Suffolk

Area Assessment

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oneplace

for an independent overview
of local public services

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Suffolk at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Suffolk. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from

- Green flag: Developing 'Green' technologies - wind and wave power
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Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

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The local area

Most of Suffolk is rural. There are some larger towns, notably Ipswich and Lowestoft. The county is diverse with some remote scattered rural villages and hamlets and there are nearly 40 miles of unspoilt coast. There are large areas of heath land. Distinctive features include the largest container port in Europe at Felixstowe, two nuclear power stations at Sizewell and some historic settlements such as Bury St Edmunds and there is an ancient burial ground at Sutton Hoo. Lowestoft and Ipswich still have working harbours. Newmarket is home to a famous horse racing course and the area surrounding it houses numerous training stables and studs.

People living in Suffolk generally enjoy a good quality of life. Suffolk has a

larger number of older people and fewer young people in comparison with other areas. It has a population of 715,700 in seven districts. These districts are Waveney, Suffolk Coastal, Ipswich, Mid Suffolk, Babergh, St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath. Some pockets of Suffolk are deprived including parts of Ipswich and Lowestoft and there is poverty in some rural dispersed communities.

Suffolk's economy is under developed. Modern businesses are not attracted into the county. Poor transport in north Suffolk and a lack of housing that meets the needs of local people has been barriers in the past. But, external investment has helped businesses expand in some more urban towns.

The next section tells you how Suffolk's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Suffolk doing?

Delivering a Vibrant and Prosperous Economy

Large areas in Suffolk are economically under developed and there are not enough 'high value' jobs. Getting around the rural parts of the county is difficult. Businesses cannot access Broadband in some parts of the county and this is not commercially attractive. People cannot find the variety of jobs they need. Skills levels and wages are low in comparison to other areas. Although there is a Suffolk wide strategy to improve the economy, it is not owned by partners in Suffolk and misses out some opportunities, such as logistics. Economic development activity is fragmented across a range of organisations and prosperity is not spread throughout the county. Although there are a number of partnerships addressing economic development and addressing the economic downturn, there is no overarching leadership.

So only parts of Suffolk have been transformed in recent years and these are beginning to thrive. Growth areas in Suffolk such as Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds benefit from significant external funding. There are large scale plans to expand housing and business growth around Ipswich, Martlesham, Felixstowe and Bury St Edmunds. The appearance of Lowestoft's town centre has been improved with better traffic flows and is set to grow, although this will mean a lot of regeneration. Felixstowe port expansion and regeneration is beginning to take shape with significant housing growth planned to the west around Felixstowe, Martlesham and the Trimley villages.

Learning and skills outcomes

Improvements in test and examination results for pupils aged 11 and 16 have slowed in recent years. Performance has fallen to well below that in similar areas and the rest of England, for 11 year olds.

The proportion of good secondary schools is in line with the national average, but lower than in similar areas. A significant number of middle schools form

part of secondary provision in Suffolk. None of these is judged to be outstanding (by OfSTED) and a smaller proportion is good compared to high schools.

The proportion of good or better post 16 provision both in school sixth forms and further education colleges is lower than found in similar areas and nationally.

Skills levels are low in Suffolk. There are higher than average numbers of people with literacy and numeracy difficulties and the picture is the same with the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training. More people participated in courses in the last year but the drop out rate was high. There are fewer diploma courses available in Suffolk than in other areas. More, recently there has been a good partnership approach to addressing skills levels in Suffolk but there is still a long way to go.

Greening Suffolk

Partners are forging ahead successfully in finding 'green' solutions in Suffolk. The North Sea is providing an excellent source for wind and wave powered energy. Lowestoft is fast becoming a 'centre of excellence' for re-newable energy with European funding to help. Offshore, Greater Gabbard wind farm is being constructed that will provide electricity equivalent to all the homes in Suffolk. If given the go ahead by government, Sizewell nuclear power station will contribute further to sustainable energy.

Every opportunity is taken to look at re-cycling and waste management processes to ensure that they are sustainable. New public buildings are designed to achieve the maximum possible energy conservation. There are examples in districts of insulation projects for vulnerable households and heating in council houses changed to re-newable sources. Wood chip boilers are being installed where heating systems in schools need replacing.

Green travel solutions are preferred in Suffolk. In the major urban areas of Lowestoft and Ipswich there are ambitious plans for cycle routes, more buses and improved pedestrian access. Elsewhere in Suffolk, businesses are encouraged to develop schemes for shared car journeys and many schools have their own 'green' plans for children.

Ensuring people are safe

Suffolk is one of the safest counties in the country with relatively low levels of crime. Generally, people get on well with one another in Suffolk and public bodies are aware of communities that get on less well. Local people show a high level of confidence in the police to keep them safe. Crime detections are increasing. Re-offending rates have reduced including repeat incidents of domestic violence. Chaotic families whose behaviour and lifestyles lead them into conflict with the police are closely monitored and helped to resolve social problems. Street prostitution in Ipswich is almost eliminated because of good partnership working. The police recognise that more could be done to keep the public informed about local crime and policing issues including the way they manage dissatisfied customers.

But, at weekends too many young men cause trouble because of heavy drinking in pubs and clubs, particularly in Ipswich, Lowestoft and Newmarket. And, although sexual assaults declined by 8% in 2008/09, serious sexual assualts rose by 16%. Conviction rates for rape are among the lowest in the country. The Police are developing an approach to rape and serious sexual offences investigation.

Ensuring people are healthy

Across Suffolk people generally enjoy better health than the rest of the country. But, significant health inequalities (where people's life expectancy is lower than elsewhere in the county) exist in Ipswich, Lowestoft and in some of the isolated rural areas. Partners have a good understanding of the health needs of people in vulnerable circumstances and funding is being directed to those areas and groups.

