Spring newsletter

Updates from Knowing Works CIC

March 2026

Knowing Works®

New season, new name, same dedication.
We're excited to reintroduce ourselves as Knowing Works.

Welcome to our next chapter.

healthwatch Suffolk

Delivering your local Healthwatch

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Welcome to Knowing Works CIC
Our next chapter

Healthwatch Suffolk CIC has become Knowing Works CIC - a large membership social enterprise.

Knowing Works CIC delivers insights to include people's lived experiences in the shape and development of services, policy, and strategy across all sectors.

Although our name has changed, our company will remain a not-for-profit social enterprise, ensuring health and care commissioners, services, and businesses all have options for how they can independently seek people's views and lived experiences in the future.

Knowing Works CIC services will be building on well over a decade of experience in engagement, partnerships, research, service evaluation and authentic co-production. It will ensure health and care commissioners, services, and businesses all have options for how they can independently seek people's views and lived experiences in the future.

Wendy Herber (our Independent Chair) said:

> *"Knowing works when it's based on independence, honesty, trusted partnerships, and proven expertise. It works when we let people tell us what's important to them, and not just what is useful to those who ask. Knowing works, because guessing is an expensive waste".*

We'll add to:



200,000+ views gathered and anysed



Tens of thousands people engaged in communities



An array of impacts for the public, services, and commissioners.



A catalogue of published insights.

Dr Ed Garratt OBE DL (Chief Executive, Norfolk and Suffolk Integrated Care Board) said:

> *"Knowing Works CIC is an outstanding organisation and a thought leader.*

Knowing Works®

Sign-up for updates & insights at www.knowingworks.co.uk



“Knowing Works will continue to champion the ethos that has driven our work for more than a decade – a steadfast belief that the only way to shape effective support, businesses and services, is with those who need, provide and use them.”

Wendy Herber (Independent Chair)

Its Healthwatch foundations means it will continue to provide a moral compass, huge industry and represent the community with integrity and authenticity.”

What does this mean for our Healthwatch service?

Although our company name is changing, everything else about our Community Interest Company; our team, services, ethos, values, and everything that drives our work, remains firmly in place.

Our passion is, and will always be, in gathering lived experience and delivering projects that amplify voices and influence outcomes for communities, professionals, and the public.

People will still contact Healthwatch Suffolk in the same ways, discover our work and impact on the Healthwatch website, use our Feedback Centre to share experiences, and meet our team in communities across Suffolk.

The Healthwatch service will continue until the law establishing our network has been changed by Government.

The work we deliver as Knowing Works CIC will add to the impact of our Healthwatch service, ensuring people have a robust way to include their views and experiences in the shape and design of care and support.

We would like to say a big thank you to every one of our partners, members, and followers. It is only with your support that we can continue to achieve impact for people and communities in Suffolk, and beyond.



You will still find our Healthwatch team in local communities across Suffolk. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Bluesky, YouTube and LinkedIn for updates.

For more information about Knowing Works CIC, and to sign-up for updates, visit www.knowingworks.co.uk. We’ll be sharing our full website very soon.

Insights from Knowing Works
Young people's wellbeing



My Health, Our Future

Phase nine (2025)

We have published findings from Suffolk's biggest survey of young people.

Nearly 10,000 young people took part in My Health, Our Future in 2025, answering questions on their current mental health and related topics.

MHoF is a critical source of evidence for people working across the NHS, social care, and voluntary, community, and social enterprise sectors.

Commenting on the research, Wendy Herber (Independent Chair, Knowing Works CIC) said:

> *"MHoF is a flagship programme for our social enterprise in so many ways – an outstanding example of how robust evidence and lived experience can support so many people and professionals to make better decisions with and for young people".*

More than 20 schools and colleges took part in the survey last year. They received a bespoke report to help them tackle student wellbeing challenges, and target resources and support where it is needed most.

Findings also influence decision-making about support for young people across organisations and services, including those within the health, social care, and community sectors.

Findings snapshot

- On average, young people in Suffolk had lower levels of happiness and higher levels of anxiety than young people aged 16 to 24 across the UK.
- More than two in five students had seen or heard at least one form of potential sexual harassment.
- Just over half failed to get their recommended levels of sleep, and levels of sleep may be at the lowest we've recorded in our surveys.
- Bullying remains a primary concern of many young people, affecting their feelings of safety in communities.
- 1 in 10 felt they had little or no control at all over their futures.

