from September 2024, as part of an ambitious national programme to provide high-quality music education for all children and young people.

NCC's Music Service has led the Norfolk Music Hub, a partnership of organisations and schools which engage with children and young people in music making, since 2012.

As the new Hub Lead Organisation for both counties, NCC will receive just over £2m from the DfE to coordinate music education, plus £661,967 to invest in new musical instruments, equipment and technology tailored to the needs of children and young people in Norfolk, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

New grants to help Norfolk residents open for applications

Voluntary organisations who support people struggling with the cost of living in Norfolk can now apply for two new grants from Norfolk's Household Support Fund.

£2.15m of funding from a combination of national government and NCC sources is being made available. Of this, £1.35m is available as part of a one-off grant funding pot that will enable community groups and social enterprises to meet the emergency needs of residents, particularly those at the highest risk of living in poverty and those who have higher than average costs due to specific needs such as care costs. Applications for this Community Based Hardship Support Fund must be made by 31 May, with grants of £10,000-50,000 available. Applications can be made [here](#).

In addition, £800,000 is being made available to organisations that are already supporting people in Norfolk to help meet any emerging needs these individuals may have, such as help with the cost of food and energy. An applicant organisation can receive up to £20,000 to distribute to individuals in grants of up to £100 to help meet these costs. Applications can be made up to 30 September [here](#).

Anyone in Norfolk struggling with living costs can also request support or advice via norfolk.gov.uk/costofliving or by calling 0344 800 8020.

Four Norfolk teenagers sworn in as new Youth Parliament Members

Four Norfolk teenagers have been officially inaugurated as the county's new Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) at a special ceremony held by Norfolk County Council.

The Norfolk Youth Parliament helps young people to have a voice on the future of Norfolk and make a positive difference in their local community. Working with regional MPs and local Norfolk councillors, the young leaders will represent their peers and advocate for important issues such as education, mental health, and climate change.

Youth parliament elections are organised by Norfolk County Council and the young people will be supported by the council's participation team during their time in office.

Government updates

Support for rough sleepers while tackling antisocial behaviour

Through amendments to the Criminal Justice Bill, new measures will ensure rough sleepers are directed to the support available to help get them off the streets – for example, to a place to sleep or to addiction treatment.

New guidance will make clear that police and local authorities must prioritise directing people who are sleep rough to support services before they consider using criminal sanctions.

If, despite being directed to support services and given a warning, people continue to cause antisocial behaviour, such as damage or harassment, they will be required to stop and asked to move on with a rough sleeping notice.

Alongside these new measures, the Vagrancy Act will be scrapped, which wrongly criminalises people for sleeping rough.

More information can be found [here](#).

Proposals to make it easier for child sex abuse victims to bring civil claims

Plans to make it easier and less traumatic for victims to bring historic claims through the civil courts have been announced by government this week. This consultation follows a commitment to explore options for reform in this area, in response to the recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in 2022.

Currently child sexual abuse claims must be brought within three years of the claimant turning 18 unless the court grants an extension. For this to happen the victim must prove a fair trial can proceed, despite a time lapse.

Government proposals would reverse this burden of proof – meaning cases would proceed automatically unless the defendant proves it is not possible for there to be a fair hearing.

View and respond to the consultation [here](#).

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

Kind regards

james