A large range of health prevention activities is being provided across Suffolk but these are not co-ordinated and this leads to gaps particularly in rural areas. People in Suffolk have a different experience of healthcare, dependant on where they live. Access is patchy in isolated areas to both health and to social care. Patients discharged from Ipswich Hospital are more likely not to have appropriate care arranged for them quickly enough. People with mobility problems or who need their homes adapted are not always being dealt with quickly to help them live independently.

Ensuring that communities are inclusive

Public services partnerships fully understand their communities. Information and data are readily shared and there is a wide range of consultation. To help improve inclusion and cohesion there is a dedicated partnership, made up of different interested organisations and groups. Although this partnership is good at working with specific vulnerable groups, it has been less successful in influencing decisions taken by other partnerships. A key weakness is that these other partnerships are not completely representative of local communities. This means that they therefore do not always consider cultural sensitivity when designing and delivering services. Some local partnerships and delivery partnerships do not always have health colleague representatives present which again represents a weakness.

About Suffolk

A recent survey shows that in Suffolk 86 per cent of people are satisfied with their immediate local area as a place to live. This is higher than the average for similar areas and higher than the national average of 81 per cent.

People living in Suffolk generally enjoy a good quality of life with most of them enjoying good health and low crime. In 2008, 86 per cent of the population said they were happy with where they lived. Retired people were even more content. In a recent survey (Place Survey 2008) local residents show significantly higher satisfaction with police, fire, GP services, dentists and hospitals than the rest of the country and east of England. However there are

some variations across the county.

Suffolk is a largely rural county covering 1,468 square miles in the east of England. The county has no motorways. The A12 and A14 provide access to London and to the north of the country and these are major transport routes for goods using Felixstowe port. There are around 322,300 homes in the county and the average house price in April 2009 was £141,826.

Suffolk has a long 40 mile coastline, some of which is at risk of coastal erosion and flooding. The coastline is largely unspoilt. Some parts of the county are quite remote; these often attract second home owners. Because of the remote nature of parts of the county, rural transport is an issue and residents have some problems getting to local services. Access to health and social care is often a problem in the rural areas. As a result, in 2008, fewer rural residents in Suffolk felt healthy than in other counties.

The countryside is very varied. Much of the environment is protected and some wildlife sites are of international importance. Many buildings are protected with almost 6,500 listed buildings of national historical importance.

Suffolk has a large number of older people in comparison with other areas and this is set to grow further. The number of older people has already grown by 6 per cent from 2001. Suffolk Coastal district has seen the biggest growth in older people. The age profile of the county is older than for England as a whole, with an average age of 40.3 compared to 38.6. There are more people over 55 and fewer children and young people (18.5 per cent) than the national average. People over the age of 85 make up 2.7 per cent of the population. An ageing population increases demands for social services and healthcare, particularly for dementia care. So this is a real challenge for the future at a time of restraint in public sector finances.

In recent years there has been an increase in migrant workers from Europe and elsewhere. However, Suffolk residents have less diverse backgrounds than other parts of the region with only 6 per cent of the population from minority ethnic communities (according to the 2001 Census). The largest group of foreign nationals is Americans living in Forest Heath district to service the US Airbases. There is a growing number of people settling in Suffolk from abroad. The largest numbers of Polish people manly live in Ipswich and Forest Heath and this is a larger number than the rest of the region. There are also significant Gypsy and Traveller communities that have their own unique needs. They live mainly on four sites in Ipswich, Kessingland, Mildenhall and Elmswell.

Some pockets of Suffolk are deprived. These areas include the Whitton, Priory Heath and Gainsborough wards in Ipswich; Kirkley, Harbour, Normanston and St Margaret's in Lowestoft and some rural communities. In Ipswich and Lowestoft, people suffer higher crime rates (particularly alcohol related crime) poorer educational achievement and lower life expectancy. But in Suffolk as a whole many neighbourhoods are relatively well off.

In July 2009 3.2% of working age population were claiming Job Seekers' Allowance which is below the regional and national figures. Suffolk has one of the highest overall employment rates in the country. But the economic downturn is having an effect and over 3,000 redundancies were recorded in Suffolk between October 2008 and April 2009. Ipswich has the highest

number out of work but Forest Heath and Babergh districts have the highest increase since the beginning of the year, with Haverhill South also suffering.

Average earnings are lower than the regional and national average at £23,774 (2008). This is contributing to relatively high levels of 'fuel poverty' (where more than 10% of income is spent on fuel). But average house prices tend to be lower overall when compared to the rest of England at £141,569 (June 2009). People working in Suffolk are employed largely in public administration (26%), distribution (24%), banking (16%) and manufacturing (12%).

Suffolk's economy has a higher than average number of small and very small businesses. There are plans to regenerate some areas such as Lowestoft, Stowmarket and Haverhill with significant growth expected around Ipswich. Attracting the right mix of businesses will be critical to improving these areas. Major companies in Suffolk currently include British Sugar, BT, Adnams, Bird's Eye Ltd., Bosch, Greene King, William Clowes, AXA and Wisdom.

Suffolk has the biggest container port in the country located in Felixstowe. There are two USAF bases at Lakenheath and Mildenhall and two nuclear power stations at Sizewell. Newmarket has horseracing and blood stock industries as part of its character. Tourism is a vital part of the economy attracting many visitors. Suffolk as a place to live is actively promoted by ‘Choose Suffolk', Suffolk's own development agency. Tourism campaigns show Suffolk's rich picture of heritage sites, wildlife and good quality attractions and venues.

