



September 2021 Town and Parish Newsletter

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Build Back **Better**
Build Back **Stronger**
Build Back **Greener**

Rachel Hood, Cabinet Member for Education, SEND and Skills at Suffolk County Council
(Column posted in EADT on September 21st 2021)

I want to dedicate this column today to the situation with Suffolk's special educational needs and disabilities (known as SEND) provision.

I was newly elected in May to this Cabinet position and SEND became my first priority.

You will have seen coverage in today's paper about an Independent Report into our services. This report follows a review carried out by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and a parent carer network, and was commissioned by ourselves after a significant increase in correspondents from concerned parents and carers earlier this year.

This wasn't a review of everything we do, but focussed on the processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of our SEND services. I would like to share with you the outcomes and actions we are taking following publication of the review yesterday. The review has found that we must change what we are doing in a number of areas.

I would like to say sorry for the difficulties that some families have experienced as a result of how we have been doing things. We recognise that we have let down some children and young people as certain aspects of our services have simply not been good enough.

Our priority now is to implement wide-scale improvements, and to do this with pace, impact and efficiency. We have already started to make improvements to the way we do things and whilst, wide-scale improvement will take time, we are determined to make things better. There have been many positive changes to the way we deliver SEND services in the past 18 months and we are proud of these, but clearly there is some way to go.

The review made nine recommendations and we have used these to draft an action plan, which can be read online. One of the recommendations made in the review was to work with a third-party organisation to deliver improvements. The council has since secured Impower as a strategic partner, who will bring capacity and extensive experience of working on SEND systems across the country. This partnership work began yesterday. Other recommendations include staff training, reviewing the process for allocating specialist placements and working with education leaders and parents and carers to understand the demand for specialist provision and use of data and local intelligence to inform sufficient planning.

We have already made significant longer-term improvements within SEND, which we continue to build upon. We have agreed a £45.1m capital programme to create an additional 870 specialist education places over a 5-year period to 2024. Two hundred and ten places opened last year with a further 310 opening this academic year and includes new specialist schools in Bungay, Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. We have also improved the time in which it takes us to issue Education Health and Care Plans from 18% in 2016 to 95% in 2021. £1million has also been invested into speech and language therapies by Ipswich & East Suffolk and West Suffolk CCGs.

At the moment, more than 6,000 children in Suffolk currently have a health and care plan to identify what support they need to help with their special educational needs. The number has nearly doubled from 3,000 in 2014. A further 12,000 pupils have special educational needs and do not require a health and care plan. Currently, there are 2,000 places at either special schools or specialist units for those with more complex needs. We continue to increase the number of places.





Your children's education and welfare is fundamental – I fully recognise this as a parent myself. We want to work together to give your children and young people the very best chance in life.

We accept without reservation the findings of the review and are grateful to the Lincolnshire team for their attention to detail, professionalism and advice. We have learnt very valuable lessons from this review, and we will act on these recommendations in the best and quickest way.

You can [read the report and action plan here.](#)

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the report or action plan please contact us via email at SendReview@suffolk.gov.uk





Independent review highlights failings in some of Suffolk's SEND services

An independent report into parts of Suffolk's special educational needs (SEND) provision was published on September 20th.

The report, [which is available to read here](#), has been written by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and parent carer network, following a review of some SEND services.

The review looked at processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of SEND provision and was commissioned by Suffolk County Council in June.

The report lists strengths and weaknesses of the service and includes nine recommendations for improvement. These recommendations are now being worked through and implemented by Suffolk County Council and other partners who help deliver SEND services.

Sue Cook, Executive Director of People's Services at Suffolk County Council, said:

"The review has found that we must change what we are doing in a number of areas.

"I would like to say sorry to any child or young person, and their families, who we may have failed.

"Our priority now is to implement these recommendations with pace, efficiency and impact. We have begun to make these changes, but it will take time before the impact of the changes are felt.

"We are grateful to the team at Lincolnshire for their findings and recommendations, which we accept wholeheartedly, and for their support and advice."

