



East Suffolk
Community
Partnerships
Bringing ideas to life

**EASE THE
SQUEEZE**



**EASTSUFFOLK
COUNCIL**

Update on Ease the Squeeze (East Suffolk Cost of Living response) - June 2023

A full review of the Ease the Squeeze programme is currently being undertaken to inform planning for Winter 2023/24 – see the end of this report for some headline messages.

Highlights from the Ease the Squeeze programme to date include:

Funding

- More than **£1 million of funding** has been secured for the programme, including from UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Community Partnership Board, ESC Councillor Enabling Communities Budgets and Suffolk County Council
- **More than forty community projects** were funded through the Cost-of-Living Community Grant Fund, established with funding from Suffolk County Council through their Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), for projects to protect people from respiratory illnesses last winter. The total funding allocated in East Suffolk was £124,000.

Engagement

- **Seventeen roadshows** were held in partnership with a range of organisations in towns across East Suffolk between September and November 2022, with the aim of promoting the support that is available for residents struggling with the rising cost of living
- Specific co-production workshops were held to promote the Ease the Squeeze programme with **business leaders, Town and Parish Councils, partners and East Suffolk Councillors**
- A **Rural Ease the Squeeze Workshop** focussing on the specific needs of rural communities in the district was held at East Suffolk House in January 2023 attended by 50+ partners
- A virtual **Cost of Living drop-in information sharing and networking event** was also held in January 2023 with over 40 people attending

Partnership Working

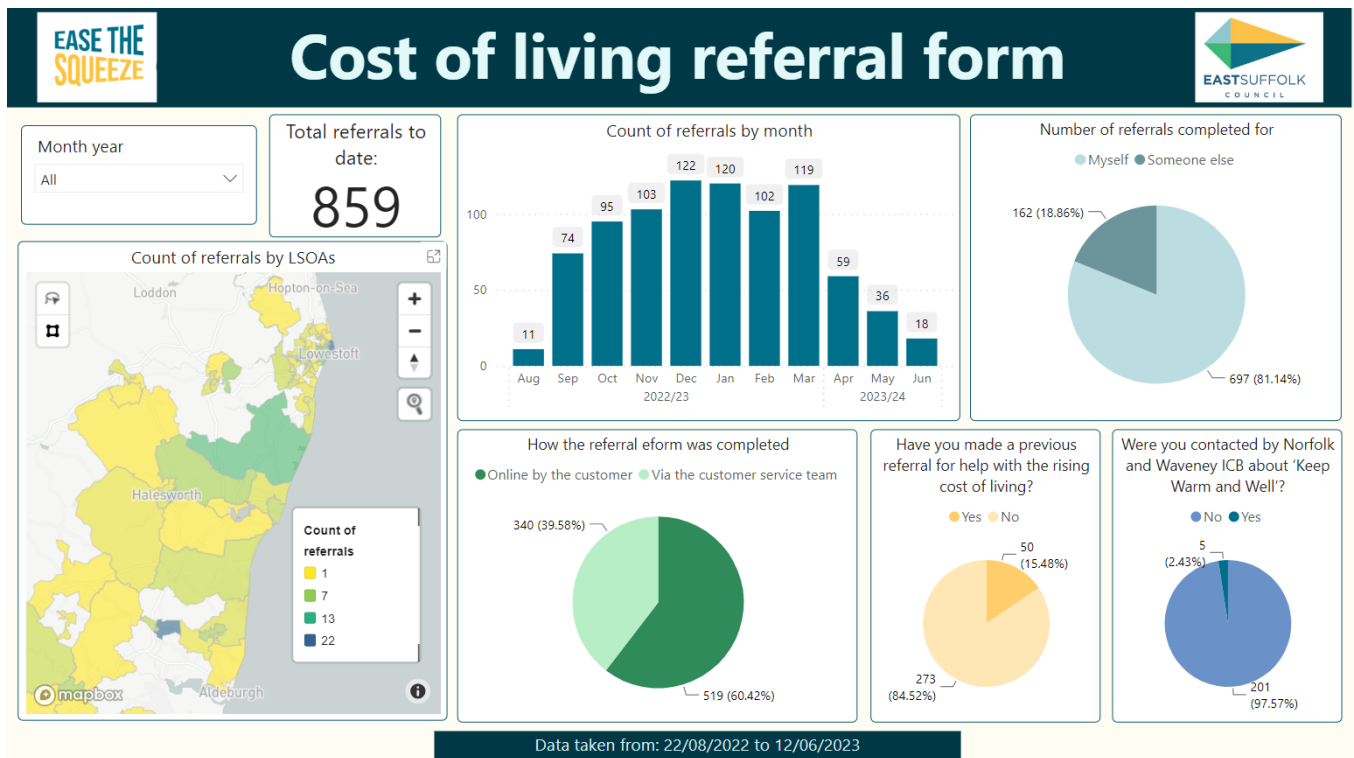
- We have worked with a local bus company to secure **100 discounted bus tickets** (provided free of charge by ESC) to enable residents in Lowestoft to access food banks and pantries
- We have recently funded both Emmaus Norfolk and Waveney and Ipswich Furniture Project to work with us to supply **furniture and white goods** to residents who can't afford to set up their homes, including in ESC temporary accommodation
- We are working in partnership with the Good Things Foundation who have provided us with a stock of **SIM and data cards** to help people to stay connected to services and family/friends
- We have developed a partnership with Citizens Advice East Suffolk and YMCA in Lowestoft to provide **household starter packs** including things like crockery, cutlery and cooking items like frying and saucepans
- We now have a freezer and supply of ready meals at the **complex and vulnerable persons hub** at Bridge View in Lowestoft – this is a partnership between ESC Housing and Communities Teams, Lowestoft Rising and Access Community Trust. We have helped to set up a weekly art group at Bridge View which is free to attend