How well do priorities for Suffolk express community needs and aspirations?

Local public services, or 'partners', in Suffolk have a long tradition of working together. Targets and priorities in 2007 were jointly agreed using good evidence and performance information to understand local needs. A formal agreement called the 'Local Area Agreement' sets these out in full and there is a structure of nine delivery partnerships that work together to meet these targets. The 'Suffolk Observatory' helps this process by collecting and updating a full range of social and economic statistics. Local needs are understood and this helps planning to meet future social and healthcare requirements.

Partners know which parts of the county are most deprived and the problems that need to be tackled. Investment is targeted to match partnership priorities and is focused on Ipswich, Lowestoft, Sudbury, Haverhill, Felixstowe and Brandon. But less thought has gone into addressing rural deprivation and associated fuel poverty, although the partnership commissioned a study to look at this. As a result, services in these remote rural areas are patchier.

Overall, priorities match community needs in most areas. But, there has not been enough focus on improving educational achievement over the past few years. As a result, tests and examination results for 11 and 16 year olds are disappointing and the gap in performance in Suffolk is making it fall further

behind than in similar areas.

Consultation on schools re-organisation is currently underway following excellent research published by consultants into problems created by middle school provision in Suffolk. This consultation and engagement has been carried out in phases and has been extensive to date. However, the programme may have to be reviewed in the light of the impact of impending government uncertainty on the 'building schools for the future' capital programme which is linked into plans for schools re-organisation.

A good variety of ways to reach different groups are used in Suffolk. Districts are very good at working with town and parish councils and setting up area forums in local communities. Community Boards are being piloted in areas such as Ipswich and Mid Suffolk to help identify local issues and agree how budgets should be spent to tackle them. This local consultation is helped by information from strong and vocal voluntary and community groups which is called 'One Voice', a panel of older people 'PoPs' and a panel of local residents called 'Suffolk Speaks'. There are a variety of different ways that partners engage with children and young people including 'Young Voices' for looked after children and 'Brighter Futures'.

Despite this work, Suffolk residents do not have strong views about their ability to influence decision making. In a recent survey, only an average number felt they could influence decision making about their local area compared to similar councils.

Public health consultation has been very effective and health needs are known in each of the districts. Vulnerable people are involved in identifying health needs in most areas of healthcare. This has been strengthened this year through consultation with people with mental health problems and their carers, and also with people affected by the recession. Substantial funding has been made available for health prevention, focusing on smoking cessation, preventing cardio-vascular deaths and bringing down teenage conception rates in Ipswich and Lowestoft.

Priorities may not be focused as well as they might on older people. Residents expressed mixed views in a recent survey as to whether there is enough support for older people. Within Suffolk as a whole, survey results were similar to other councils. However, feelings vary across the county. For example, in Suffolk Coastal and Waveney districts, residents think there isn't enough support and services to help older people remain in their own homes. This is important as in Suffolk the number of older people is set to rise.

Not enough attention is being paid to the needs of diverse groups in Suffolk despite the care taken to consult and the work of a dedicated partnership. Because decisions are taken without sufficient representation from vulnerable groups, some services may not be sufficiently culturally sensitive.

Consultation with voluntary organisations is similarly not as effective as it could be, so very local priorities could be missed. For example, a lot of effort is made by agencies, councils and other bodies to consult with the voluntary sector but this overloads them and they are frustrated that local issues are not always understood. Engagement with the voluntary sector needs to be better organised and more focused. This is important because design of local services may not match need.

Delivering a Vibrant and Prosperous Economy

Red flag: Rural economic inequality and lack of 'high value' jobs

Although there is a Suffolk wide strategy to improve the economy, it is not fully owned by partners in Suffolk and misses out some opportunities, such as logistics. There is no clear and united approach to economic development across the whole of Suffolk. This has meant that there is fragmented economic activity and focus. Decisions about external funding have not helped rural economic development because of a focus on ‘growth' areas (Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds) and on Lowestoft, a priority area for re-generation. Therefore, whereas parts of Suffolk will continue to grow and expand, rural areas will not.

High value jobs in rural Suffolk are limited. There are fewer career opportunities for young people in Suffolk because many of the businesses are traditional, small or medium sized. Ipswich, Martlesham and Bury St Edmunds have a wider variety of jobs than elsewhere in the county. Generally, the county has few ‘knowledge-based' or technological industries. This makes it difficult for people living in rural villages who typically get traditional unskilled jobs that are relatively low paid.

Getting around is difficult in parts of the county. Investment in road infrastructure has been insufficient in the past and there are poor transport connections especially in the north of the county. There are high levels of congestion along the A12 and A14. The Copdock interchange to the south of Ipswich is particularly congested at peak times. Rural transport in some of the dispersed communities is poor.

What's being done in response?

There are no plans currently to provide overall leadership and co-ordination for economic development across Suffolk. Activity is siloed, fragmented and concentrated on 'growth' areas. Whereas a range of partnerships work together to try to make some areas in Suffolk more economically viable, these are interested primarily in making their own plans work. This approach will not address economic inequality across Suffolk, make more 'high value' jobs available everywhere or boost rural economies.

Discussions are taking place about the improvements which are needed. We will update this section with more information when this is agreed.

Delivering a Vibrant and Prosperous Economy

Ipswich and Martlesham are the most successful economies in Suffolk with a higher number of large modern industries and research based companies such as BT. Newmarket has a unique focus on horse racing and horse breeding. Tourism is quite successful throughout Suffolk but particularly along the coast.

In many districts, partners have acted proactively to try to attract inward investment and to develop their own strategies, with limited external funding to enhance market towns like Stowmarket, Newmarket, Mildenhall, Haverhill, Halesworth and Framlingham. As a result, there are many incubator units for new businesses but these are generally small businesses that cannot offer large numbers of 'high value' jobs.

