

## **Norfolk County Council updates 10-07-25**

### **Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service firefighter recruitment programme**

Anyone looking for an exciting career change will soon be able to apply to be a full-time firefighter in Norfolk, as recruitment to take on this lifesaving role opens for the first time in three years.

Norfolk Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) will be hiring 16 new recruits, with eight starting in April 2026 and eight in 2027, who will be stationed in the five wholetime stations across the county. The application window opens on Monday 28 July and will close on Monday 25 August.

Norfolk has around 150 wholetime firefighters, otherwise known as full-time firefighters, working in shifts to ensure the Service has cover 24/7 for 365 days a year.

Shortlisted applicants take part in written, fitness, and verbal assessments, before final selections are made later this year. Each shortlisted candidate can request a 'buddy', a current NFRS firefighter, crew manager or watch manager who can answer their questions about the selection process and the role.

Successful applicants will join the NFRS firefighters' development pathway, with an initial 12-week course at the Service's bespoke training centre, before joining watches as development firefighters and completing a two-year apprenticeship to become fully competent. These apprenticeships are run through Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning team.

Further information is available in our news release [here](#). The full criteria, assessment dates and answers to frequently asked questions can be found [here](#).

### **Norfolk County Council named among top 100 apprenticeship employers**

Norfolk County Council has been recognised as one of the best places in the country to be an apprentice, earning a coveted spot in the 2025 'Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers' list.

The rankings, published by the Department for Education, feature some of the country's most recognisable names, including McDonald's, Specsavers, and the British Army.

Ranked 54th overall, Norfolk County Council stands out as the highest-ranked local authority in the country. The full list can be found on the [Top Apprenticeship Employers 2025 page](#).

Find out more about apprenticeship opportunities with Norfolk County Council [here](#).

### **Devolution decision update**

Councillors in Norfolk and Suffolk will vote in September whether to support a deal to boost jobs, skills, transport and housing.

If approved, the Government's proposed devolution deal would see powers and funding transferred from Whitehall to a new Norfolk and Suffolk combined authority, led by an elected mayor.

The news comes as Norfolk County Council's strategic and corporate select committee considers a report on preparations for devolution.

A devolution bill, which sets out more detail of the powers each area would receive, is expected to be published by the Government shortly.

If the two county councils vote in favour in September, the Government would start the Parliamentary process in the winter to set up a combined authority early next year. A Norfolk and Suffolk mayor would be elected in May 2026.

The strategic and corporate select committee meets at 10am on 16 July. [Read the report and watch the meeting, live or afterwards.](#)

### **Summer Reading Challenge at Norfolk libraries**

Norfolk libraries are inviting families to take part in The Reading Agency's 2025 Summer Reading Challenge, encouraging children aged 4-11 to explore the magical connection between storytelling and the natural world with this year's theme: Story Garden - Adventures in Nature and the Great Outdoors.

Now in its 26th year, the Summer Reading Challenge is delivered in partnership with public libraries and is completely free to join. It's all about reading for fun, aiming to improve children's reading skills and confidence over the summer holiday.

In 2024, the Challenge reached nearly 600,000 children and inspired over 100,000 new library memberships across the UK.

To find out how to join in and discover events happening at your local library, visit the [Summer Reading Challenge](#) page.

### **Star Wars Exhibition at Lyn Museum this summer**

Opening on 15 July, in time for the summer holidays, 'May the Toys Be With You' showcases one of the UK's finest collections of vintage Star Wars toys and original cinema posters, from 1977-1985. It is a celebration of the now highly collectable vintage toy line and of the iconic design work and art of the Star Wars movies.

The collection is owned by Star Wars devotee, Matt Fox, who bought his first toy aged five. His collection is now one of the finest and most complete in the UK.

Lynn Museum will host a wonderful selection from Matt's collection – including life-size storm troopers.

The exhibition runs from 15 July 2025 to 30 May 2026. For more information, openings times and admission visit [www.lynnmuseum.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.lynnmuseum.norfolk.gov.uk).

