Welcome to our Autumn update

The latest news and updates from Knowing Works CIC & your local Healthwatch service in Suffolk

Knowing Works®

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healthwatch Suffolk

Delivering your local Healthwatch

Focus on Survivors
10 years on...



Working with Survivors in Transition, we published a major national report exploring how adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) experience services and support.

Trigger warning: These pages include references to childhood sexual abuse. If you need support, please visit the Survivors in Transition website at **www.survivorsintransition.co.uk/resources**.

> ***"It's already exhausting surviving – then, you have to navigate systems."***

This research compares findings from national surveys in 2015 and 2025, exploring survivors' experiences of abuse, disclosure, reporting, recovery and support.

The report details the experiences of 243 adult survivors of CSA. It highlights both progress and challenges, showing where responses to survivors have improved and where systems still need to change.

> ***"This whole situation caused me to have a complete mental breakdown."***

Findings snapshot

- **Survivors had continued to face long-term and complex recoveries, often finding it difficult to find the support they need amidst lengthy and traumatising criminal justice proceedings.**
- **Findings suggest improved access to support in the decade. For example, more respondents indicated they accessed support from specialist sexual abuse services (up from 44% to 79%).**
- **Half had reported abuse to the police, which is a 20% increase over what survivors indicated a decade previously.**
- **In total, 29% of survivors had accessed support within five years, but many waited much longer than this. The whole-sample average was 15 years (down five years from what was reported as the whole-sample average a decade previously).**

30%

Almost a third were abused before the age of six.



A series of clear mandates from survivors

The findings and comments provide important evidence for health services, commissioners, criminal justice agencies, policymakers and the voluntary sector, alongside clear messages from survivors about what needs to change.

They included:

- **For commissioners and funders:** "Stop commissioning services as if recovery has an end date. Fund recovery for as long as recovery takes."
- **For the NHS:** "Stop waiting for survivors to disclose. Simply – Ask. Listen. Validate. Refer."
- **For criminal justice:** "Justice is not only about an outcome. Communication and specialist support are fundamental to keeping us engaged."
- **For the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector:** "Stop behaving like the margins of the system. You are central to survivor recovery. Lead with confidence, evidence and a collective voice."



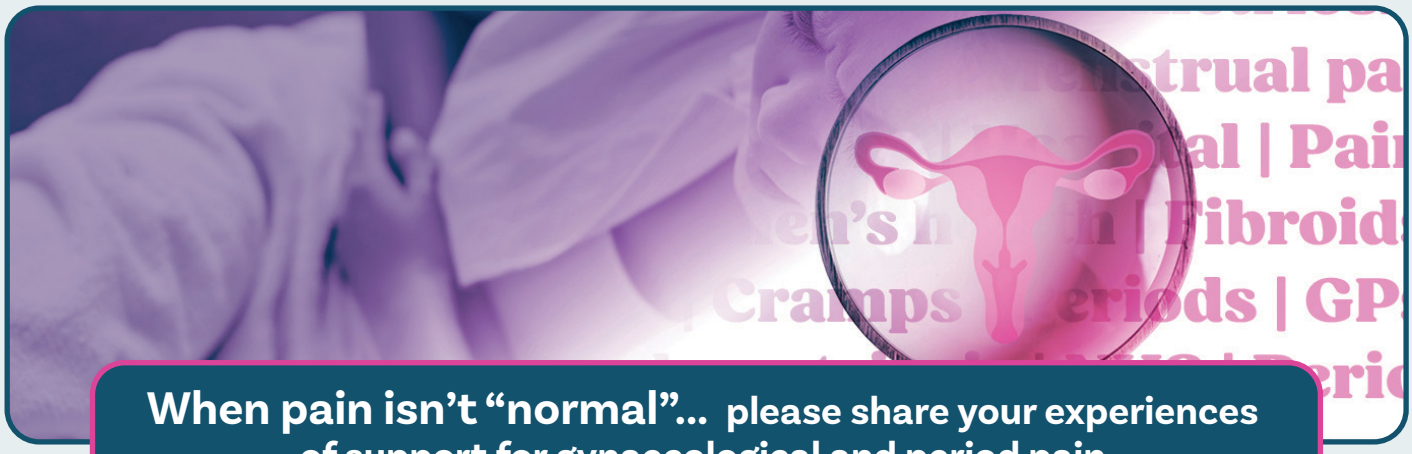
> ***"My hope is that this report is not simply read but acted upon – especially where things haven't changed or got worse over the last 10 years"***
>
> - Kate Davies CBE (National Director for Health, Justice, and Sexual Assault Services at NHS England)

> ***"What is most striking is how consistently survivors are still telling us what they need: to be heard, believed and respected"***
>
> Fiona Ellis OBE, Chief Executive (Survivors in Transition)

> ***"The responsibility for all of us, across every sector, is to be ready to ask, listen, and signpost"***
>
> Wendy Herber, Independent Chair (Knowing Works CIC)

Download the full report:

www.knowingworks.co.uk/our-work/focus-on-survivors



When pain isn't "normal"... please share your experiences of support for gynaecological and period pain

Our focus is on pain related to the **reproductive organs,** such as pelvic or ovarian pain, endometriosis or fibroids, as well as period pain and cramps.