Low levels of skills and qualifications in young people leaving school make it difficult for them to gain employment with more modern industries such as research institutes and computer-based companies, of which there are few in Suffolk. There are also insufficient work related training opportunities.

While increasing numbers of young people are completing apprenticeships, success rates for NVQs are below the national average. The achievement of level 2 qualifications (the equivalent to five higher grade GCSEs) by young people from lower income families is good so the gap with their peers is smaller than average. However, their achievement of level 3 qualifications (the equivalent to two 'A' level passes) is not as good as elsewhere, so the gap with their peers is larger. Slightly more young people from low income backgrounds go on to higher education than in similar areas, but not as many as do nationally.

Getting around the county is difficult in parts of the county. Investment in road infrastructure has not been sufficient in the past and there are poor transport connections especially in the north of the county with a single track rail service from Ipswich to Lowestoft. The A12 access to Lowestoft is slow and narrow through rural villages. There are high levels of congestion along the A12 and A14 and the Copdock interchange to the south of Ipswich is particularly congested at peak times. Rural transport in some of the dispersed communities is poor. Local people are significantly less satisfied with the availability of local buses and information about local transport than other parts of the country (Place survey 2008). This reflects the isolation of a large part of the rural area.

Partners have campaigned hard for the A11 to be made into a dual carriageway from Thetford down to the A14 and advanced plans are in place for this to happen. Transport is not quite so difficult the nearer you get to Cambridge, although people living in remote villages still struggle in that part of the county.

Some local schemes, such as along the Wilford peninsular where local people can request transport, are beginning to make an impact at a very local level. Suffolk ACRE, a voluntary organisation has provided mopeds for young people in some rural areas for travel to work and training but this is patchy and funding is becoming a problem. Much more needs to be done to ensure that people can get around in Suffolk.

Action has been taken to by partners across Suffolk to address the effects of the economic downturn. Financial support has been provided for businesses, including small businesses and those in rural areas. Payment of invoices has been quicker so that local businesses can operate within tight finacial frameworks. Funding for Citizen's Advice Bureaux and volunteering organisations has been increased so that vulnerable people and job seekers can have access to advice and support. Credit unions have been developed in West Suffolk. Local colleges have been giving targeted support to people to

make their skills more relevant to the local job market.

People on low incomes whose salary is around an eighth of the cost of a house in Suffolk, struggle to afford to buy their own homes. This is particularly a problem for young people wanting to stay in Suffolk. Recent housing market and needs assessments have been undertaken and these recognise that there is an increasing demand for affordable housing. The proportion of affordable homes provided differs significantly between the districts with Ipswich having the highest proportion at 22.3 per cent and Suffolk Coastal having the lowest at 10.86 per cent. In Suffolk Coastal there are high numbers of second homes. This is having an impact on the viability of small local shops and pubs in the villages.

Housing affordability varies across the county. Regional planning policy expects 35 per cent of all new housing in the region to be affordable. However, it allows districts to set local targets where this can be justified. So local targets for affordable housing have been identified everywhere and some have been exceeded, as in Ipswich, St Edmundsbury and Mid Suffolk districts. Planning constraints in rural areas have not been helpful in Suffolk and local councils struggle to find appropriate sites and bring forward ‘exception' or ‘green-field' sites. Ipswich is running out of suitable land on which to build housing. The focus in Waveney on housing has been limited in the past.

Many rural social homes are in poor condition with 6% of them having no central heating. There is a lack of gas supplies in some rural areas and because of low incomes, fuel poverty (where more than 10% of income is spent on heating) is a real problem.

Learning and skills outcomes

Red flag: Learning and skills outcomes

Children and young people are not as successful in schools and colleges in Suffolk as they are in similar areas. Over time, school results in Suffolk are not showing steady improvement for 11 and 16 year olds. At the end of their first year of formal schooling, pupils in Suffolk perform less well than pupils in similar areas and nationally. The gap between the lowest achieving children and the rest is wider than in similar areas. By the time children are 11, their test results place Suffolk in the bottom 10% nationally. Pupils from low income families and those with special educational needs perform particularly poorly.

By 16 years old, test results for young people in Suffolk have improved compared with the national average but they still do not do well compared with pupils in similar areas. In 2008, results in Suffolk fell, in contrast to the national trend. And for the first time GCSE results here were below the national average. There are a variety of schools in Suffolk. For pupils living in the west and parts of the north of the county there are primary schools for 5 to 9 year olds, middle schools for pupils aged 9 to13 and upper and high schools for pupils aged 13 to 18 and for those in the rest of the north of the county and in the south of the there are infant schools (5 to 7), junior schools (7 to 11), primary schools (5 to 11) and high schools (11 to 16 or 11 to 18).

OfSTED inspections show that the number of good middle schools is comparatively low although the proportion of good secondary schools is in line with the national average but lower than similar areas. The number of schools failing to reach the government's minimum standard for 11 year olds has increased recently in Suffolk whereas nationally it has been reducing. However, fewer upper and high schools are falling below the minimum expected.

Fewer 16 to 18 year olds in Suffolk are in education, employment or training than in similar areas or in the rest of England. An average number of 16 year olds continue in learning, but too many have discontinued by the time they are 17. Lack of community transport, suitable courses not being available and not enough work related training are some of the reasons given for this. The proportion of school sixth forms or further education colleges in Suffolk judged good or better by OfSTED is lower than found in similar areas and nationally. However, those young people who do continue with their learning achieve relatively well. The numbers getting these qualifications are not increasing as quickly as elsewhere. Without these qualifications young people will not be able to go to university and career opportunities are limited.

