



# Norfolk County Council

## Latest Information, Advice, Useful Links and Service Updates

**Updated 01 February 2024**

This weekly briefing is intended as a resource to keep you up to date with the latest information and advice.

**Service updates:** The most up to date information on council services can be found at [Norfolk County Council services disruptions](#).

### Norfolk County Council updates

#### **Children and Young People: Post-16 Travel Scheme Consultation**

Norfolk County Council has launched a public consultation as part of its annual review of its Post-16 Transport Policy Statement. The consultation focuses upon their [Post-16 Travel Scheme](#) that offers subsidised travel for eligible students aged between 16-18 years old, as well as 16-25 year olds with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, to get to a school sixth form, sixth form college or further education learning establishment.

The council spent £3.8m on its Post-16 Travel Scheme in 2022-23, providing travel assistance to 1,320 students across Norfolk. To reflect the current and forecasted level of inflation for the next year, they are considering increasing the parental contribution for the Post-16 Travel Scheme. The council usually increases the cost of the Post-16 Travel Scheme each year in-line with inflation.

In the consultation the council outlines two options for increasing parental contributions for post-16 travel. The 3% option is based on current inflation levels and the 6% option is based on the council's inflationary forecast for 2024-25. The 6% figure more likely represents the cost uplift that the council will face in the coming year.

The council does not have to provide free or subsidised post-16 travel assistance but do have to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement, specifying arrangements for provision of transport or other assistance that the authority considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

The post Post-16 Transport Policy is reviewed annually to make sure it offers the best value for money and meets the needs of local families and young people, while remaining financially sustainable.

Findings from the consultation will be used as part of the evidence to inform a decision about the proposals. If approved, this change will be implemented from September 2024.

The consultation closes on 27 February 2024 and is available [here](#).

## **Health - HIV testing week awareness - Norfolk campaign launched**

Norfolk County Council is encouraging residents to get tested for HIV during this year's National Testing Week (Monday 5 - Sunday 11 February).

In Norfolk, almost one in two (48%) of people aged 15 years or more who were newly diagnosed with HIV infection between 2017-21 received a late HIV diagnosis. There are particularly high prevalence areas in Norwich and Great Yarmouth.

Working alongside Norfolk's GPs, community pharmacies and charities, the council is raising awareness of the importance of regular testing to help reduce the number of both undiagnosed HIV cases and those who are diagnosed too late.

Testing is free and confidential. It's also the only way to know if you have HIV and worth doing because people can live with HIV for a long time without any symptoms.

The [Terrence Higgins Trust](#), in partnership with [iCaSH Norfolk](#) (run by Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust), will be hosting free, pop-up, confidential HIV testing clinics to encourage residents to get tested and know their status to protect their health. Private booths will be set up with trained staff from the charity, offering free HIV tests as well as information on HIV, sexual health and free condoms in collaboration with the Norfolk Library Service.

Key HIV campaign messages:

- Testing at least once a year remains the best way to keep on top of your HIV status
- Anyone can get HIV infection regardless of age, sexual orientation, race, or religion
- HIV testing and treatment is free, confidential, available, and easy

### **Members are asked to:**

- Be aware of HIV risks and encourage people to book a free test online or at one of our drop in events at Great Yarmouth or the Millennium library.
- Spread the word within your communities about the importance of getting regularly tested for HIV
- Signpost people you think might be interested in getting a free at home test to <https://freetesting.hiv/>
- Share, like and comment upon any social media posts from Norfolk County Council Facebook and X

If you have any questions about this campaign, please contact [louise.banning@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:louise.banning@norfolk.gov.uk)

## **Norfolk Museums**

Ancient House, Museum of Thetford, has been awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant. The funding will be used to celebrate its centenary and tell the story of its benefactors, the Duleep Singh family.

The NLHF has awarded Ancient House, Museum of Thetford, £198,059, in the museum's centenary year.

Other funding for the two-year project has come from the Thetford Town Council community grant, the Friends of Thetford Museum, Norfolk County Council and Arts Council England as part of the Norfolk Museum Service's National Portfolio Organisation grant.

