

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

23 February 2023

COUNCILLOR SAM SANDELL - CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

For the period 26th January to 12th February

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Housing still is an ongoing issue. Meetings have taken place with Freebridge.

Housing register

1302 live applications

1 Emergency

198 High

442 Medium

661 Low

263 new or change in circumstances received - increase likely due to forms being unavailable over Christmas

Housing Options

160 applicants given housing advice, of these 89 progressed into homeless declarations and/or are ongoing investigations

Lets advised - 12

Still significant issues with Freebridge turning round their voids and still causing issues with numbers in temporary accommodation and B&B. No properties from them for the last two weeks

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Members support group met on teams. A very useful discussion was had. We spoke about the cost of living crisis. We spoke about the new Councillor folders after the elections in May.

We also spoke about debate not hate policy. We all signed up to this.

The DWP Household Support Fund

This limited Fund is to be used to support vulnerable households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support that government has recently made available such as:-

- Energy Bills Support Scheme and the equivalence package confirmed on 29 July 2022
- Council Tax Rebate and the associated £144 million Discretionary Fund
- Cost of Living Payments for those on means tested benefits
- £150 Disability Cost of Living Payment
- One-off £300 Pensioner Cost of Living Payment (through the Winter Fuel Payment)
- This includes the Cost of Living Payments set out on 26 May 2022 and the energy support set out on 3 February (enhanced on 26 May 2022), and detailed on 29 July 2022 (details on eligibility for these schemes are at Annex A).

Other help clients can get

You can also:

- check if you're eligible for a cost of living payment
- check what benefits and financial support you can get
- get council tax support if you're on a low income or get certain benefits
- get a discretionary housing payment if you are struggling with your rent

Clients can apply to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS); The Norfolk Assistance Scheme (NAS) helps people who are in financial hardship and cannot pay their living costs. There are many reasons why this might happen.

- Redundancy
- Work hours have been cut
- On a low income or benefits
- Waiting for Universal Credit payments
- A home emergency such a fire or flood
- Have a special educational need or disability
- Have mental health issues or in ill health
- Have left an abusive relationship
- Have dependent children
- In a resettlement scheme

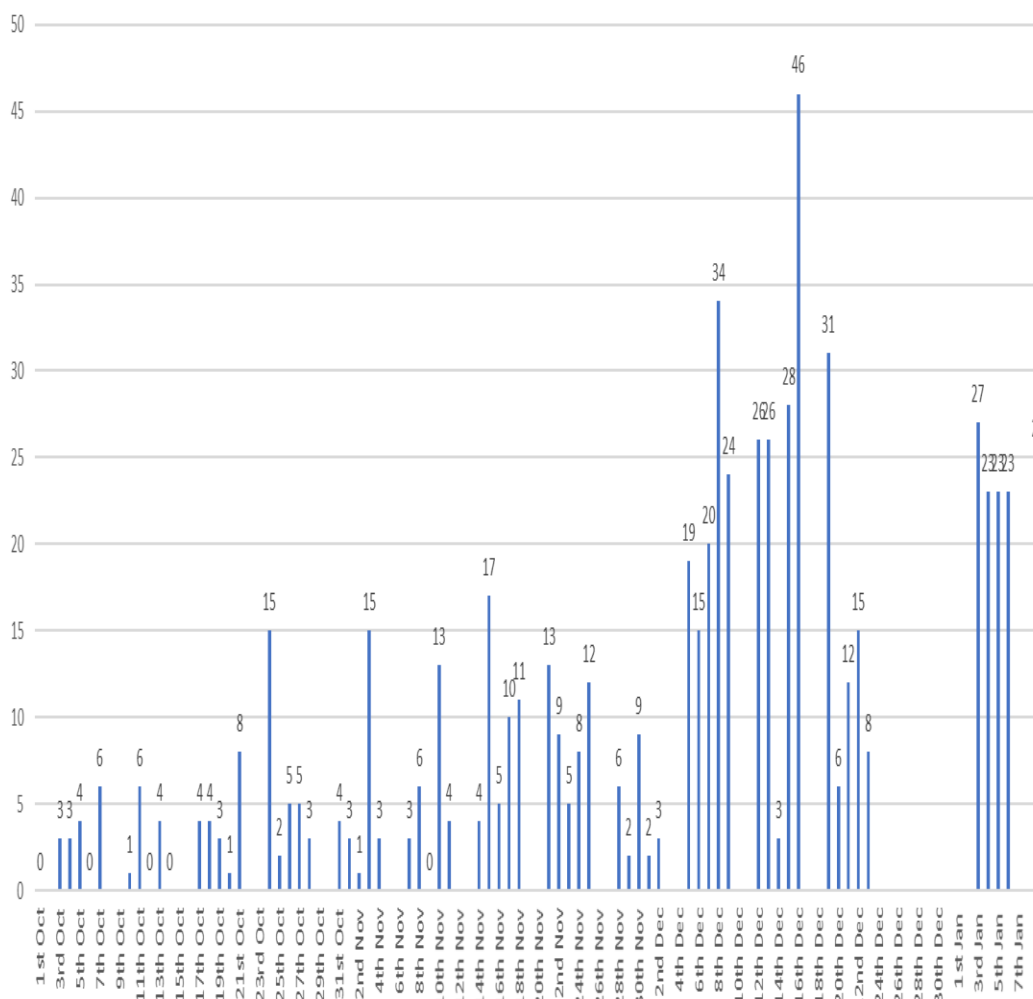
If you are eligible they can:

- Provide emergency financial help
- Supply essential household goods and furniture
- Give support, guidance and advice
- You will need to complete an application with evidence of your financial situation.