Skills levels are low in Suffolk. There are higher than average numbers of people with literacy and numeracy difficulties. More people are participating in courses in the last year but the drop out rate is high. There are also fewer numbers of diploma courses available in Suffolk than in other areas.

What's being done in response?

Suffolk's major challenge is to establish and maintain a momentum of improvement to catch up with progress made in other areas. Suffolk is planning to improve results in schools by removing middle schools so that pupils transfer school after taking their tests at age 11. The re-organisation also plans to create new sixth forms and remove surplus school places which means Suffolk will no longer be spending money on unfilled school places. Building work at a number of schools is already well under way but unfortunately Suffolk's plans will have to be reviewed in some parts of the county to take account of uncertainties in government funding from 2011. Partners remain committed to schools reorganisation and are reviewing timeframes. If the re-organisation is put back in some areas in Suffolk, this may have an impact on improving school results. Suffolk also faces a major piece of work to re-train teachers for their roles in the new schools whilst coping with the transition. The County's School Improvement Service is revising its approaches and engagement with schools to respond to the challenges. It is, however, difficult to see how Suffolk will get the improvements in pupils' results needed in the short to medium term.

Discussions are taking place about the improvements which are needed. We will update this section with more information when this is agreed.

Learning and skills outcomes

Children and young people are not as successful in school and college in Suffolk as they are in similar areas. This is despite OfSTED judging pre-school settings as very good and Children's Centres being well established in the more deprived areas of Suffolk with services being provided to families in rural

areas.

The inspection by OfSTED of children's services in 2007 judged the local authority's actions to raise standards at age 11 as adequate and the likelihood of further improvement as good. Unfortunately this has not been realised.

Children living in some areas of Suffolk such as Woodbridge and Martlesham do well but in Ipswich and Lowestoft pupils' achievement is consistently poor in comparison with the national average. So pockets of poor educational attainment remain in the county, making it difficult for all children to reach their maximum potential.

The achievement of all ethnic groups, except Chinese, at both age 11 and 16 is below average. It is particularly poor for pupils of white, Asian, or mixed heritage. The achievement of pupils from low income families at age 11 is lower than in similar areas and has been much lower than the national average for the last three years. At age 16 their achievement matches that of pupils in similar areas, but is lower than that in the rest of England.

Overall the number of schools judged by OfSTED as ‘good' and ‘outstanding' is higher than the national average but middle schools get far lower inspection scores. Investment in improving schools has been low in comparison with other areas. But a new senior appointment in the Schools Improvement Service has now been made to concentrate on improving school performance.

The proportion of children and young people in Suffolk who are in the care of the local authority is greater than in similar areas. The number has increased since 2007 despite Suffolk investing in services to prevent the need for children to be taken into care. The number of these children who are now placed more than 20 miles away from home has also increased. The achievement of children in care at age 11 was good in 2009, attendance is carefully monitored and is similar to the national average. The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training is lower than in similar areas.

There are increasing numbers of young people aged 16 to 18 not in employment education or training, and far more than is seen in similar areas. Partners in Suffolk recognise the need to reduce these numbers. Adult skills levels are low with a high number of people with poor numeracy and literacy levels. The take up of ‘Train to Gain' is higher than average but is being limited by a lack of places. There are now 7 learning centres in market towns to help people over 16 find suitable courses and places to study. Local businesses are being encouraged to train their staff and adult skill levels are improving. But this is from a low base and in comparison with other areas, workforce skills are still below average. While an increasing number of young people are completing apprenticeships, success rates in recognised qualifications gained by age 19 are below the national average. Young people from lower income families do less well in the qualifications they achieve by age 19 than poorer pupils nationally.

Greening Suffolk

Green flag: Coastal protection in Bawdsey

People who live along Suffolk's Heritage coastline are protected by tailored plans in case of flooding or erosion. There is an effective Partnership that has risk assessed all villages and hamlets. As part of the plans, in some places the sea defences will be maintained or rebuilt at public expense. However not everywhere can be protected in this way, especially small settlements.

The village of Bawdsey was one of those places where public funding of sea defences couldn't be justified. However, local people and Suffolk Coastal District Council took the unusual and, at first sight, surprising step of allowing more development in the affected area using part of the proceeds from that development to fund improved sea defences. Innovative planning exception permission on green belt land was given. Local landowners used the land to develop housing and used the capital receipts to fund enhanced coastal protection where external government funding has been limited. Local people have been empowered to take action to protect their farming lands.

Green flag: Developing 'Green' technologies - wind and wave power

Partners in Suffolk are helping meet the national need to generate more renewable energy, creating opportunities for the establishment of new industries and jobs for local people. They have taken advantage of proposals for wind and wave power off the Suffolk coast to encourage new companies to move into in the Lowestoft area and thus provide a good jobs and new opportunities for local people in a previously declining area with low employment.

When complete the 140 wind turbines costing £650m will produce as much renewable electricity (500 MW) for the national grid as Suffolk already uses. And they will need a network of supporting businesses to build and maintain them, such as a heliport.

To support the emerging new industry, partners, including Airtricity a major partner in the development of the wind and wave technologies, helped establish the Orbis Energy Centre. This is a hub for renewable wind, wave and tidal power businesses across the East of England. There are already 400 offshore and energy related companies in and around Lowestoft area. Suffolk now has nearly 8000 jobs in the energy sector, (which is 2.7% of the total workforce, compared with a regional average of 0.6%).

The presence of such a strong core of expertise should act as a catalyst for the development of similar related industries, such as energy from waste, and plans for the area are designed to encourage this to happen, including links to European partners. European funding (£3.6 million) has been awarded to pilot practical, local and innovative solutions to the energy problems facing communities and businesses and help reduce energy use.