Rachel Hood, Cabinet member for Education, SEND and Skills, at Suffolk County Council, said:

"Suffolk County Council's Cabinet commissioned this review after the May elections because of concerns that our SEND services were not performing well.

"As we anticipated, the report has shown that SEND services in Suffolk are not good enough, and I want to apologise to those children and young people we have let down.

"I want to be clear that this report does not cover all SEND services and many children or young people who have specialist educational needs in Suffolk are very well served, but significant changes must be made following this hard-hitting report.

"We must learn from this report and implement fundamental change as quickly as we can."

The review was commissioned following a significant increase in correspondence from parents and carers earlier this year.

An Action Plan based on the recommendations is now being implemented. [This can be read here.](#)

One of the recommendations made in the review was to work with a third-party organisation to deliver improvements. The council has since secured Impower as a strategic partner, who will bring capacity and extensive experience of working on SEND systems across the country. This partnership starts today [Monday, September 2021].

Other recommendations include staff training, reviewing the process for allocating specialist placements and working with education leaders and parents and carers to understand the demand for specialist provision and use data and local intelligence to inform sufficient planning.





Suffolk's first 'healing woods' locations announced.

On September 6th, four locations were announced by Suffolk County Council as 'healing woods and spaces'.

They will offer people better access to nature and provide a positive legacy to the pandemic.

The healing woods and spaces will be located in:

- Bury St Edmunds
- Combs and Little Finborough
- Eye
- Hopton

The council's healing woods project connects with the motion unanimously passed by the county's councillors earlier this year, to commit to developing mental health support in Suffolk, in response to the impacts of the pandemic.

Research, such as that recently published by the University of Essex with The Green Light Trust, demonstrated that access to woodlands and green space can significantly improve people's wellbeing.

The four sites will develop unused spaces and existing green areas, to make them more accessible and offer dedicated places for peaceful reflection and a positive focus.

Councillor Richard Rout, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment at Suffolk County Council, said:

"I'm delighted that we've been able to identify four suitable locations, the first of many I hope. We will be providing advice, technical support and some funding to help develop these areas.

"I've been extremely impressed by the vision and thoughtfulness of each of these projects. Across them we will see things like new seating areas, sensory gardens, vegetable growing plots, better connections between existing green areas, hedge planting and opportunities for community activities.

"The site in Hopton is particularly exciting as it will look to establish a community woodland on an area which was formerly used as a village tip and whilst rural, has fantastic accessibility. It is also a brilliant example of the expertise we have in our communities and the opportunities of partnership working.

"I'm really grateful to the parish councils, local councillors, and volunteers for all they have done to make these projects a reality - demonstrating the fantastic community ethos we have here in Suffolk.

"The inspiration for healing woods was as a memorial to those we have lost during the pandemic. These spaces will offer that opportunity for reflection, whilst also showing that nature is accessible to everyone and our mental health can benefit from being in touch with these outdoor spaces.

"Thank you to everyone who has contacted us with suggestions for sites. We're still hoping to create more sites, and would very much welcome suggestions for Ipswich, East Suffolk, and anywhere else in the county that may be interested. Not every location can be suitable, but we will look into every site, and I hope to be able to announce more soon."

If you would like to propose a suitable site which could be developed as healing woods or spaces, email HealingWoods@suffolk.gov.uk.





Showcasing Suffolk's environmental achievements as the UK hosts COP26

On September 8th Suffolk County Council launched Creating the Greenest County Awards 2021.

Creating the Greenest County is now more important and more relevant than ever - going green, reducing carbon and protecting biodiversity are choices we must all be making.

The United Nations COP26 event in November will rightly focus on the international agreements that need to be in place, and the 2021 Creating the Greenest County Awards will bring this huge issue into a Suffolk focus and give us encouragement and inspiration to make changes to how we live our lives and secure a better future.

As Suffolk works hard towards its net zero carbon 2030 target, the Awards provide an excellent opportunity for individuals, businesses, communities, schools and voluntary organisations to be celebrated for the environmental work they do to combat climate change, or simply for improving the area where they live.