- The Communities Team is working with the Private Sector Housing team, Lowestoft Rising and Cadent on establishing at least two **hubs in Lowestoft** where residents can access information and advice about cost of living but particularly energy and money issues. The team have been supporting sessions at St Andrews in Lowestoft since April – with around 50 people attending each session

Cost of Living Referrals

East Suffolk Council has received **more than 850 referrals** through its website and Customer Experience Team for help with money, support to access food and other essentials, help with fuel and energy and housing issues. These referrals are from residents across the whole District and cover a range of needs, including some very complex and multi-faceted cases.

An overview of referrals between August 2022 and 12th June 2023 is shown in the dashboard below:



Ease the Squeeze Programme

Twelve priority projects were identified as the foundation of the Ease the Squeeze programme – an update on each of these is below:

EAST SUFFOLK WARM ROOMS

EASE THE SQUEEZE EASTSUFFOLK COUNCIL

CAN YOU PROVIDE A VITAL WARM ROOM FOR YOUR COMMUNITY THIS WINTER?

With rising energy prices, many people in your community will struggle to heat their home in the Winter months. That will leave them at risk of poor physical health, due to the cold, and struggling with their mental health due to social isolation.

So East Suffolk Council is co-ordinating a network of Warm Rooms across the District to give people somewhere to come to stay warm, connected and healthy.

HOW IT WORKS

We need safe, inviting spaces that are heated for 6 hours a day, 2 days a week, for 22 weeks over Winter.

You can donate your Warm Room or we can contribute towards your heating and lighting costs and pay for hot drinks for your guests.

Your guests will be able to keep warm, socialise and access additional support from other providers where appropriate.

You'll make an enormous difference to people's lives at this difficult time.

HOW TO SIGN UP

Please complete the grant application form we've attached. If you need any help or have any questions, please see our Frequently Asked Questions on page 2 of this document, the Grant Guidance notes or email communities@eastsoffolk.gov.uk.

Please return your form to the same email address by midnight on Wednesday 12th October 2022.

Network of Warm Rooms

32 Warm Rooms were funded through the programme, either through the core budget, UKSP Fund and/or SCC Community Grant) plus the Suffolk Libraries 'Be Kind in Kind' project. Networks of Warm Rooms were established in Beccles and Felixstowe so, in total, there were over 50 Warm Rooms in East Suffolk last winter.