BCKLWN was allocated £148,000 for October 2022 – March 2023. As of 31st December 2023 £111,196.04 has been allocated 58% of this has gone to households with children, 2% to households with pensioners, 28% to households with disabilities and 12% to other households.

Please see below a graph of the level of demand that has fluctuated and peaked just before Christmas (due to cold weather and word of mouth), this placed huge unmanageable pressure on the team and Judith Berry as the member of staff solely employed to triage and deliver this fund was off sick and another member of staff was on leave. Members of the CIC team assisted with this demand and issued blanket payments to applicants based on their household situation. As you can see referrals are still high and we are now only accepting referrals from professional organisations.

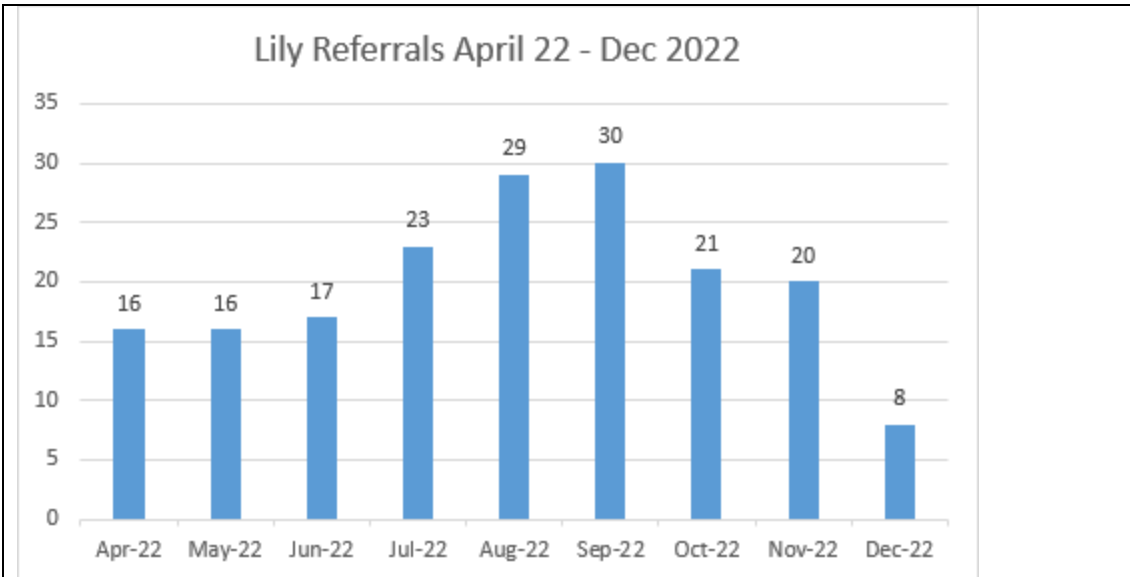
Referrals per day to HSF 3



The DWP Household Support Fund provided funds directly to the King's Lynn Foodbank / Baby Basics / Open Road / Hanseatic Union to help to capture all demographics of households in need.

Lily

The Lily service has been re-commissioned for another year from April 2023 – March 2024. Meetings are taking place with Norfolk County Council to determine what the service will look like going forwards.



Food For Thought is continuing for its third cohort, starting on 18th January 2023 at the London Road Methodist Church. Funding for this cohort was acquired from the Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

Careline

- Digital
 - All customers (apart from 1) have at least a VI which we know is digital compatible
 - When people move over to a digital line we have the support video on the website to guide them on how to re-fit into a digital line
 - Staff are all confident in explaining digital, how to plug in the VI and why a SIM based unit is better
 - Imminently waiting on a digital leaflet to explain to all
 - This is still a project that is moving and goal posts are changing but I feel we are doing our best to keep up to date with this

Downside would be the cost implications of:

- The new sim based units
- Ongoing sim charge costs
- Increasing administration duties to keep all digital things up to date
- Installer visits to support vulnerable clients without any help when the digital phone line companies have left them with an unplugged unit

Our sim based products (which we believe are the best products available to those with a digital line) is increasing every month. Last month was our highest amount of installs to date at 30 installs. Due to limitations with stock we are currently looking into having a second sim based product from another provider to support us going forward.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

23rd January Food Bank Visit
24TH January Cabinet sifting
24th January Councillor Briefing on County Deal
24th January Health and Wellbeing Partnership Meeting
24th January Full Council
25th January Portfolio Catch up
6th February Members support Group
7th February Cabinet
8th February Cabinet
9TH February Active Clean Connectivity
9th February County Deal discussion

Meetings Scheduled

13th February Shareholder Meeting
13th February Cabinet Sifting
15th February Cabinet Briefing