Nominations for the Creating the Greenest County Awards are now open and close on Thursday 14 October 2021. Nominations can be submitted online at greensuffolk.org/awards.

This year's categories will include biodiversity and landscape, business, community, schools and waste and recycling, and we will be recognising our county's green heroes. Many individuals have taken it on themselves to lead the way in making change, voluntary organisations have formed to help transform their local communities and businesses are taking their environmental responsibilities even more seriously.

Since its inception in 2007, Creating the Greenest County has seen Solar PV generation becoming mainstream without government subsidy, the world's largest wind farm operating from our coast and virtually no waste going to landfill. 500 businesses have been accredited and over 900 supported to develop carbon reduction plans and the county is embracing the move towards electric vehicles.

Councillor Richard Rout, Suffolk County Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Environment, said:

"We can see the reality of climate change across the globe on a daily basis but are proud that the majority of organisations involved in Creating the Greenest County have declared a Climate Emergency and made a strong commitment to achieving net zero emissions.

"The Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan sets out the collaboration required to achieve our aspirations and the Awards recognise those that have gone above and beyond to support this. We have launched this year's awards at E.J. Barker and Sons at Lodge Farm, who won the Biodiversity and Landscape award in 2019 and are sharing their best practice at COP26 this year."

The Awards are a chance to celebrate the people, organisations and communities that are making Suffolk the Greenest County. This is a great opportunity to shine a light on anyone who inspires others to make Suffolk a better place for its residents and its wildlife. It could be someone who has inspired you to live more sustainably, or an organisation which has transformed its business operations to be carbon neutral.

The award ceremony will be held at The Hold in Ipswich on 12 November 2021.

If your business would like to sponsor the awards, please contact creatinggreenestcounty@suffolk.gov.uk or 01502 521406.





New COVID testing centre to open in Bury St Edmunds

On September 10th it was announced that a new COVID-19 PCR testing centre is to open in Suffolk.

The centre in Bury St Edmunds will offer PCR testing and operate from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week, from Saturday September 11.

It is being opened to provide a service in the west of the county following the August 16 rules change around self-isolating.

Stuart Keeble, Director of Public Health for Suffolk, said:

“This new facility will help to meet anticipated increased demand for testing now that fully-vaccinated close contacts, and those aged under 18, no longer have to self-isolate after being around someone with coronavirus and are advised to take a test instead.

“This is an NHS Track & Trace facility and does not offer testing for people returning from travel overseas. They must continue to follow the rules depending on which country they have been to.” PCR testing is carried out on people who are showing symptoms of coronavirus such as a high temperature, a new, continuous cough and a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste.

It is also used for people who:

- Have been in contact with someone who has tested positive
- Have been asked to get a test by a local council or someone from NHS Test and Trace
- A GP or other health professional has asked them to get a test
- Are taking part in a government pilot project
- Have been asked to get a test to confirm a positive result
- Have received an unclear result and were told to get a second test
- Need to get a test for someone they live with who has symptoms.

The Bury St Edmunds site is a walk-through test centre but members of the public arriving in a vehicle can park on site and proceed on foot to the test centre building.

Parking is free to members of the public while they are attending the test centre.

The centre is in the car park behind West Suffolk House at Olding Road depot in Bury St Edmunds. The full address is Olding Road depot, West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3TA.

Booking is strongly advised and can be [done online](#) or by calling 119.

Home PCR testing kits can also be ordered via 119.





Work begins to replace street lights in Suffolk and save energy in the County

On September 13th, Suffolk County Council and Bouygues Energies & Services (Bouygues E&S) have started work replacing 43,400 street lighting lanterns in Suffolk with LED lanterns.

The picture shows the team installing some of the first lanterns on Bergamot Close, Red Lodge on Friday, 10th September.

SCC and Bouygues E&S joined forces to create a flagship partnership with the aim of reducing energy, minimising light pollution, bringing down ongoing maintenance costs for the Authority and providing the best value to residents. SCC expects to reduce its annual electricity costs on these assets by around 76 percent, saving more than 1.7 million pounds a year.