A full review of impact of Warm Rooms is underway – but it is clear that the most successful ones have been those based on existing groups or where activities take place at the 'Warm Room' i.e., the 'offer' is more than just a warm room and hot drink. Some Warm Rooms have continued as Warm Welcome or Community Rooms.

Food Network Coordinator

ESC led a procurement process for a VCSE organisation to host a Food Network Coordinator role for the District - the successful organisation was Community Action Suffolk. This is a two-year role, with a focus on opening up food supply pathways and supporting the establishment of Community Pantries and other food related projects, creating a whole system approach to helping residents to access good quality but lower cost food. The post has just gone out to advert.

Community Pantries

A Community Pantry grant scheme is available to support set up costs for Community Pantries, including the Your Local Pantry membership fee, shelving and storage, fridges/freezers and initial stock. One pantry was funded in Round 1 but there has since been interest from lots of other communities since its launch. Round 2 is live until end June and an information session was held at the end of May for potential applicants. Successful applicants will be supported by the Food Network Coordinator (see update above) and the Communities Team. In addition, Enabling Communities Budget funding has been secured for a part time pantry coordinator in the Carlton Colville, Kessingland and Southwold CP area as a pilot.

[East-Suffolk-Pantries-Grant-Scheme-guidance.pdf \(eastsoffolk.gov.uk\)](#)

Winter Warmth Packs

The Warm Homes Team are running a scheme where residents can be referred in by both partners and ESC staff for a Winter Warmth pack which includes items like hats, gloves, scarves, blankets, duvets, baby sleep bags, hot water bottles, LED bulbs, draughtproofing strips and more.

There are two options – a standard pack and a bespoke pack and the take up for each as at 30/03 is shown below.

The Lowestoft and Northern Parishes Community Partnership boosted the offer with heated items available for residents in their catchment area.

EASE THE SQUEEZE EASTSUFFOLK COUNCIL

WINTER WARMTH

Are you working with a resident or patient who is struggling to afford to heat their home?

Do you support families who sleep in one room as they don't have enough bedding to go round?

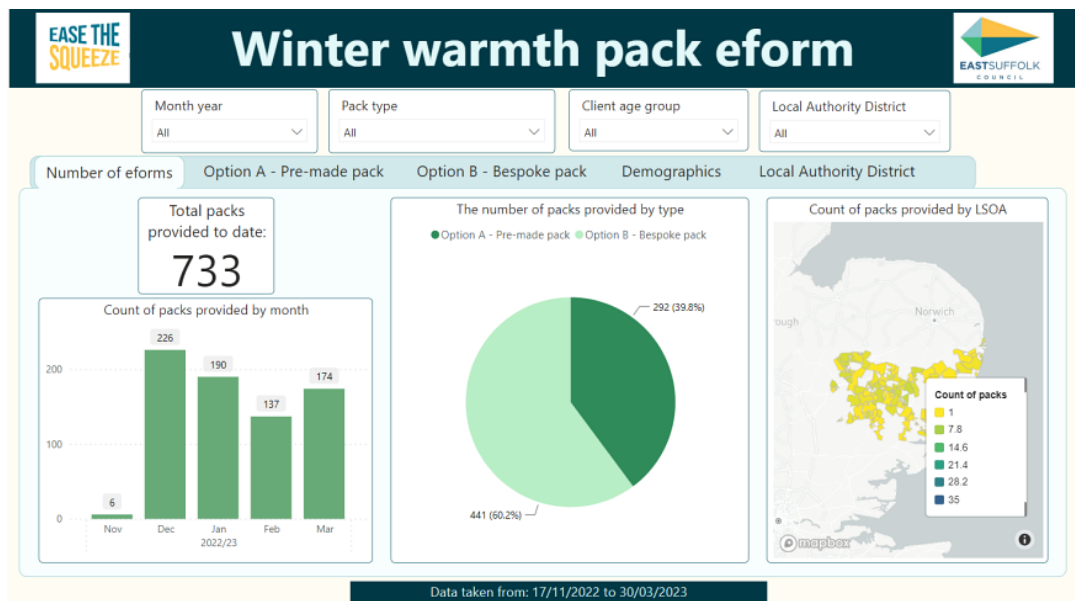
Would some simple items of clothing, bedding or draught-proofing make a difference?

