

With the cost of living rising, many people across the county face a difficult winter.

Norfolk ALC recently sent out information that pointed councils and their residents to sources of support that can offer assistance through difficult times. This information can also be accessed via our website; just go to [Help in a Crisis](#). The page offers links to find help with:

- Financial support
- Food costs
- Energy costs
- Sanitary products and toiletries
- Help from district councils.

Many of us, especially those most vulnerable, will feel the strain this winter. If you feel that your physical or mental health is being affected by financial stresses, you should speak with your GP.

A recent YouGov poll commissioned by the Royal College of Physicians suggested that:

Over half of the people in Britain thought their health had worsened due to the cost-of-living increases. Many indicated that it was down to increased heating costs, the rising cost of food and transport costs rising. 16% of those surveyed who said they were impacted by the rising cost of living had been told by a doctor or health professional in the last year that stress caused by rising living costs had worsened their health.

In response, Healthwatch Norfolk have launched their own [cost of living support directory](#) to help those affected by the cost of living crisis access help and advice. The webpage contains a list of local services offering advice and support for those facing financial stress.

£2,000 in government funding available to help with childcare costs

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) are encouraging families across the UK to not miss the opportunity for government-funded help towards their childcare costs.

Families could save up to £2,000 a year towards their childcare costs to help pay for half-term holiday clubs and wraparound care during the school terms.

More than 391,000 families saved money on their childcare costs in June 2022, worth a total of £41.6 million in top-up payments, and HMRC is reminding thousands of other families to not miss the chance to save up to £500 every 3 months, or £1,000 if their child is disabled.

Families can sign up to Tax-Free Childcare to help pay for holiday clubs, before and after-school clubs, childminders and nurseries, and other approved childcare schemes. It is available to families with children up to the age of 11, or 17 if their child has a disability.

The government will pay 20% of childcare costs by topping up the money paid into a Tax-Free Childcare account. This means for every £8 paid into the online account, families will automatically receive an additional £2 in government top-up.

News story: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2000-in-government-funding-available-to-help-with-childcare-costs>

Energy Grants for Armed Forces veterans

The Royal British Legion, the UK's largest charity dedicated to supporting the Armed Forces community, has launched a new grant scheme for veterans and their families who are struggling to pay their energy bills. The initiative will provide non-repayable emergency grants of up to £2,400 a year (£200 a month) and is available across the UK.

It is estimated there are 2 million UK armed forces veterans, according to the latest figures from the Ministry of Defence, though the Royal British Legion has not said how many might be able to benefit from the new grants. When we asked about the total funding available, the charity told us there was no set cut-off and that it wants to help as many members of the Armed Forces community as it can.

Who can apply for the Royal British Legion grants?

In general, the Armed Forces community includes those who have served, or are serving, in the

Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force, as well as their **families, dependents and carers** – which can include children, current and former spouses and partners, widows and widowers. However, the Royal British Legion uses a broad definition of "Armed Forces community" – so even if you're not sure you fit in one of the categories above, it's worth [checking your eligibility on its website](#) or by calling its helpline on 0808 802 8080.

The grants are means-tested – but you DON'T have to be on state benefits

[Who We Help](#) | [Armed Forces Charity](#) | [Royal British Legion](#)

[Search](#) [Results](#) [\(britishlegion.org.uk\)](#)

For further support with your energy bills – including if you're not part of the Armed Forces community – see [Money Saving Expert's full Energy bill help](#) guide.

Portable Fire Heaters

With energy bills so high many consumers may be tempted to switch to portable fire heaters Norfolk Fire Service are currently running a campaign to warn residents about the potential fire risks associated with using portable heaters in the home and to help change behaviours to ensure they are used safely:

We are conscious that with the significant rise in energy prices, there may be an increase in use of these heaters by residents who are focused on heating just one part of their home to try and save money. The main fire risks are associated with people living alone who place heaters too close to themselves, their sofas or their clothes. Older men who live alone are at particular risk.

The campaign therefore aims to:

- Warn Norfolk residents, particularly older people, about the fire risks associated with using portable heaters in the home
- Change behaviours to encourage the safe use of heaters
- To give guidance on the safe use of portable heaters at home

The key messages we are trying to get across are that portable heaters can be a fire risk and that people should place their heaters at least one metre from people and furniture.

We also want to encourage people to

- Keep their heater away from household items such as newspapers, cushions, blankets, laundry
 - Keep their heater on a firm, stable surface
 - Plug their heater directly into the mains. Do not use an extension lead or block adaptor
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- Some emollient creams for skin conditions are highly flammable so people must always stay at least 1m from your heater
- Do not use electric heaters to dry clothing

Campaign assets, including posters, flyers and social media posts that you can use to get this message across can be found on www.norfolkalc.gov.uk. You can also help by sharing posts from the Fire Service or Norfolk County Council social media accounts. Do share with your contacts and print and put up in public places to share the campaign.

Take 5 Mental Health and Wellbeing

A new campaign to give Norfolk residents the knowledge and tools to be able to manage their own mental wellbeing and support one another has launched. The 'Take 5' campaign will run until the end of February 2023. There will be a focus on one of the five ways to wellbeing each month.

Key objectives:

- To raise awareness of five ways to wellbeing
- Give people the tools to self-manage their mental health
- Signpost people to the wide range of help and support available to them to stay emotionally well

Key Creative and messaging

The overarching theme is to 'Take 5' to make your mental health a priority

- *Take 5 ... to look after your wellbeing*
- *Take 5 ... to help yourself*
- *Take 5... to get help*
- *Take 5... to help others*

Messaging is focused on two audiences:

- Males under 40
- Families across Norfolk and Waveney

Monthly			messaging		focus
October	-		connect	with	others
November	-		learn	new	skills
December		-		help	others
January		-		get	active
February	-	take	notice,	be	mindful

Norfolk County Council and the ICS will be using their social media channels to support a campaign of paid-for social media adverts, advertising in the EDP and on the Radio.

Webinars

Coming in November webinars on the subjects that matter around Norfolk.

Help in a Crisis

Hear from various advice agencies about support that is available to help anyone struggling with rising prices.

Norfolk County Council Budget consultation

Listen to Councillor Andrew Jamieson from Norfolk County Council set out proposals for next year's budget. Have your say as part of the consultation, open until 16 December 2022

Dates to be confirmed



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