Some key findings

Wellbeing
The average wellbeing of young people remains the same as we recorded in 2024 (see image below). This sustained increase since the pandemic is positive, but it can hide how young people's wellbeing differs across the county and between individuals.

Bullying
Bullying (31%) was the leading cause for feeling unsafe in communities, followed by knife crime (22%) and gang activity (21%). For 70% of students who described their gender another way, homophobia or transphobia was a primary concern.

Social Media
Our data shows young people are using social media more than they were six years ago. On a school or college night in 2018, 38% were using it for four hours or more. This increased to 46% in 2025. Wellbeing data shows a decline in wellbeing with more time spent on social media.

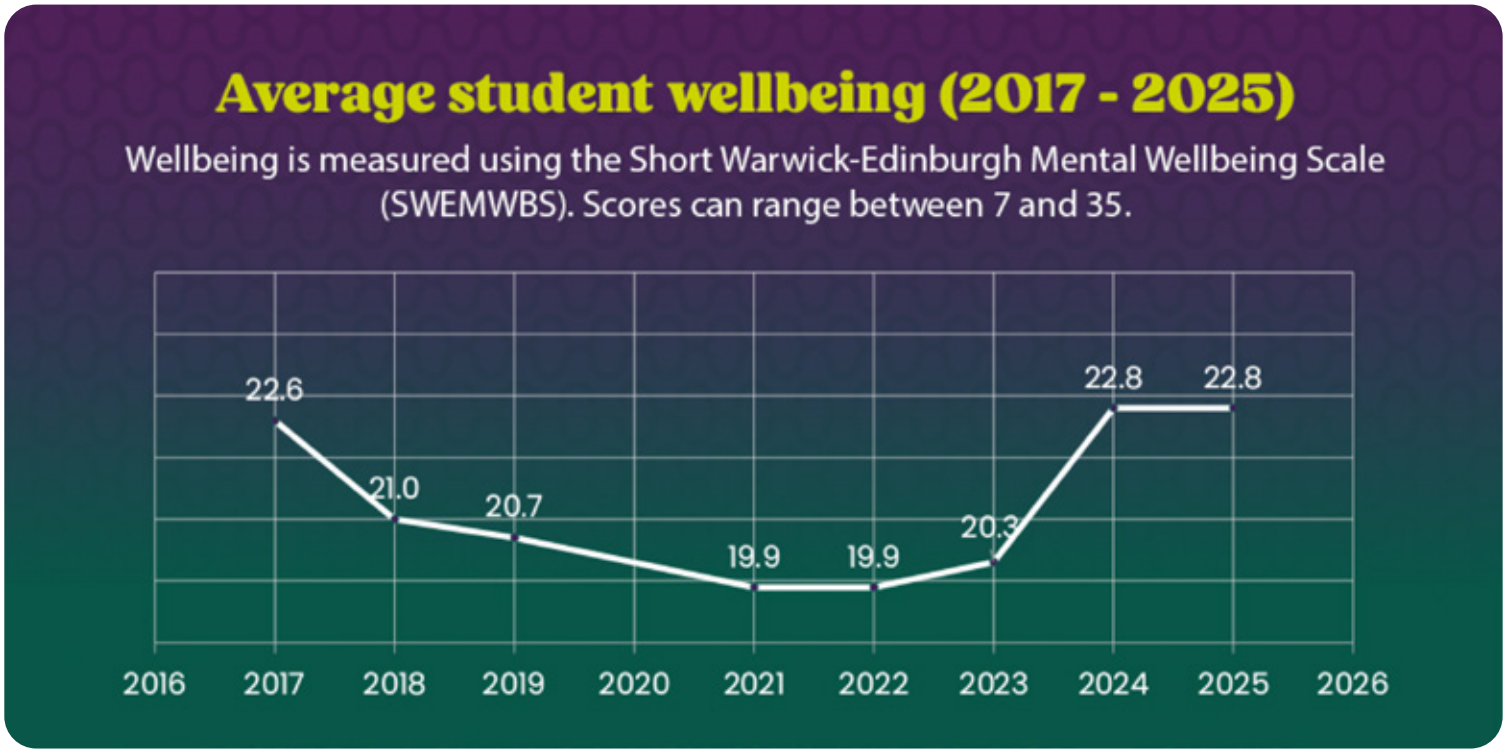
Nicotine Use
Most (88%) young people had not used nicotine products in the last month. Among those who had, the largest proportion said they had vaped (11%).