SUFFOLK WINTER WARMTH PACKS ARE NOW AVAILABLE

The referral process is really simple!

Using our standard form please:

- Record your details.
- Record the client's details (so we can get their consent to the information being shared with us and contact them to arrange delivery).
- Either select a standard winter warmth pack on the form (option A) or create a bespoke warmth pack by adding items (option B)
- If you cannot access the webform we can supply in alternative format to then email to winterwarmtheastsuffolk.gov.uk requesting a copy.



Handyperson Project

The Warm Homes Team is leading a project to link residents who need low impact energy improvements (draught proofing, low energy light bulbs, loft hatch covers, chimney balloons etc.) to their home, and can't do them/can't afford to pay for someone to do them, with a local handyperson.

ID Document Fund

The ESC Financial Inclusion Officers have a small fund to enable residents to access a replacement birth certificate and/or driving licence – essential for opening a bank account.

Comfort Food

This project is delivered in partnership with local cafés and food outlets who provide a free hot meal and drink on presentation of a 'Comfort Food' card which is distributed by a range of referral partners. There are currently 18 locations across East Suffolk offering Comfort Food (see below). Whilst demand is clearly there, some referral partners have struggled to issue vouchers. However, we have delivered nearly 500 meals to date and feedback from venues is that the experience of eating out makes a real difference to people in need. The remaining vouchers will be issued through schools and via the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme



Comfort Food		
CP area	Live venues	Budget allocated
Aldeburgh, Leiston, Saxmundham & villages	2	£1,000
Beccles, Bungay & Halesworth	3	£1,500
Carlton Coville, Kessingland and Southwold	1	£500
Felixstowe Peninsular	4	£3,000
Framlingham, Wickham Market & Villages	2	£1,000
Kesgrave & Martlesham	2	£1,000
Lowestoft	2	£4,000
Melton, Woodbridge & Deben	2	£1,000
	Total allocated	£13,000
	Remaining	£19,000

Cooking on a Budget classes

This project involves putting on 32 classes across the District to give families the skills and confidence to cook healthy meals on a budget. Each class will involve a cooking demonstration, eating the meal together and a package of ingredients and recipes to take home. Promotion of the classes has been primarily through schools and staff working with families. Uptake from schools has been limited so far, but delivery dates are being agreed currently and full details will be made available once finalised.

Cooking Equipment

The Council has a stock of small/large slow cookers, single/double hobs and microwaves for residents who don't have a way to cook hot meals. We also have 'Kettle Packs for those who only have access to boiling water and cannot use the other items due to lack of space or a chaotic situation, and some 'Taste Kits' of herbs and spices to add flavour to food packs.

School Uniform Banks

This project builds on Uniform Bank projects already available locally, for example in Lowestoft and Beccles. The offer will include funding for vouchers for shoes and name tags, as well as for storage facilities to enable more Uniform Banks across the District to open and provide school uniform and sports kit to families struggling with the cost of living. The Grant scheme is now live and details will be available shortly at: [Community grants and funding » East Suffolk Council](#)

Digital Projects

10 laptops have been ordered for Warm Rooms to enable residents to access the internet and/or for Warm Room locations to support residents with digital skills. 6 have been allocated to date to the Warm Rooms at Carlton Marshes, Kirkley Centre, Lound, Somerleyton, Bungay and Leiston Long Shop.

Field to Fork – Growing Kits

There has been a really positive take up of the Field to Fork Growing kits targeted at some of the most deprived communities in East Suffolk where residents are less likely to have ever 'grown their own'. Due to the levels of interest from Primary Schools (see list below), the number of kits was increased from 1,000 to 1,600, with additional funding from underspends in other areas plus a £2,000 contribution from the Lowestoft Community Partnership for schools in their area.