The upgrade of the lighting system will include a further rollout of SCC's central management system which will allow lights to be switched on or off and dim individual or groups of lights. This smart technology will increase the control the Authority has over its power consumption which will further reduce costs. The system will also automatically flag any lights that are not working which reduces the need for night-time inspections.

The Street Lighting LED Upgrade contract commenced in May 2021 and the scope of works includes:

- Survey
- Design to latest British and European Standards
- Supply and installation of new LED Street Lighting with wireless control system
- Removal of existing luminaires
- Updating inventory
- Verification.

All roles are being advertised locally to Suffolk and social value activities undertaken throughout the period of the contract will include volunteering days, tree planting and presentations to local school children.

Bouygues Energies & Services Sales Director, Matt Fitzpatrick said:

“After a successful mobilisation period, where local people from within Suffolk make up the majority of our new team, we are excited about starting this large-scale LED street lighting upgrade and being a pivotal partner for the Authority in reducing its carbon emissions.”

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member responsible for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, Councillor Paul West said:

“After many months of planning by Suffolk County Council and Bouygues Energies & Services teams, I am pleased to see that the huge task to upgrade the 43,400 street lighting lanterns is underway.

Starting in the west of the county, I had the pleasure of seeing the teams install some of the first lanterns in Bergamot Close, Red Lodge. I very much look forward to seeing the project progress over the coming months and await the positive environmental results upon completion.

I encourage everyone to follow the project updates via Suffolk Highways twitter: [@Suff_highways](https://twitter.com/Suff_highways).”





Youth Focus Suffolk puts young people at the heart

Additionally on September 13th, it was announced by Suffolk County Council that 18 youth projects from across the county have been awarded a share of just under £240,000.

This is in response to the gaps faced after Covid-19 for activities and services for young people.

Almost 2.5 times over-subscribed, the Youth Intervention Fund, hosted by Suffolk Community Foundation, attracted an array of bids and has successfully granted both rural and urban projects from Lowestoft to Newmarket, Hadleigh to Eye. The Fornhams and Gt Barton have been identified as an area which would require some assistance.

It is expected that an additional 1,900 young people will benefit from these activities offered through the voluntary and community sector over the next 12 months and the schemes include performing arts to increase confidence, mentoring programmes to support mental health, forest schools and construction skills.

Cllr Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities at Suffolk County Council said,

“We are thrilled to be supporting such a diverse range of projects which give young people opportunities after such a challenging period presented by the pandemic. This work will kickstart activities to grow confidence in our future generation, developing opportunities to upskill and to have the safe spaces they need to thrive.”

Suffolk Community Foundation successfully levered in additional contributions of £79,350 through philanthropic donations and will be supporting the groups as they deliver their work over the year ahead. Andrea Pittock, Head of Grant Programmes at Suffolk Community Foundation said, “This programme has been a wonderful opportunity to help meet the needs of young people in Suffolk. The variety of need covered includes, creating safe spaces, opening new youth provision in rural areas, focussing on impaired mental health and looking at the effect the pandemic has, and continues to have, on the young people across the county. By working with us here at the Foundation, it has also enabled some of those organisations that weren’t originally funded through this programme to now be funded with the help of other philanthropic giving. It has been exciting to work closely with Suffolk County Council to help them to meet these needs and increase youth services through the Youth Focus Suffolk programme.”

The Youth Intervention Fund this year has formed part of a wider programme, called Youth Focus Suffolk, which is funded through the county council’s Suffolk 2020 fund. The project supports both the voluntary sector and communities to become more resilient in supporting their young people through a range of measures. This includes a fully funded programme of training, which is open for all adults to access, and ranges from youth mental health awareness, accredited youth work as well as themed support around drug and alcohol awareness, gambling and exploitation. The project has also mapped out current youth provision to help people find out about the opportunities in their local area for young people to take part in and provides a peer mentor space online for professionals and volunteers alike to share experiences and learn from others.