Careers
Almost two thirds in Year 9 and above were concerned about finding a suitable or stable job in their future.

Find our full report

Our report includes many more insights and detailed analysis. Visit www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/mhof to find it, and to explore our programme of work.

> **"The MHOF survey continues to play a vital role in driving change across our system. The voices and experiences of young people must remain at the centre of this work".**
>
> **NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board**



Young people with SEND
Please share views

How well is Suffolk preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities for their adulthood?



We have been working with the Local Area Partnership for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk to ask young people and parents for their views about preparing for adulthood.

It is vital that all children and young people get support and guidance to prepare them for becoming an adult. Getting help at the right time and in the right ways helps young people to reach their full potential and to lead a fulfilling life.

Understanding the perspectives of young people and local families is critical to developing the best and most supportive culture in Suffolk within which young people with SEND can grow, develop and thrive. That is why Suffolk County Council asked Knowing Works to engage people about how well young people with SEND are being prepared for their adulthood.

We've been gathering views from young people with SEND aged 13 - 20, young adults with SEND aged 21 - 25, and parents, carers, and guardians using a mix of methods. To date, more than 200 responses have been gathered.

The research was commissioned by Suffolk County Council on behalf of the Local Area Partnership (LAP) for SEND in Suffolk. It aims to support organisations and services like schools, colleges, Suffolk County Council, and the NHS to work on a plan for how young people can be supported locally now, and into the future.

Specifically, the findings will inform the development of Preparing for Adulthood Strategy. Our surveys and web forms will close after 31 March 2026.

Please visit our website for more information.



Learn more:
www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/pfasurvey

Thinking about care homes?
Look out for our survey later this Spring

From May 2026, we will be working with Suffolk County Council to understand how people make decisions about care home placements.

The council would like to use the findings to understand more about people's experiences, and to make sure people get the help they need when making choices about residential care.

What would we like to know?

We would like to receive feedback from:

- Family members and carers who may have to organise a care home placement for a relative in the future.
- Family members who have helped an individual move into a care home or have had to select a care home within the last two years.
- People who are considering a care home for themselves in the future.

The survey will look at understanding care home placement discussions within families, including any worries or concerns that may arise when selecting a care home.

We are also interested in how and where individuals have sought information and advice to support them to make informed choices about future residential care. That includes understanding how people's care may be funded when they need residential care.

Our survey will launch soon. Please don't miss the opportunity to participate. Look out for updates on the Healthwatch and Knowing Works websites.

What is the Choice of Accommodation policy?

The local COA policy outlines how Suffolk County Council will arrange long-term care home placements for individuals with eligible care needs. It includes an offer process for care home placements and details how people are support.



A survey for young people by young people
Experiences of support for hormonal health

We've been looking for feedback from young people aged 16-25 years on their experiences of accessing support for hormonal health concerns.

Through our Youthwatch team and My Health Our Future (MHoF) programme we have been told by young people in Suffolk that some people faced difficulties accessing support for reproductive and hormonal health issues.

What do we want to learn?

Young people taking part in our Youthwatch project hope to understand the impact that hormonal and reproductive health concerns can have on the lives of young people and what could make it easier to get support from a GP.

A report summarising the responses of all young people who participated will be shared with the public, the NHS, Suffolk County Council, and local charities.

You can visit our website to learn more about this work. Our web form will remain live throughout March 2026. After that, we'll update the page again when our final report is ready.

Learn more at:
www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/news/are-you-aged-16-to-25-take-part-in-our-growing-pains-research/

What previous research has told us:

Insights from My Health, Our Future (2023/24) told us:

- **61% (6715) said their school or college had given them enough information about the physical changes they may experience during puberty and at the right time.**
- **Out of 2,382 students who had visited their GP for their physical or emotional health, 38% felt listened to and 35% felt the GP really tried to help them (35%).**
- **Various students reported not being taken seriously (22%), being dismissed because of their age (16%) or gender (5%), not being believed about the level of pain they were experiencing (19%) and not being involved in treatment options (17%).**



Crisis support in A&E
Our report with Suffolk User Forum



We worked with Suffolk User Forum (SUF) to gather feedback from people who have used local emergency departments (A&E) to access mental health support.

A&E departments across England are under severe pressure - what did people tell us about their experiences?

What did we find out?

Just over half of patients felt A&E treatment had not addressed their mental health needs *'at all'.*

Some patients felt unable to access the help or support they needed at A&E. Others felt there had been a lack of privacy for triage or assessments. People found it difficult to speak about their needs with others around them.

