

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING AT HOME

A very warm welcome to our Summer '22 edition!

You will be aware of the growing concern about the cost-of-living crisis, ie the average amount of money needed to cover basic living expenses such as housing and food.

Sharp rises already in recent months for those, plus energy, water, fuel and food have meant that inflation is estimated to reach at least 8.7% by May 2023.

Locally rural households are disproportionately impacted by huge rises in heating oil costs (28.7% of Suffolk properties are 'off grid') and petrol/diesel rises, with the cost of petrol having increased by more than 40p per litre.

Gross weekly pay in Suffolk is already £40 lower than England and £55 lower than the East of England average, with high levels of insecure employment and zero hours contracts.

The number of Universal Credit claimants in Suffolk has increased by 75.1% since March 2020, whilst 39% of adults surveyed in 2018

said that they did not feel confident in managing their money. That figure is likely to be higher now.

As the potential for real hardship grows, all the Suffolk Councils, statutory and voluntary sector partners are working up a range of support mechanisms to help.

These include increasing access to help with Budgeting, developing more Local Pantries, Warm Rooms and 'Cooking on a Budget' classes; funding a Handyperson service to check heating controls, install draught-proofing, low energy bulbs and do many other small repairs.

In parallel, they are also developing the emergency Winter Warmth packs and increasing activity to get homes insulated.

We will be communicating further on this but clearly the clients we assist through the Independent Living Service (ILS) are likely to need more support this winter as temperatures

What's inside?

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drop and bank accounts empty.

'Warm Homes Healthy People' will take referrals via the Suffolk Information Partnership or directly to whhp@eastssuffolk.gov.uk.

**Teresa Howarth -
Principal Environmental
Health Officer (Housing)**

Supplier Spotlight. This month..... Tom Kell, TAK Building Maintenance Ltd:

Q. You have specialised in disabled adaptations – what encouraged you to do so?

“I came down from Darlington in 2004 to work for someone doing general building maintenance and then disabled adaption work in Clacton which I quite enjoyed - it gave me a lot of satisfaction helping people. We then took on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) work for Suffolk Coastal District Council. Unfortunately, his pricing left a bit to be ‘desired’, so I left! A Technical Officer at SCDC – pleased with my work and approach with customers – suggested I ‘go it alone’ and take on DFG work. They offered to help get me started and ensure payments were made quickly to aid cashflow. I started in 2007 and the rest is history!....”

Q. What’s the best bit of the job?

“Client satisfaction! I feel like I’m really helping people....”

Q. How did you cope during the pandemic, as people were still at risk of falls, etc. and that would have also put even greater strain on hospitals too?

“There was a short period when we weren’t allowed to do anything, but common-sense



prevailed and by working safely to procedures set by the ILS Team, I was soon able to restart and keep everyone safe....”.

Q. What would you change about the DFG process if you could.

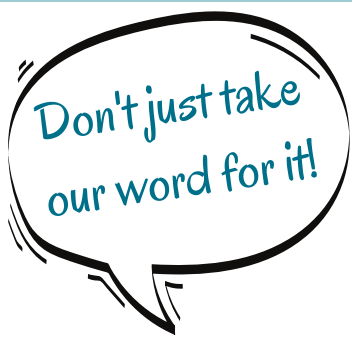
“The online procurement competitions work well. However, uncertainty of knowing what work may be coming up or when I have won (or not), means planning ahead is more challenging then before. I had a period when I wasn’t winning, so took on private work. Then I started winning again but couldn’t ‘jump’ straight on to DFG work as I had to fulfil private work obligations. Again, shorter notice of contract awards can mean I have little time to get materials and that was also impacted by recent industry

supply issues too. I couldn’t get a shower pump anywhere at one point! However, suppliers are starting to get back on track now and either way, I can usually ‘work around’ things!

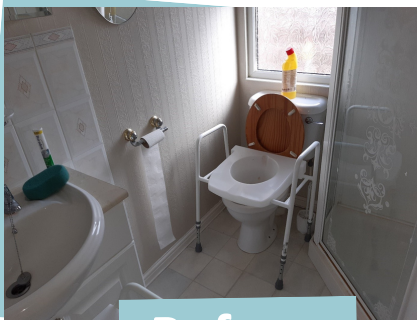
Q. Any memorable cases?

“One in particular you reported on in an earlier issue. The lady from Woodbridge emailed the Council and was very complimentary! She explained how due to mental health she didn’t leave the house. It was a real challenge as she didn’t like anyone coming to the house, but once I started working there, things turned around and she was really happy! She wanted me to stay lol! Every case has its own challenges....”

Huge thanks to Tom for his time and consistent quality, as too that all-important customer consideration. See a recent example of Tom’s work in the ‘Don’t just take our word for it’ section!



Mr B, Nacton... had his shower converted to a Level Access room (TAK Building Maintenance):



Before



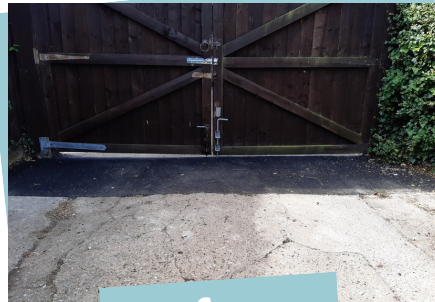
After

Mr & Mrs P: *"We just wanted to say thank you for arranging for the disabled ramp to be put in. Everything went great and the builders were too. Thanks again."* (Grantchester Construction).