More information about the project, and resources to support those working with young people, can be found at the new online platform www.youthfocus.suffolk.gov.uk





HRH The Duke of Gloucester officially opens The Hold

His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester has officially opened The Hold, a new archives and heritage centre on Ipswich's Waterfront.

The Duke was given a tour of the £20million building, a partnership between Suffolk County Council and the University of Suffolk, which is home to more than nine centuries of history safely preserved by Suffolk Archives.

His Royal Highness was greeted by Suffolk's Lord Lieutenant, Clare, Countess of Euston, as well as a line-up of civic guests, and was then shown round by Kate Chantry, Strategic Manager of Suffolk Archives.

During the visit The Duke met Tim Greenacre, Chief Operating Officer at the University of Suffolk, Dr Harvey Osborne, Course Leader for BA (Hons) History and students, and saw the state-of-the-art teaching facilities including a 200-seat auditorium and seminar rooms.

Lord Lieutenant, Clare, Countess of Euston then gave a short history of the Suffolk Medal, including showing a replica which is on display in the building's main street.

Representatives from local history groups were introduced to The Duke in the John Blatchly Local Studies Library, named in honour of the esteemed local educator, author and historian.

The Duke was shown treasures from the Suffolk Archives collections spanning 900 years of Suffolk's history, including the oldest document - a Charter of King Henry I granting churches and property to the monks of Eye Priory from around 1119 - and the newest contemporary collections of Black Lives Matter protest placards.

His Royal Highness also met representatives from organisations which contributed to The Hold, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund which awarded nearly £11million to make the project possible, as well as those involved in the design and construction of the building.

To complete the visit to The Hold, His Royal Highness unveiled a plaque to declare the building officially open and signed a book which will be added to the archive as a record of the visit.

Cllr Graham Newman, Chairman of Suffolk County Council, said:

"We are honoured that His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester has officially opened The Hold. This is recognition of a project lasting more than 10 years to deliver a Suffolk Archives service for the 21st Century, and it has been a great occasion to show off this wonderful building, the work we do and some of the treasures in our archives.

"It has also been an opportunity to recognise the Suffolk Archives staff and volunteers who have worked so hard to make this possible, through many challenges including a global pandemic, as well as those supporters and funders that have backed the project along the way."

Now that The Hold is officially open, appointments can be booked to view printed local studies materials in the John Blatchly Local Studies Library or archives in the Searchroom.

Visit www.suffolkarchives.co.uk for more information or to make a booking.





Illegal cigarettes seized in Trading Standards crackdown

It was announced on September 17th that thousands of illegal cigarettes had been seized from shops in Lowestoft and Beccles as part of a Trading Standards crackdown.

More than 12,000 cigarettes were sniffed out by tobacco detection dogs at three shops in the town, with over 8000 of the cigarettes and 8kg of hand rolled tobacco found under a manhole cover in the rear of one the premises.

The operation was supported by Suffolk Police, Norfolk Trading Standards and Wagtail UK.

A total of 12,440 cigarettes and 18.45kg of hand rolled tobacco were seized from the stores. All the items are suspected to be illegally imported into the UK without duty being paid and do not comply with the legal packaging and labelling requirements.

Several of them are also suspected to be counterfeits of popular brands, which are likely to contain harmful substances and may not self-extinguish - presenting increased health and safety risks.

The seized products will now be fully assessed as part of the investigation to determine the exact offences that have been committed. Test purchases had been carried out before the raids with all three selling to covert officers.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Public Protection and Communities said:

"Intelligence was received that the premises were selling illegal tobacco. Test purchases and a thorough search of the premises and grounds by the team led to the discovery of the tobacco products.

"Far from being a victimless crime, illegal tobacco trading creates a cheap source for children and young people, undermines the reduction of smoking, and affects the trade of legitimate retailers.

"We strongly encourage members of the public to recognise the adverse health, economic and social impacts of the illicit trade of tobacco products.

