



Norfolk County Council

Latest Information, Advice, Useful Links and Service Updates

Updated 18 July 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

Stay Focused, Stay Safe campaign launches on 22 July 2024

Our partnership road safety campaign “stay focused” launches on Monday 22 July. The campaign seeks to reduce the number of traffic collisions on Norfolk’s roads.

The campaign objectives are to:

- Educate drivers about the risks of not remaining focused whilst driving
- Teach drivers techniques to improve focus / concentration
- Encourage drivers to practice focus techniques during every journey

Practical tools have been produced to help drivers to be more focused at the wheel when driving. The stay focused toolkit includes:

- Access to a series of free online road safety driver education modules to improve driver awareness about fatigue, distracted driving and driving on autopilot in partnership with Drive IQ who are the leading provider of driver education programs.
- A [podcast](#) by mind coach Gavin Drake who talks about the psychology of multi-tasking and gives tips on how to train the brain to stay focused when driving.
- A [video](#) produced by Professor Gemma Briggs at the Open University which enables drivers to take an interactive test to see how much of a distracted driver they are.

Further information, advice, links and the stay focused toolkit are available at [Stay Focused - Norfolk County Council](#).

Members are asked to promote the campaign and to and to share, like or comment on related social media .

Norfolk and Suffolk awarded Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) Status

LVEP’s support and grow the visitor economy. As well as having a nationally recognised status, they provide strong local leadership and management of their destinations. They also have access to expert advice, toolkits and training. More information is available [here](#).

National Government updates and King's Speech

Ministerial taskforce launched to kickstart work on child poverty strategy

On 17 July 2024 the Prime Minister appointed the Work & Pensions Secretary and the Education Secretary as joint leads of a [new ministerial task force](#) to begin work on a Child Poverty Strategy.

The Prime Minister says that the new Child Poverty Unit in the Cabinet Office will bring together expert officials from across government, as well as external experts, and will report into the taskforce. The new unit will explore how to use all the available levers across government to create an ambitious strategy.

Secretaries of State from across government will take part in this work, with the first meeting set to take place in the coming weeks.

In the immediate term, the taskforce is expected to consider the government can use levers related to household income as well as employment, housing, children's health, childcare and education to improve children's experiences and chances at life.

Kings' Speech

On 17 July 2024, King Charles III set out the new Labour government's legislative plans for the forthcoming parliamentary session in the [King's Speech](#) which included 40 Bills and Draft Bills. These Bills are not guaranteed to become acts of law but do set out the new Government's intentions in terms of policy.

This brief outlines published headline content for some of the key bills. Full details and their implications for Norfolk and local government are not yet known. Relevant County Council officers will be able to provide more specialised briefings and advice for Members as the legislation is developed and more detail announced.

English Devolution Bill

This Bill seeks to deliver more devolution agreements, transferring more power out of Westminster into local communities, as part of the government's plans to empower local leaders to deliver change for their communities.

It is also expected to include new powers and duties for local leaders to provide Local Growth Plans.

The Prime Minister said "we'll push forward devolution to the cities, regions and councils of England to deliver quality jobs and opportunities in every corner of this country. We'll do that by putting local decision-makers in charge, moving power away from Westminster and back to those with skin in the game, who know their communities best.

Ahead of the King's speech, this Bill has been referred to as the Take Back Control Bill.

Planning and Infrastructure Bill

The Bill intends to reform the planning system and make changes at a local level to speed up and streamline the planning process, to build more homes of all tenures, and to accelerate the delivery of major infrastructure projects - in alignment with the government's industrial, energy and transport strategies and with local growth plans.

Children's Wellbeing Bill

The Children's Wellbeing Bill is intended to put children and their wellbeing at the centre of the education and children's social care systems, and to make changes to ensure children are safe, healthy, happy and treated fairly.