### **National Updates**

#### **Heat-health alert for East of England**

A Government yellow [heat health alert](#) is in effect from 10 July to 15 July. This means that there is a potential risk potential for significant impacts across health and social care services from high temperatures, including:

- a rise in deaths, particularly among those ages 65 and over or with health conditions - there may also be impacts on younger age groups
- a likely increase in demand for health services
- internal temperatures in hospitals and care homes may exceed recommended threshold for clinical risk assessment
- the heat affecting the ability of the workforce to deliver services
- indoor environments overheating increasing the risk to vulnerable people living independently in community and care settings

Top tips to help all people stay well this summer are included in a new NHS campaign and available on the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System site [here](#),

### **National Emergency Alert test to be held on 7 September**

The Government will send a test Emergency Alert to mobile phones across the UK at around 15:00 on Sunday 7 September 2025. During the test, mobile phones will vibrate and make a loud siren sound for roughly ten seconds, even if they are set to silent. A message will also appear on phone screens, making it clear the alert is only a test. An FAQ site related to the test has also been published: [Emergency Alert Test: Frequently Asked Questions - GOV.UK](#).

### **Best Start Family Hubs**

The Government has announced that up to 1,000 [Best Start Family Hubs](#) will be rolled out across the country, to provide help with parenting skills, early development and childcare, alongside £400 million of extra funding for early years and reception classes.

Best Start Family Hubs will act as a one stop shop for parents seeking a range of support, including difficulty breastfeeding, housing issues or children's early development and language, reassuring families that they have convenient access to support in their local area or can be efficiently connected to specialist local services.

The Government says that the rollout will help transform the existing Family Hubs and Start for Life programme and create up to 1,000 hubs across the country by the end of 2028. The hubs and early years support will be linked up through the Government's "Best Start in Life" strategy - which aims to make sure tens of thousands of children are ready for school at age 5.

### **More NHS dentistry for those who need it most**

Satisfaction with NHS dentistry has fallen to a record low, with the British Dental Association outlining that over 1 in 4 adults are struggling to access NHS dental care.

The Government has [announced new reforms to the dental contract](#) that will prioritise those with urgent and complex needs, with new measures for those with extreme tooth decay and gum disease.

They are proposing a swathe of changes to incentivise dentists to deliver more NHS work and fix the foundations of dentistry and have also launched a [consultation on the NHS dentistry contract](#). The consultation will run for 6 weeks, closing on 19 August 2025.

### **Road and rail upgrades**

The Government has [announced](#) over 50 road and rail upgrades that they say will support 39,000 new homes and 42,000 jobs, plus provide quicker journeys. The upgrades include funding for the [West Winch Housing Access Road](#), a new 1.5 mile road in Norfolk, which will connect the A47 to the A10 south of King's Lynn and support planned housing growth.

### **New local government outcomes framework**

The local government minister, Jim McMahon MP, has [announced a new local government outcomes framework](#). The framework sets 15 outcomes that the Government have collectively agreed they will work with local authorities to deliver, ranging from preventing homelessness and rough sleeping to community safety and satisfaction. The framework will measure progress towards outcome delivery, to evidence that funding is achieving impact.

The Government has [invited feedback](#) from local authorities and interested parties on how best to measure delivery of each priority outcome and how the framework can complement existing systems of accountability and support. They expect to publish a final framework alongside the

provisional local government finance settlement, and to use this to support outcome delivery from April 2026.

### **Right to Buy reforms**

The Government has [responded to their consultation of reforming the right to buy and set out proposed legislation](#) to reform Right to Buy, which could increase the qualifying period for tenants to buy their property from 3 to 10 years and exempt newly built social homes for 35 years, ensuring councils are not losing homes before they have recovered the costs of building them.

The government says it will also amend the agreements made with local authorities under Section 11(6) of the Local Government Act 2003 on the use of Right to Buy receipts, to simplify the rules and ensure that a greater proportion of receipts are used to deliver new social and affordable housing.