We're interested in your **experiences of care** from GPs, hospitals, specialist services and other healthcare providers. Your experiences will help us to understand what is working well, what could be improved, and what people need from services.

Why do we need your experiences?

Gynaecological and period pain can have a significant impact on quality of life, yet many symptoms of conditions are often dismissed, misunderstood, or accepted as 'normal'.

Research is needed to better understand people's experiences and the difficulties women can face when seeking support.

We will be sharing people's views and experiences to inform work across your local health and care systems - including new strategies in the NHS about women's health, work by Suffolk's Public Health, Communities, and Public Safety directorate, and efforts by local hospitals to improve people's experiences. Don't miss the chance to share feedback.

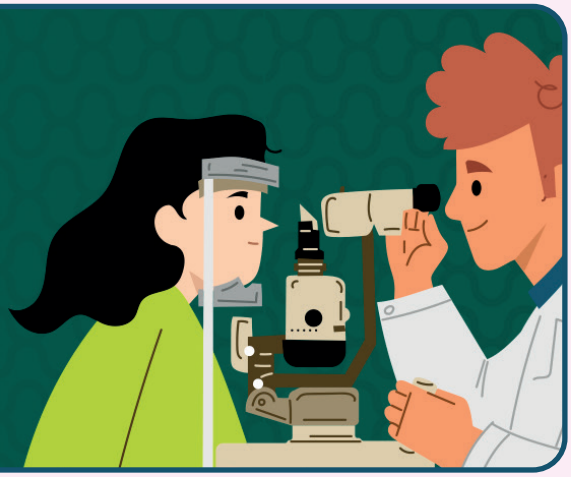


To take part, scan the QR code or visit:
www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/gynaepain

"I was not listened to initially when I raised concerns about my health and was just told I was too young."

Your care, Your Way

Using health and social care services with visual impairment



All health and social care services are required to offer accessible care to those living with a disability or sensory impairment.

Yet our work shows people's needs are still not being met consistently. This is despite the NHS Accessible Information Standard (AIS) — a national framework in place for more than a decade to guide services.

Following feedback from 101 people with a visual impairment, we're asking services and commissioning bodies to look again at how well they are meeting their responsibilities.

We found inaccessible information is still causing potential harm. Although services generally met people's preferences, nearly half had experienced a negative impact because of inaccessible information. Common avoidable challenges people faced included:

- inaccessible check-in systems;
- poor communication about using medications;
- dazzling lighting;
- low awareness of needs amongst staff;
- letters or results shared as images unreadable by screen readers;
- reliance on paper-based tools;
- small print on medication packaging.

How have your local services responded?

The NHS Norfolk and Suffolk Integrated Care Board said its Health Equity team and group would consider the report and key findings, but we have received no further more detailed update on its response.

It added:

> *"Accessible information and health literacy are key priorities for our NHS providers Health Equity Leadership Network and we are committed to the Accessible Information Standard self-assessment in 2026 - and responding to its findings."*

The report has also been shared with local hospitals.

West Suffolk Foundation Trust reviewed the check-in process for its eye department after people highlighted how recent changes had reduced accessibility at appointments, it also planned to review patient letters and was training staff in the rollout of the Reasonable Adjustment Digital Flag (RADF). It is a national visual marker in patient records that helps staff to know when people need adjustments to their care.

East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trust said it was considering the reports key findings and working with people who have lived experience to complete further assessments of its hospital sites. It is presently awaiting the outcomes of those visits and will inform us of learning and improvement in due course.

Look out for more updates about this research as we receive further updates from services.



Finding strength in a shared storm
Our Healthwatch annual report 2025/26

It's been a time like no other for people working in health, care, and communities.

Major structural changes have transformed the entire health and care system around us. Valued colleagues were lost in the change and several important community organisations ceased providing critical support.

And the storm reached us too as we learned of Government plans to abolish the Healthwatch network — a proposal that would remove the public's independent right to influence care for the first time in 50 years.

In moments like this, organisations can either fall apart or stand together. Our annual report showed how we chose the latter — and how our approach, our values, and partnerships are helping us find strength in a shared storm.