There are a range of changes that the government aims to pass through the bill to remove barriers to opportunity and make sure that the school system is fair for every child, no matter their background. These include, but are not limited to:

- Making sure there are free breakfast clubs in every primary school.
- Limiting the number of branded uniform items that a school can require, to bring down costs for parents.
- Creating Children Not in School registers to support home-educating parents and to help local authorities keep track of pupils, so that children don't slip under the radar.
- Requiring all schools to cooperate with the local authority on school admissions, SEND inclusion, and place planning.
- Giving Ofsted more powers to investigate unregistered schools and tackle patterns of poor care in children's homes to keep children safe.

Health Related Bills

The King's Speech highlighted that the Government were committed to improving the National Health Service for all on the basis of need, regardless of the ability to pay. While there were no Bills announced in the King's Speech which specifically referred to these commitments, two health related bills were announced:

The **Tobacco and Vapes Bill** which achieved cross-party support under the previous Government will be continued. The Bill will progressively increase the age at which people can buy cigarettes and will impose limits on the sale and marketing of vapes. It is designed to reduce smoking and vaping, particularly amongst underage individuals.

A **Mental Health Bill** intends to introduce changes to the Mental Health Act, to make it "fit for the 21st Century". The Bill will aim to see fewer people detained for mental health reasons and give people more say over their treatment. The King said that the Government would "ensure mental health is given the same attention and focus as physical health."

Skills England Bill

The Skills England Bill will establish a new body, called Skills England, which will bring together government, businesses, providers, unions and other bodies to try to boost skills training and tackle skills shortages to support sustained economic growth, the industrial strategy and the green prosperity plan.

It is anticipated that this legislation will scrap the apprenticeship levy and replace it with a growth and skills levy that will allow companies to use up to half of their apprenticeship levy on non-apprenticeship training.

Great British Energy Bill

This Bill will establish Great British Energy (GBE), a publicly owned energy production company, to accelerate investment in clean energy projects, including green hydrogen and offshore wind.

GBE will own, manage and operate clean power projects across the country and will help make the UK energy independent. It will have a capitalisation of £8.3bn over the Parliament and aims to leverage additional private sector investment.

Rail Reform Bill and Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bills

These Bills will deliver legislative changes to reform the rail sector. The **Rail Reform Bill** will bring together the management of the network and the delivery of passenger services into a single public body, Great British Railways (GBR). The new body will focus on delivering for both passengers and freight customers.

GBR will also ensure that ticketing innovations like automatic compensation, digital pay-as-you-go and digital season ticketing are rolled out across the whole network.

The Bill will also establish a new passenger watchdog, the Passenger Standards Authority, to independently monitor standards.

The **Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill** will bring rail services back into public ownership. It will also ensure that franchises transfer to a public-sector operator as existing contracts expire or operators fail to meet their commitments, avoiding the need to pay compensation to the current operators.

The government says that transferring operations to the public sector will save the taxpayer millions of pounds currently paid out in fees to private operators each year. It will end the fragmentation of our railways, establishing a more efficient and reliable rail service for passengers – helping to get people to work on time and boosting productivity.

The current rail contract between the Secretary of State for Transport and Abellio East Anglia Limited, is due to expire in September 2026.

Better Buses Bill

The Better Buses Bill aims to deliver improved services across the country and support local leaders to create the transport networks that are right for their communities.

The government says this will put power over local bus services back in the hands of the communities that depend on them and provide the powers necessary to deliver their plan to build better bus networks across England.

The government also says that this will help bring an end to the postcode lottery of bus services and that local leaders can decide to introduce better bus networks, at pace, which reflect the needs of the local communities that rely on them.

Employment Rights Bill

The Government will use this bill to deliver its 'New Deal for Working People', with a central aim to "make work pay". The Bill intends to forge a "new partnership" between business, trade unions and working people.

Key proposals include banning zero hour contracts, ending both 'Fire and Rehire' and 'Fire and Replace'; strengthening Statutory Sick Pay; ensuring immediate access to parental leave, sick pay and protection from unfair dismissal, facilitating flexible working, strengthening protections for new mothers.

It also intends to establish a Fair Pay Agreement in the adult social care sector and following review, assess how and to what extent such agreements could benefit other sectors.