- People want to receive clear advice, with ongoing support or signposting.
- People need updates and respectful treatment to helps them feel recognised.
- Access to quiet and comfortable spaces, and ensuring the availability of food or water is important to people in crisis.
- Carers have an important role to monitor people iwhen staff cannot attend to them, but they have needs too.

One carer stated, **"Nobody considered the impact it had on me watching this person get promised support that never happens, as it then falls back on me."**

You can use our Feedback Centre to find and review local services at: **www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/services**

"During the wait for the two mental health professionals, no one came to update us at all."

For the full report, visit healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/news/aande-mhreport

or scan the QR code

Visual impairment
Look out for our full report landing in April

Through our 'Your Care, Your Way' campaign, we recently ran a survey focused on people living in Suffolk with a visual impairment.

We wanted to understand more about how well NHS and social care services support people locally to influence standards of accessible care.

We also wanted to encourage services to check their compliance with the NHS Accessible Information Standard (AIS) and to help people learn more about their rights to accessible information, care and support.

The AIS is an important tool that services should use to ensure they are helping people to access care and support in ways they can understand – their way.

Our campaign aims to highlight that services can always do more to support people who have specific communication needs – even small changes can make a big difference.

Simon's story

We explored life with a visual impairment with Simon, who, sixteen years ago, received a diagnosis of a visual impairment that would change his life.

> *"Navigating through signposting can really be hard when you're VI... you have to try to remember so much more as a visually impaired person."*







Read more about Simon's story at **www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/news/ycyw-simonsexperience**

...or scan the below QR code.

What is 'Your Care, Your Way'?



This campaign challenges services to do better at meeting the Accessible Information Standard and to increase awareness about people's rights.

"If there was anything that I wanted to know, I'd probably get my husband to look at it - but, my medical stuff is private. It's even private between husband and wife.

"I want my husband to be my husband, not my carer."

Accessing ADHD medication

Responding to your questions about changes



Back in January 2025, GPs were advised to stop delivering adult ADHD treatment under shared care agreements by Suffolk and Essex local medical committees (LMCs).

This meant the responsibility of prescribing, testing, and monitoring ADHD medication was placed back to specialist services.

As a consequence, many adults with ADHD living in Suffolk and North East Essex (SNEE) were faced with changes in how they access their ADHD medication.

Reports from Healthwatch Suffolk and Healthwatch Essex highlighted medication issues, increased stress and anxiety, and ongoing uncertainty about care.

In response, and with the support of our team, Healthwatch Essex brought together a panel from the SNEE Integrated Care Board to respond to questions the public have around ADHD prescribing changes.

The webinar also focused on plans to improve ADHD services and pathways for people living with ADHD across the area.

What to look out for

A summary of key issues and outcomes discussed during the meeting will be available soon. This will include any commitments from the NHS to improve local ADHD care and support.

Panel details

The event brought together a panel of representatives from different teams of the Integrated Care Board.

This included representation by:

- Executive Director of Primary Care and Neighbourhood Health
- Meds Optimisation Team
- Deputy Medical Director
- Commissioning Team
- Quality Team
- Head of System Change
- A GP

“No reliably available supply of medication during the school exam season has a high and lasting impact.”

From our report

A silent epidemic?
Our feedback will inform local pain service review

Our short briefing includes nearly 70 comments from people who submitted reviews to the Healthwatch Suffolk Feedback Centre, and over 1,200 responses to our research.

What's the key learning from people's experiences?

- **Pain affects all aspects of people's lives** – pain is not something that exists on the peripheral of people's lives. Instead, it can be a constant depriver of factors that enrich lives and contribute to positive wellbeing.
- **Pain can make caring harder, and creates new family carers** – Family carers are amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts of long-term pain.
- **Pain affects people in different ways** – People need access and guiding to a range of different solutions.
- **People need their pain to be taken seriously** – Pain can be a leading cause of disability, but the invisibility of pain may also lead professionals in services to doubt people's concerns.



Our report (available on the Healthwatch Suffolk website) is being used to inform an ongoing local review of pain support and services by the NHS in Suffolk. Visit our website to find it in our news reel.

If you're in pain...

Suffolk County Council has a pain management Directory with information about how to manage chronic pain: **www.suffolk.gov.uk/care-and-support-for-adults/keep-well-and-active/pain-management** Click here to access the Suffolk County Council Pain Management Directory.



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