Ms A, on behalf of her father from Beccles: *"The stairlift has been a life saver for sure! The company were marvellous; absolute pleasure to deal with. Thanks again for all your help."* (Norfolk Stair Lifts).

Feedback from clients is heart-warming.

Mr B, Kesgrave... was "over the moon" with these driveway improvements, as it was the first time in years he could park on it without great difficulty. (Highway Assurance Ltd).



Before



After

And a very touching one indeed: **From the Husband of Mrs D, Carlton Colville:**

A priority grant (for palliative care or hospital discharge) was rapidly progressed for Mrs D. Upon completion, it was learnt that sadly Mrs D only had two months to live and her wish was to go down to the seaside. A ramp enabled that, with Mr D reflecting: *"Just to say a massive thank you – the supplier did a fantastic job. Many thanks."* (Nexus/Ramp & Mobility Solutions Ltd).

Hospital Discharge/Mr B, Lowestoft – our Technical Officer said: I carried out a final inspection on a level access shower (LAS). The client was beyond happy! It was a priority case due to heart failure as he was in Papworth having major surgery. An immersion heater above the bath needed removing first. Mr B didn't have any heating other than plug-in electric heaters. Sadly they were not eligible for a heating grant. Mrs B was frantically trying to get boiler installation quotes without success. Our own 'Warm Homes Healthy People Team' stepped in; located a gas installer and one was onsite a week later. This enabled Stuart W Dewell Building Contractors to install the LAS a week later so Mr B could be discharged from hospital. Mr B commented: *"I can't thank you all enough for the assistance we have received; for your kindness and efficiency. I can now be independent and shower by myself. Stuart Dewell was fantastic and took our needs into account throughout the work. We now have a lovely shower room and we are warm too. You helped us so much and enabled my discharge so I could begin my recovery at home safely."* **...Makes it all worthwhile!**

And talking of heart-warming stories, Adrian George (Technical Officer) married his long-time partner Tracey on July 2! It was a great day with celebrations rocking 'The Esplanade', Lowestoft all night! We wish them every happiness.

Apprenticeship Update... Customer Satisfaction Survey

Eleanor Wilding has recently successfully transitioned from apprentice to ILS Administration Assistant. As part of her studies, she was tasked with demonstrating her project management skills. She focussed on 'Customer Satisfaction Surveys' and set about reviewing and then updating ours, in order to capture the impact our services make on the end user.

Our new survey now provides them with an opportunity to suggest improvements to potentially enhance the service and ultimately their experience.

It includes questions about the service; how the grant-aided works have benefited them and captures wellbeing/mental health feedback. The familiar 'smiley face' scoring mechanism is used.

A sample of 116 surveys were sent out, with a much higher-than-expected return of 44, ie 38%. These are currently being processed and surveys will be a key outcomes measurement and highlight any necessary improvements required, as we continue to strive for excellence. We'll keep you posted!....

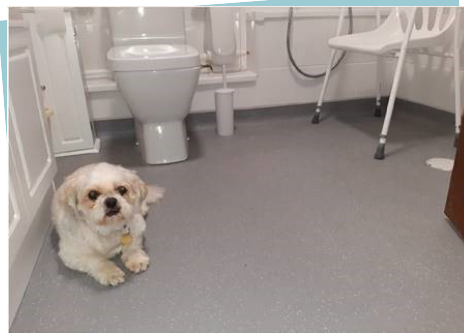
And finally, we 'Paws' for thought with a delightful Dog 'Tail'!

Carol from Felixstowe was delighted with her new level access shower.

And as our photo shows, so was Tinkerbell, her nine year old Shih tzu (and 'yes', I did have to 'Google' that!)

Carol said *"I struggled to get in the bath but it's a lot easier – lovely, thank you!"*

...Clearly every dog has it's day and 5 minutes of fame!



How to apply for a DFG

An Occupational Therapy (OT) Assessment is needed first and the client should contact the Independent Living Suffolk (ILS) at Suffolk County Council to arrange this, via ILS@suffolk.gov.uk or Tel: **0800 121 7711**.

For anything else, please see our contact details below.

We'd love to hear from you!

Please do let us have any comments you have on the newsletter; any suggestions and questions about DFGs generally. Our contact details are below... Thank you!

DFG Stat Attack! Putting it all into context

We currently have 71 DFG cases with OT assessments. This time last year it was 224 - an amazing reduction on our waiting list!

All clients are advised their application will be processed in date received order and according to priority, with the focus on palliative care. Due to demand, they are also advised we are doing our very best but there will be a delay.

199 cases are 'live' with the Case Officer/Technical Officer). 68 have been approved since 1 April, with 43 completed (some in 21/22).

Covid still impacts, however, things are improving, ie 20 works are on site. 36 are awaiting start date agreement and 10 are already agreed – that's 46 almost ready to roll!

CONTACT US

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/adaptations-and-independent-living

☎ 0300 003 0231 | ✉ independent.living@eastsuffolk.gov.uk