300 businesses are already linked in to the University Campus in Suffolk and Lowestoft College so that training for local people can be targeted at the new technologies to support this growth. Future learning opportunities will include skills needed to build and maintain the new wind and wave technologies

Greening Suffolk

The Greenest County partnership is enthusiastic, energetic and is successfully engaging with all sectors in Suffolk. It aims to achieve a 60% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2025. It has a wide ranging plan including actions on climate change and enhancing the local environment. Some actions are already having an impact, such as the installation of wood chip boilers in schools and re-wilding of Dunwich.

Partners in Suffolk are taking action to protect the environment and save energy. There are numerous examples of schemes adopted by business, schools and local communities that are contributing to carbon reduction. Funds are given to local 'green' projects across Suffolk. There is support and funding for bio-diversity schemes and coasts and heath land is protected and enhanced for people to enjoy.

Other sources of energy are exploited by partners through other new build projects such as the new University Campus site in Ipswich and the new Public Sector Village at Bury St Edmunds. In Hadleigh, the Beaumont School has been built to a high specification to be energy efficient. The Apex, a public building in the new shopping Centre in Bury St Edmunds, is another example of good building design. It will use geothermal energy when it opens in 2010. ‘Suffolk One', the new sixth form college outside Ipswich is being built to use green energy sources and will also open in 2010.

Local schools play their part in renewable energy sources. There are 145 eco schools in Suffolk with children contributing towards saving energy and conserving natural resources. School boilers coming to the end of their lives, are replaced by wood chip boilers. Future plans include further building projects that will use alternative sources of energy, such as the new build schools in the building schools for the future programme.

District councils work hard to ensure that energy is used effectively, as well as providing insulation programmes for vulnerable families to help people on low incomes use their money wisely. Heat source pumps are used for some council house heating. Mid Suffolk District Council has supported Orwell Housing Association to build an affordable housing scheme at Elmswell Clayfields that uses solar energy.

Nuclear energy sources are well established at Sizewell with plans to expand. If the government selects Sizewell as an additional site, 5,500 new jobs will be created in the construction phase.

Road traffic schemes are concentrated on making town centres such as Lowestoft and Ipswich as free of traffic as possible through the use of cycle routes. Partners work with local businesses and schools to introduce and ‘green' travel plans.

Waste management, including re-cycling performance across Suffolk is excellent. All councils in Suffolk have contributed well to an overarching waste management strategy and plan, and as a result have sustained one of the best rates of waste management in the country for a number of years. There are advanced plans to introduce an 'energy from waste' scheme in 2014 to prevent more waste being sent to landfill sites and to provide alternative energy. This is important because the landfill sites are becoming full.

Ensuring people are safe

Green flag: Tackling Street prostitution in Ipswich

Late in 2006, five women were murdered in Ipswich. After a major investigation a local man was arrested and convicted of these offences. He is now serving a long term prison sentence.

The murderer's imprisonment might have represented a conclusion to these tragic events. But partners including the police, the two councils (Suffolk County Council and Ipswich Borough Council) and the Iceni Project (an award winning charity) have worked to ensure that Ipswich is unlikely to experience similar events again and have improved the lives of many vulnerable women, their families.

Police investigations had linked these tragic events to street prostitution. Working together, partners have been extremely effective in supporting vulnerable sex workers in seeking access to rehabilitation, training and housing. The work includes countering drug addiction, giving the women advice and support to gain employment, housing support and advice, counselling and complementary therapies. Out of the twenty five or so sex workers originally on the street at the time of the murders, 23 have been helped get better lives for themselves. One hundred and twenty other women have been supported under the programme since 2007. The partnership has been strengthened this year to deal with ‘off street' sexual exploitation. There are currently no women working permanently on the streets in Ipswich and as a result kerb crawling has significantly decreased.

Ensuring people are safe

Suffolk is one of the safest counties in the country with relatively low levels of crime. Local people have a high level of confidence in the police to keep them safe but more can be done. But a recent inspection by HMIC on the 'Policing Pledge' found that Suffolk Constabulary weren't effectively using their web site to keep the public informed about progress on local priorities or how the force had tried to find out what updates the community wanted and how they wanted to receive this information. Systems to capture and analyse cases of minor dissatisfaction were also found to be inadequate.

Ipswich has the highest crime rates at around 30 per cent of the whole of Suffolk. Safer neighbourhood teams have been strengthened over the past year and each has its own area related priorities and these partnerships are very effective. But Partnership funding has not been targeted to support deprived areas that suffer from relatively higher crime figures.

Agencies are not as prepared as they might be to deal with referrals concerning keeping adults safe. Recent inspection has revealed some weaknesses in referral practices, training and awareness.

Targets to deal with the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on the roads are being met but this remains a concern. This is despite some innovative work by the Road Safety Partnership to try to educate young

people in programmes like ‘Road Kill' and ‘Learn to Live'. It is an important aspect of the Suffolk partners' work. Partners have been effective at reducing the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents in the last two years.

Services for safeguarding children in the care of the local authority were judged to be good in 2007. Since then inspections have identified that fostering and adoption services are good and private fostering arrangements are outstanding.

Improvements in the proportion of children at risk who are referred to social care going onto the first stage of child protection assessment have been maintained so performance is well above the national figure and better than in similar areas. The number of initial assessments carried out within the required timescale continues to improve and is just above similar areas. Extra support is being targeted at families where domestic abuse or substance misuse may be putting children at risk. Many more children are the subject of a child protection plan in Suffolk than in similar areas. Nevertheless, all child protection plans are reviewed on time and this high performance has been maintained for the last six years. Although the proportion of plans lasting two or more years was high in 2008, it has reduced significantly over the last year and is now well below average. However, recently more children have become the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time than is the case nationally.