## **Public information notices**

The Norfolk Coroner's Service are appealing for help to trace families of:

- A man who died at his home address. 58-year-old Philip Cox, who lived at an address in Blofield, Norwich, died on 21st January 2024.
- A woman who died at her home address. 76-year-old Tew Nenkong Clarke, who lived at an address in Dereham Road, Norwich, died on 30th January 2024.

There were no suspicious circumstances and despite carrying out extensive enquiries no next-of-kin have been identified for either of these individuals.

Anyone with information relating to Philp Cox or Tew Nenkong Clarke should contact the Coroner's office in Norwich on 01603 774773. [coroner.referral@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:coroner.referral@norfolk.gov.uk)

## **Government updates**

### **NHS Pharmacy First launched**

Patients in England will now be able to get treatment for seven common conditions at high street pharmacies without needing to see a GP, as part of a major transformation in the way the NHS delivers care.

Trained pharmacists will be able to assess and treat patients for sinusitis, sore throat, earache, infected insect bite, impetigo, shingles, and uncomplicated urinary tract infections in women (under the age of 65) without the need for a GP appointment or prescription.

The NHS said that 90% of community chemists have registered to provide the new service and it will free up around 10 million GP appointments a year.

Patients can access the new service by walking straight into a chemist or being referred by NHS 111, urgent treatment centres, emergency departments or their GP. Those who are not registered with a GP can still access the service.

The scheme is part of the NHS and government's primary care access recovery plan.

The NHS will launch a national marketing campaign from mid-February 2024, which will encourage the public to access advice and treatment from community pharmacy services for common conditions and run for six weeks. They are developing a communications toolkit for ICBs to use to share information across their channels.

### **Government to ban disposable vapes**

The Government [has announced](#) that disposable vapes are set to be banned as part of plans to tackle the rising number of young people taking up vaping.

The measure comes as part of the government's response to its consultation on smoking and vaping. Recent figures show the number of children using vapes in the past 3 years has tripled. As well as benefitting children's health, the ban will have a positive impact on the environment, as 5 million disposable vapes, that are hard to recycle, are thrown away each year.

As reported to the People and Communities Select committee on 19 January, whilst supporting vaping as a tool to quit smoking, Norfolk County Council is already taking measures to help prevent non-smokers from taking up vaping and to prevent the illegal sale of vapes to children and young people. They have also recently developed a vaping toolkit to help schools implement a whole-school approach to addressing the increasing challenge around vaping.

### **Veterans Card roll out**

Veterans who left the Armed Forces before December 2018 can now verify their veteran status online with a [new digital application service](#) to receive a Veteran Card through the post. A paper-based application process is also available as an alternative to the digital system.

The Veteran Card had previously been provided to all service leavers as part of the discharge process with effect from 18 February 2019, and retrospectively to those who left on or after 17 December 2018

The Veteran Card provides veterans with a clear recognition of service, a tangible link to the Armed Forces, and allows them to easily verify their veteran status to access support and services from government, charities, and local authorities.

[Norfolk County Council webpages](#) signpost veterans to a number of support services for Armed forces and their families for which the Veteran's Card may be a useful means of veterans verifying their status.

### **Financial distress in local authorities – Commons select committee report**

The [Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee](#) have published their report on 'Financial distress in local authorities'.

The report points to a systemic underfunding of local councils in England and calls on the next Government to reform both the council tax and the wider funding system for local authorities, and to ensure council finances are put on a sustainable footing. It says government priorities should include fundamental reforms to the way in which local authorities are funded, the services that they are currently required to deliver, and the way in which these services are delivered.

It identifies the range of financial pressures currently faced by councils in England, especially the rising demand for children's and adults' social care, which they say are contributing to unmanageable bills for some local authorities. It also highlights the costs involved in the delivery of services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and home-to-school transport.

It also notes the increasing levels of homelessness which have required local authorities to spend more on fulfilling their responsibilities to those requiring support.

More details and a link to the report available [here](#).