

Norfolk County Council
Member for Necton and Launditch
Report May 2022

The Norfolk Cost of Living Support Scheme

Norfolk County Council has launched a £7.7m package of hardship support offering increased flexibility and choice in the way a broader range of households can access help.

The Norfolk Cost of Living Support Scheme is a £7.7m package from NCC which is offering support to a broad range of households which are struggling to pay for food, energy and water bills and other essentials. The council is topping up the £6.7m of Government funding with £1m to create the scheme.

Previously the focus of our support has been on helping those facing hardship as the economy recovers from the pandemic and providing a bridge between the end of furlough and the Universal Credit top-up.

Now the main challenge we face is the spiralling cost of living crisis which is hitting a far wider number of households who cannot increase their income through employment.

So, over the last month, we have reassessed the way we offer support and created this flexible and broad-based scheme using best practice from the hardship support we've been providing over the last year and following the Government guidance of aiming our support at a broader range of people including families, older people, and other vulnerable households.

To ensure part of the support the council is offering is sustainable for the longer term, in addition to the £7.7 million Cost of Living Support Scheme, we are also investing a further £225,000 capital into our partnership with the Norfolk Community Foundation Nourish Norfolk food hub offer, bringing the total investment over the last year to £500,000.

The scheme which will run until October will be administered as follows:

- **Cost of living vouchers**
£3.6m to support families with seven monthly cost of living vouchers for children eligible for means-tested free school meals. The payments will total £120 per child over the seven months of the scheme and will be in the form of supermarket vouchers which can be spent on food, clothing (in larger supermarkets), and other household essentials. The vouchers will be paid from April (backdated) up to and including October. Payments will be £15 per child per month, with a £30 enhanced payment for August, recognising the increased pressures families face over the summer holiday.

This approach gives families flexibility and choice by allowing them to budget monthly and offset vouchers against other financial pressures on their

household bills and activities. It also means families will have payments during and outside school holidays with the option of saving them to use only in the school holidays if they prefer

- **NAS**
£1m allocated to the council's Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS) to support families in hardship, where there isn't eligibility for free school meals. This support is available to families with very young children, young carers, and families caring for children with disabilities, many of whom may be facing significantly higher energy bills
- **Vouchers and cash for older people**
£2.2m, a third of the Government funding, to support those aged 65 or over by providing cash and voucher awards through the voluntary sector and other partners such as district, borough and city council, including a specific collaboration with Anglian Water, as well as support through NAS. The work with Anglian Water will support customers aged 65 or over who are on Anglian Water's social tariffs, because they are in financial difficulty, providing a package of support to reduce and prevent debt. The Norfolk Assistance Scheme will also have specific provision of £900k for this group.
- **Funding for district, borough and city councils**
£840,000 to support others in need, including funding for district, borough and city councils to meet immediate housing concerns. This part of the scheme will also mean that voluntary sector agencies can refer those they are working with to the council for support. As with the other two groups, specific provision, totalling £500k has been made within the Norfolk Assistance scheme.

We residents who find themselves in hardship should contact NCC on 0344 800 8020, so we can offer support either directly or through our partners.

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