

Norfolk County Council Updates – 15/01/2026

Ready to Change

Ready to Change is an online self-help tool using behaviour change science to support improvements to health and to break engrained habits. The tool is available throughout the year. It can help with:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Eating healthily
- Being more active
- Drinking less
- Quitting smoking

When residents choose one of the above and sign up to the challenge for 30 days, they will receive regular email updates full of expert advice, guidance and support to help them reach their health goal.

How members can get involved:

- Signpost residents in your community to sign up and try the challenge - and visit the [website](#) to discover support to improve their health and lifestyles.
- Download and share resources such as leaflets and posters via the Ready to Change page on the [Health Information Leaflet Service page](#).
- Like and comment on the posts you see on social media.

Encouraging fostering for Norfolk's children in care

Research shows that children thrive best in family environments. More foster carers are needed to make family homes a reality for the five children a week who come into care in Norfolk.

A new mini documentary has recently been launched that asks the questions people often have when first considering fostering. It follows writer, comedian and family man Adam Buxton as he visits two local authority foster families in Norfolk and Suffolk. Adam doesn't know anything about fostering or having children in care before he meets the foster carers. He finds out more over cups of tea, emptying the dishwasher, Top Trumps, a dog walk and a kick-about in the garden.

The full documentary can be seen at www.fostereast.org.uk.

Residents are encouraged to consider fostering - to find out more about fostering for Norfolk County Council, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/fostering.

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service - body worn cameras

Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) firefighters are now using state-of-the-art technology to help keep the county safer, with the rollout of 160 new Axon body-worn camera devices

in stations across Norfolk. Each of the service's fire appliances and operational officers have been kitted out with a camera for use at incidents, and they have also been issued to protection and prevention officers for business safety inspections and home visits, as well as fire investigation officers and the service's training school. Trading Standards officers have also been equipped with ten cameras for use in investigations.

The devices are equipped with live streaming capabilities, location data and two-way communication. All of this enables firefighters and officers to be able to stream footage to control room staff taking emergency 999 calls while an incident is ongoing, and ensures quicker, more informed decision-making during complex fire incidents. Live streaming also improves fire personnel safety by identifying risks earlier and supporting better coordination with police, ambulance and other partners to ensure resources are deployed at the right time to save lives.

Funding to double for Made Smarter Programme

Advanced manufacturing Small and Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) in the East of England are set to receive more support to grow and innovate after the Government agreed to double its funding for the Made Smarter Adoption (MSA) programme. The programme will deliver funding, impartial advice, a roadmap from digital specialists, and leadership and management development programmes to upskill workforces.

Norfolk County Council is part of the programme and will also be responsible for delivering and processing 48 match-funded grants delivered up to £20k. On 5 January the Cabinet agreed to receipt of the funding and to Norfolk County Council being the accountable body for the programme

National Updates

Town of Culture competition

The Government has launched the first ever UK Town of Culture competition, inviting towns across the country to apply to showcase their local culture and identity. The initiative is intended to complement the UK City of Culture programme.

Applications are now open. The strongest bids will progress to a shortlist, with each shortlisted town receiving £60,000 to help deliver their full bids for the competition.

Three finalists - one small, one medium, one large town - will be chosen. The winner will be crowned UK Town of Culture 2028 and receive a £3 million prize. The two runners-up will each receive £250,000 to deliver elements of their bid, from refreshed community infrastructure to electric music festivals.

Applications are open until 31 March 2026 for expressions of interest.

For more information and guidance on how to bid for the UK Town of Culture 2028 title, please go to: [UK Town of Culture 2028 Expression of Interest](#).

Local Government Association (LGA): Campaign for recruitment

The Local Government Association has launched a national recruitment campaign [Make a Difference, Work for Your Local Council](#), highlighting local government careers and their potential to make a positive community impact.

Funded by the government, the campaign will run until 15 February 2026, and provide councils with a [toolkit](#) to attract candidates, addressing severe staff recruitment and retention challenges. It showcases the range of council jobs (800+ roles), flexible working, and development opportunities, aiming to inspire more people to join local government – an initiative welcomed by LGA leaders amid growing workforce shortages in specific areas.

Cyber-action plan

The Government has unveiled a £210 million [Government Cyber Action Plan](#) to boost cyber resilience across public services. A new central Cyber Unit will drive improvements so that online services (from benefit applications to tax payments) are more secure, preventing attacks that could disrupt vital local services.

This plan, alongside the [Cyber Security and Resilience Bill](#) sets higher standards and faster responses to cyber threats in government, helping keep councils and other public bodies operational and safeguarding public data.

The Public Bill Committee will meet for the first time on 3 February 2026 to scrutinise the Cyber Security and Resilience (Network and Information Systems) Bill line by line and is expected to report by 5 March 2026.