Activities and support is available for young people. ‘Positive Futures' has helped 286 young people at risk of offending with physical activities. ‘Lowestoft Together' has been a successful initiative that has engaged with young people in a deprived area that suffers from higher unemployment than other parts of Suffolk. External funding has been available to help the community, police and Waveney District Council to develop strategies to deal with young people without work or training. Skate parks have been successfully set up this year in North Lowestoft and in Felixstowe to give young people a chance to be active.

By most measures, the youth offending service works reasonably well. Young people sentenced to custody, re-offending rates and the number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time, are in line with averages found in similar areas. Preventative work through Youth Inclusion Support Panels has been successful in reconnecting young people at risk with mainstream education provision and leisure facilities. However, fewer than average young offenders have access to suitable accommodation and this could lead to re-offending.

At weekends, too many young men aged 18-25 become victims or cause trouble because of heavy drinking in local pubs and clubs mainly in Lowestoft, Ipswich and Newmarket. Serious violent alcohol related crime targets set by partners are projected to be missed by more than 10% this year (2008/09) because of a rise in incidents. Police and partners work hard to ensure young people are protected on the streets and that anti-social behaviour is dealt with quickly. A number of initiatives, led by local partners have been successful. Support for young carers, who are children looking after parents who abuse alcohol or drugs, has been successful. Local licensees have been trained to deal with aggressive behaviour and to take action when drinking is causing problems. At a Felixstowe club, an 'amnesty bin' for drugs is used so

that the club is kept safe from drugs. Hospital staff give advice to young people who sustain injuries whilst drinking including how to contact drug and alcohol teams. Partners are investing in additional community support officers to help keep order outside major clubs and pubs.

Domestic abuse, which has seen an increase of incidents in Newmarket, Lowestoft and Central Ipswich since the economic downturn, is a focus for partners. Recent investment has provided a web-site for vulnerable women to access support.

Suffolk uses the Specialist Domestic Violence Court model for dealing with crimes of domestic violence and this model is in place in Ipswich and District, Western Area and North East Magistrates. The service now has a domestic abuse co-ordinator to oversee county-wide awareness raising, arrangements and multi agency responses.

Chaotic families whose behaviour and lifestyles lead them into conflict with the police and other authorities are closely monitored by partners. Information is collected and updated regularly to ensure that appropriate action is taken to help these families avoid trouble. Partners have recently agreed to the funding for further family intervention. Re-offenders and their families are regularly visited by a number of agencies and supported to try and resolve their social problems. As a result re-offending rates have reduced.

Fire safety in Suffolk is good. Almost all performance is very good in comparison with other counties and the cost represents good value for money. Suffolk's Fire and Rescue Service works with partners to improve community safety through ‘Homeshield'. This identifies homes at risk and works with residents to ensure fire alarms are fitted. The Fire and Rescue Service's performance is influenced by the rural nature of Suffolk and remoteness of some areas. This means that it sometimes takes longer to get to incidents so preventative work is carried out in these rural areas to reduce the risk.

Partners' response to emergencies in Suffolk has been excellent. Leadership has been very good. Support is given by a good emergency planning team. Suffolk has been able to deal effectively with a wide variety of incidents including potential flooding at Blytheburgh and foot and mouth outbreaks. However, only 17 per cent of the business community has a good understanding of business continuity requirements. So, if there was an emergency in Suffolk, some businesses could be seriously affected. There is a Business Continuity Forum where sharing best practice with a focus on small and medium enterprises and voluntary organisations.

Ensuring people are healthy

Across Suffolk people generally enjoy better health than the rest of the country. Mortality rates from all causes, and early deaths from heart diseases, stroke and cancer have fallen over the past 10 years especially in Mid Suffolk, Suffolk Coastal and Babergh. Rates of diabetes and heart disease are low in Suffolk generally but found more commonly in some black and Asian communities in Ipswich. But significant health inequalities (where people's life expectancy is lower than elsewhere in the county) exist in Ipswich and

Lowestoft.

Partners have a good understanding of the health needs of people in vulnerable circumstances and funding is being directed to those areas and groups.

People in Suffolk have different experiences of health care depending on where they live. For example, access to dental care is very good in Waveney, with one of the best access levels in the country whereas in the rest of the county, access is patchy. Up to date mental health wards are available in Waveney whereas in the rest of Suffolk, mental health patients have to use old unwelcoming wards.

GPs are supporting people with high intensity health needs in some relatively deprived areas such as Debenham, Saxmundham, Lowestoft and Ipswich. In Waveney, GP practices have good engagement with patients giving support and guidance with 82 per cent of practices being open during extended opening times. More local people are generally satisfied with access to GPs than in other areas.

Support for family carers is good with outreach services available. There is a family carers' helpline and special centres throughout Suffolk. Some family carer workers are co-located in GP surgeries such as in Deben, Ravenswood and Lowestoft to give tailored help and support as soon as it is needed.

Out of hours services are currently not working well enough and information is not been systematically shared to inform out of hours clinicians. Although a high percentage of patients expressed satisfaction with the service, there is patchy access, problems with communications and long waits, particularly in rural areas. This is made worse when 'Home First', which is a reablement service, that help keep people living at home independently, struggles to cope with occasional difficullties inarranging high intensity packages in some rural areas.