The starter kits include a cotton bag, gardening gloves, pack of hand tools, window planter trough, four packs of seeds and an instruction sheet. Recipients will be able to share their progress and get hints and tips through monthly newsletters (opt-in required). 27 distribution partners were engaged with the kits reaching a minimum of 5,000 people across the District:

Leiston Primary
Langer Primary, Felixstowe
Grange Primary, Felixstowe
Kyson, Woodbridge
Saxmundham Primary
Albert Pye PS, Beccles
Grove Primary, Lowestoft
Dell Primary, Lowestoft
Somerleyton Primary

Wickham Market PS
St Margaret's Primary, Lowestoft
Westwood Primary, Lowestoft
Blundeston Primary
Corton Primary
Poplars Primary, Lowestoft
Phoenix St Peter Academy, Lowestoft
Wenhaston Primary

Field to Fork – Growing Spaces

Fifteen Growing Space Grants have been awarded to date totalling just under £24,000.

[Field to Fork grant scheme » East Suffolk Council](#)

Funding awarded January 2023 – Round One		
Organisation	CP Area	Funding awarded
Pathways Care Farm	Lowestoft	£1,800
Giving Community	Wickham Market	£1,585
Involve Active	Lowestoft	£1,860
Nassau Trust	Felixstowe	£977
Saxmundham Community Fridge/Allotment group	Saxmundham	£2,000
Bungay Town Council	Bungay	£1,991.98
Wild About Campsea	Campsea Ashe	£2,000
Total awarded in round one		£12,213.98
Funding awarded May 2023 – Round Two		
Easton Primary School	Wickham Market	£2,000
Framlingham Swifts	Wickham Market	£1,751
Lightwave – Bealings	Kesgrave	£189
Deben Community Farm	Woodbridge	£1,200
Grove Surgery, Felixstowe	Felixstowe	£343.56
Somerleyton Primary	Lowestoft	£2,000
Badingham Village Hall	Wickham Market	£2,000
Blundeston Primary	Lowestoft	£2,000
Total awarded in round two		£11,483.56
Total grant funding awarded		£23,697.54



CAN YOU HELP YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY GROW ITS OWN FOOD?

With rising food and energy prices, many people in your community will struggle to feed themselves this Winter, with all the obvious problems that creates around both physical and mental health.

So East Suffolk Council is providing small grants to community farms, allotments and gardens to expand their capacity and engage local people with grow-and-eat projects that will feed communities and help people stay active and connected.

HOW IT WORKS

- We'll provide a grant of up to £2,000.
- You'll provide space for community growing projects - and the expertise to make them successful.
- You'll engage the local community to bring new people in to help grow on your land.
- The cheap, nutritious, sustainable food you'll share with the community will help keep people fit and healthy - and hopefully create a new group of green-fingered growers.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Just complete the simple form we've attached. If you need any help or have any questions, please see our Frequently Asked Questions on the reverse or email communities@east.suffolk.gov.uk.

Please return your form to the same email address by midnight on Sunday 18 December 2022.

Other Projects

ESC worked on a '**Cold Homes – Warmth on Prescription**' pilot with Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Norfolk and Waveney ICB. This involved the Protect Now Team from the ICB contacting (by letter and phone) patients identified through GP data as being at risk of hospital admission last winter due to respiratory conditions. Anyone identified as needing support was helped by the Community Intervention Team to apply to the SCC-led Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (LWAS) and to access a top up payment from the Ease the Squeeze budget. This pilot will be expanded upon next Winter to try and ensure that support reaches those most at risk.

Our focus over the coming year will shift to more work around prevention and early intervention. The Council has created a **Community Help Hub** consisting of 8 FTE's working in two teams focussing on Help with Money and Support for Individuals and Families. One tool to support this will be use of the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) software to identify people at risk of financial exclusion. Part of the programme will involve targeted campaigns, for example the first one will focus on supporting older people to access Pension Credit.

We have set up a **Woman2Woman group** in partnership with the Hatfield Hotel, Lowestoft (who provide the venue free of charge) to reduce isolation and loneliness as well as provide support for women who are struggling to make ends meet.