"The sale of illegal tobacco is also linked to organised crime which results in dealers going to extreme lengths and using very sophisticated methods to hide the tobacco products from trading standards."

People are urged to look for:

- Packaging that is not plain olive green
- A lack of health warnings
- Text on the packet that is not in English
- Cheap prices
- Unknown brands

If you suspect someone is selling illegal tobacco in Suffolk, please report it to the [Citizens Advice Consumer Service](#) on **0808 223 1133**.





New Suffolk Recycling Centres online booking system improvements to deliver greater customer experience

On September 20th it was announced that Suffolk County Council has developed a new, more user-friendly booking system which enables residents to book slots for recycling.

For bookings from 27 September, people can view all available time slots in real time, to see which booking slots are free at any given moment. The system allows you to book up to seven days in advance. If circumstances change, you can easily cancel your slot up to one hour beforehand or equally, you can click to amend your booking if required.

The system is also able to advise customers on which sites accept specific materials, such as plasterboard to ensure the correct type of booking is made to save customers' time, and it can also be used to share real time messages with customers, for example if any site needs to close due to adverse weather or emergency situations. The new booking system is connected to automated numberplate recognition to allow for a trial of automatic entry gates.

Customer survey results show overwhelming support for the use of a booking system and the Council has gathered feedback from customers and site staff on how the booking system can be further improved, which have shaped the design of this new system. Through the use of bookings the council can avoid the frustration of long queues at peak times and increase the overall throughput and efficiency of the service for residents.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Transport Strategy and Waste, Councillor Richard Smith said:

"During the last 16 months through the pandemic, it was important that we managed access to Suffolk's Recycling Centres in a safe and organised fashion to ensure the safety of residents visiting to recycle their waste as well as that of our staff and contractors working on site. I am very pleased that sites are now back to full capacity and the new booking system will allow us to make adjustments to the system to make best use of all available slots at every site.

"The system has been developed with our customers in mind, with staff taking on board the views and comments received through regular customer feedback and interactions over the past year. Our site teams have done a great job in maintaining high levels of customer service during such difficult circumstances and as we begin to recover from Covid as a county. I am pleased to launch this new online service to help people access the services they need, when and how they want to."

To make your booking, visit suffolkrecycling.org.uk.



Suffolk demonstrates commitment to Climate Emergency through Public Sector Leaders Group

Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders committed to delivering the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan.

Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders committed to accelerate efforts across the county towards delivering the Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan that will set Suffolk on the path for carbon neutrality by 2030.

A key forthcoming campaign will focus on helping people understand what simple changes they can make to their home to help reduce carbon emissions, including details of what help and support is available across Suffolk.

Chair of Suffolk Public Sector Leaders, Councillor Suzie Morley said:

"Every organisation in Suffolk has its own plan to deliver against this important agenda, and as a group we are fully committed towards working collaboratively to address the Climate Emergency declared in 2019. The forthcoming COP26 event will be a significant moment in the race to achieve Net Zero for Suffolk, as well as its impact at national and international level. In the run-up to the conference, Suffolk has been hosting a number of different events to keep the climate emergency at the forefront of people's minds. Suffolk recently welcomed the Zero Carbon Tour, a roadshow led by an electric bus visiting places around the country on its way to COP26 in Glasgow.

"We are now investing this funding in a number of key projects including the delivery of a range of communication channels to inform and support Suffolk's residents so they find out how to access online services and resources to help us all make a positive change.

"Everybody can play their part in helping us achieve our Net Zero ambitions across the county." During the meeting, leaders also discussed the continued work of the Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund (SIGIF) which was established in September 2020 to support the investment in positive economic growth across Suffolk's towns and business communities.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the fund is providing a catalyst for Suffolk's economic recovery and investment support as part of Suffolk's public sector commitment to addressing many of the challenges that local businesses, individuals and communities are currently experiencing.

Since the fund began, it has supported 12 projects with over £1million, with more to follow as part of future allocations. The Fund is managed by Suffolk Growth on behalf of Suffolk Public Sector Leaders and the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership.