Significantly fewer children are active in Ipswich, Suffolk Coastal and Mid Suffolk. Children and young people's participation in high quality PE and sport matches the national average, but is lower than in similar areas and the rate of increase has been slower than elsewhere. Obesity amongst 5 and 11 year olds reduced between 2007 and 2008, in contrast to a rise in similar areas and nationally. However, obesity in young children varies across the county.

The development of effective Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) has been slower than in similar areas. In a recent survey children and young people in the county have indicated their emotional health is lower than that in the rest of England. A specialist consultant has been employed to improve and modernise the service this year. Access to CAMHS is variable, being the best in the north of the county. Different models of CAMHS operate in east and west Suffolk, so service users have differing experiences, both of the range of services available and the methods of assessment used to access them. Children with attention deficit hypertension disorder (ADHD) cannot access services for CAMHS quickly enough in most of Suffolk (apart from Waveney). Referrals take too long. Whereas a lot of work has been done to improve this, and recent investment has been made to reduce waiting times, this is a service that has not yet demonstrated sustainable outcomes.

Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been judged as good. A higher than average proportion of special schools or pupil referral units are judged as good or outstanding (by OfSTED). Good use is made of outreach services to enable children and young people to be included in main stream education. Suffolk is leading the way with an assessment unit for children with severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour in Lothingland through a successful partnership. This also provides outreach and community teams.

Overall, levels of teenage pregnancies are falling at a faster rate than average. But some parts of the county have rates comparable to the highest 20% in England and this remains a focus in Ipswich and Lowestoft. At both PCTs access to reproductive services failed to reach planned standards in 2008 and there are gaps in provision for HIV/AIDs.

People with learning difficulties are slow to move out of Ipswich Hospital. Although they will all be moved to more supported accommodation in the community in 2010, there are still a number waiting for alternative care. Some good training and volunteering opportunities for people with moderate learning difficulties are provided. For example, in the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket and the Scrap Store at Copdock.

Physical and cultural activity is promoted well in Suffolk. Local people from all groups can take part in a range of physical activity. This includes summer activities for children to help tackle obesity, and courses for people with mental health and alcohol problems. A range of activities is promoted for over 65 year olds for example, swimming, walking, cultural activities in libraries, and access to local gyms. Activity is targeting the most vulnerable and deprived areas but it is not coodinated enough to be sure that it is providing equal access for all.

There are strong third sector partnerships in Suffolk to help in improving health and preventing illness. For example 'Sustrans', a cycling charity is working in Suffolk to develop and promote cycle routes, encouraging healthier lifestyles. Disabled 'showcase' days are regularly organised by Optua, a local charity for disabled people and partners to encourage local people with disabilities to try out new sports. There are also bursaries available for disabled sports coaches to help improve take up. Partners in Suffolk are also working with Dance East to get as many vulnerable groups active as possible.

Patients are more likely to experience a delay to being discharged from Ipswich Hospital than other hospitals, due to the amount of time taken to put appropriate care arrangements in place. Where patients are discharged without these care arrangements, a high percentage of them are re-admitted. Although performance overall has improved, with good performance at West Suffolk Hospital and James Paget Hospital, Ipswich Hospital needs to think about the impact of discharging its patients where care arrangements are not in place. Hospital admissions for children caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries are consistently lower than in similar areas or nationally.

People with mobility problems or who need their homes adapted are not being dealt with quickly enough to help them live independently. Time taken for occupational assessments needs to improve as does the time taken to

approve disabled facilities grants. Partners are aware of the problem and are currently reviewing business processes to simplify the process. Suffolk County Council and health partners are looking at the potential to join up occupational health services to provide a more streamlined service for residents.

Ensuring that communities are inclusive

Just over 80 per cent of people in Suffolk believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together. Suffolk has given priority to ensuring inclusive communities. It is having success in some areas.

Consultation happens regularly across Suffolk and some of this is with specific vulnerable groups. Local partnerships are extremely good at getting close to their communities for example Suffolk Coastal and West Suffolk. Waveney and Ipswich have their own community forums. Community and voluntary organisations are engaged well through the 'One Voice Suffolk'. The 'Suffolk Speaks' panel of local residents ensures engagement with the wider community and has been very effective for a number of years. Needs are well known but minority groups do not always believe that changes have been made to proposals as a result of consultation. Overall the number of Suffolk residents who feel that they can influence decision making in their local area is average.

Some targeted work is being undertaken by the police in their joint work with the Ipswich and Suffolk Commission for Race Equality (ISCRE) to understand and address why high numbers of people from ethnic minority groups are stopped and searched. Black people are 6.3 times more likely to be stopped for drugs, by police (July 2009). Management action has been taken in cases where police have acted inappropriately and extensive training has been delivered as a result.

Attention has been given to accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers. Around 45 Gypsy and Traveller families have better standards at their West Meadows site as a result of recent refurbishment. The Gypsy and Traveller Steering Group is looking to identify additional sites to provide appropriate numbers of pitches. Specific help has been given to black minority ethnic children and gypsies and travellers' children to help them with success in school exams and to help them integrate.

The partnership has set up a specific group focussing on social inclusion and community cohesion which is designed to understand needs across whole sectors in Suffolk. It has separate interest groups and information gathered is fed into the work of other partnerships. The partnership engages well with different ethnic groups including asylum seekers and new emerging communities. But race equality issues are not always considered in service planning, design and delivery because of a lack of representation when making decisions.

Vulnerable people who need social housing or supported housing are not always adequately supported. 16,000 people are currently on the housing register, but there are nearly 4,500 long term empty properties, mainly in Waveney, Suffolk Coastal and Mid Suffolk districts. There are some gaps in

supported accommodation for young people in Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury districts. Waveney has less accommodation available than Ipswich to support people with mental health problems. This is important because adequate, safe housing is a fundamental need.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/

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