Key Learning Points from the first 12 months of Ease the Squeeze

General

1. Partners appreciated being part of the workshops to develop and prioritise the programme
2. Partners across sectors support our ambition to do more data-led preventative/early intervention work with the aim of reaching as many people as possible before they get to crisis point, including by using the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT), working with health data as we did in the Cold Homes pilot with Norfolk and Waveney ICB, and upstream partnership work with RedSTART on financial education in schools (Lowestoft)
3. It was felt that ESC has a convening role - bringing together partners across sectors to help identify duplication and understand gaps. It is proposed that ESC should convene a workshop to understand and support coordination across sectors to the ongoing cost of living challenges in winter 2023/24

Engagement, Communication and Branding

4. Ease the Squeeze branding worked well and enabled regular, consistent and recognisable messaging. Field to Fork as a brand worked well, but 'Warm Rooms' was felt to be stigmatising, which is feedback seen nationally as well as locally. Four Lowestoft and Northern Parishes CP Warm Rooms have taken this feedback on board and transitioned to Warm Welcomes.
5. While our communications were strong, it was felt that we might not have reached all the people we wanted to, particularly those who are very isolated and not already engaged with services/VCFSE sector support. A range of improvements were suggested, as detailed below
6. Messaging should be better co-ordinated across agencies – some residents and partners are overwhelmed by the amount of information out there. East Suffolk partners support the idea of a Suffolk leaflet with an East Suffolk page, supplemented by local, tailored information at Community Partnership level
7. Information packs with more detailed information should be produced for professionals, community champions and community venues across the District, but these need to be ready by September
8. It was agreed to explore rolling out a Community Champions/Neighbours model across the District – trusted people who can signpost and support others in their community N.B. links to Community Voices approach in Norfolk and Waveney
9. Engagement worked best when it was based on something that was already happening e.g. Community Cuppa sessions run by Communities Together East Anglia
10. Outreach should target the places that people already go for help e.g. warm spaces, pantries, foodbanks or they already go in their day to day lives e.g. schools, supermarkets, chemists, libraries
11. Messaging should be clear, easy to understand and honest e.g. we don't have the funding to provide ongoing food support (vouchers or parcels) and that those we work with need to be ready to help themselves (with our collective support and connections)

Resources and Capacity

12. Some VCFSE organisations are struggling to cope with the level of demand for support and we need to recognise this and support them, including financially where possible
13. The SCC funded Cost of Living Community Grant Fund was a positive addition to the offer and enabled some really innovative projects led by the VCFSE sector – we have asked whether SCC, through the Collaborative Communities Board, will continue this fund next winter

Rural Challenges

14. Rural communities have specific needs and challenges and we should work in partnership to consider how we can maximise our reach into rural communities – one idea is joint outreach through a mobile pantry/advice hub targeting the middle third of the district
15. Are there opportunities to link rural residents to provision in market towns via demand responsive transport projects like KATCH and Buzzabout?

Practical Support

16. The balance between providing emergency support (e.g., three-day food packs) and funding community-led projects that enable sustainable steps towards independence (e.g. Community Pantries, Field to Fork, Uniform Banks) has worked and should be maintained
17. The ‘one stop shop’ cost of living referral process worked well – there have been numerous tweaks since it launched, including revisions to the form and a streamlined triage process. Further changes are planned, including more pop-ups and self-help options
18. Link work around cost of living to work around mental health and wellbeing and promote the resources available to support wellbeing more widely
19. Ambition to work more closely with schools and youth organisations and to link Ease the Squeeze work to the Holiday Activity and Food Fund (HAF) and Food in School Holidays (FISH - Lowestoft) provision
20. Consider the clear and ongoing unmet need around Isolation and Loneliness – proposed that this should be a topic for a future CP Board meeting i.e., revisit our priority?
21. Specific changes proposed include:
 - a. reducing the number of ‘Warm Rooms’ and focussing on those that were well used, convening a network of Warm Room organisers and paying grants in instalments
 - b. Using Comfort Food budget to target more upstream work, including more cooking classes to support healthy food provision
 - c. Some projects (Community Pantries, Field to Fork, Warm Rooms and Cooking on a Budget Grants) are UKSPF funded for 2 or 2.5 years – these will all be reviewed to ensure maximum impact.