Dr Ed Garratt OBE DL and **Professor William Pope** (Chief Executive and Chair of the NHS Norfolk and Suffolk Integrated Care Board) said:

> ***"An independent partner like Knowing Works is vital. We have a long and proud history of working with its team from their ten years as Healthwatch Suffolk. Within our local NHS system, this team set the highest standard for listening to the public. They have proven that listening to patient feedback is a must."***

Snapshots from our Annual Report

- **More than 5,000 people** were engaged by our team visiting local communities.
- **101 people with a visual impairment** shared their experiences of NHS and social care.
- NHS leaders took action to **improve harm reporting** by hospitals and GPs.
- **We made sure people's experiences were heard** when changes were made to local ADHD support.
- Suffolk County Council invested in support for **children making transitions to adult services.**
- **600+ people** were helped to find services and support they needed.

& much more

Read our full Annual Report here

Knowing Works®

Suffolk's Annual Parent Carer Survey!

Are you a parent, carer, or guardian of a child or young person with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), or support needs, in Suffolk?



This survey is your chance to say:

- What it's like to be a parent carer in Suffolk.
- How you feel about support for children and young people in Suffolk with SEND.
- How well your child or young person's health, education and social needs are met by local services.
- How inclusive you feel Suffolk schools, colleges, and other settings are.

Look out for the survey when it launches

We'll share it at www.knowingworks.co.uk very soon.





Join the Best Start Family Voice network

Independently hosted by Knowing Works CIC for:

Suffolk County Council | Best Start in Life | Family Hubs

Are you a parent, carer or guardian in Suffolk?

We are building a network of local parents to share experiences of family support from pregnancy through to early childhood.

Our Best Start Family Voice network will support Suffolk County Council to develop its Best Start Family Hubs service and approach – building on Suffolk's existing Family Hubs service and ensuring all families feel comfortable asking for help when they need it.

How can you help?

By joining the network, your insight will help shape the support offered through Suffolk's Best Start approach — a plan focused on giving every child the strongest foundations for learning and development by the age of five.

A key part of this work is the launch of Best Start Family Hubs across Suffolk.

Building on Suffolk's existing Family Hubs services, these will bring together services and activities supporting family life and child development in one welcoming place. They aim to offer spaces where all families feel comfortable asking for help.

We are hosting this network on behalf of Suffolk County Council as it works with local people and partners to introduce the Best Start offer. By sharing your experiences, you can help ensure Best Start Family Hubs and wider support for families truly reflect what parents need.

It's easy to join & there's no commitment

You can get as involved as you like, and for as long as you like. If you're interested, you can sign up here:

www.smartsurvey.co.uk/t/Suffolk-Family-Hubs

or scan the QR Code

We'll contact you with updates, ways to take part, and news about services and support available to families. This may include surveys, meetings, focus groups, or other ways you can shape support available to local parents like you.

Time for a quick survey?

We know parents and guardians are busy people! So, if you've only got a moment, why not take our survey to share your views?

Whether you've used a local Family Hub before or not, this is your opportunity to help shape how support for families could develop in the future.

If you're a parent, carer or guardian with children aged between the years of 0-5, 6-12, 13-18 or up to 25 with SEND, we'd love to hear from you.

The survey asks about several topics, including:

- Whether you have visited a Family Hub and what your experience was like.
- Reasons you may not have used your local Family Hub previously.
- The types of support you would most value from Best Start Family Hubs now and in the future.
- How you would prefer to access support and services.

Every person completing the survey has the chance to join our network, but you can also choose only to take the survey.

In the future, the hubs will bring together services like midwifery, health visiting, infant feeding support and perinatal mental health support. They will also help parents and carers support children's learning and development at home, while providing guidance for families of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This is your opportunity to shape the support they will offer across Suffolk.



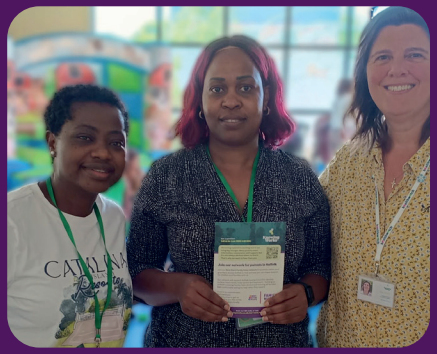
Take the survey

Visit
www.smartsurvey.co.uk
/t/beststartfamilyhubs

...or scan our QR code with your phone camera.

We've loved meeting parents at groups and events across Suffolk - please contact us if you know of a local group we could visit (info@knowingworks.co.uk).







Your experience of caring for loved ones
How does it change your life?



If you're supporting someone who wouldn't cope without your help, we want to hear from you.

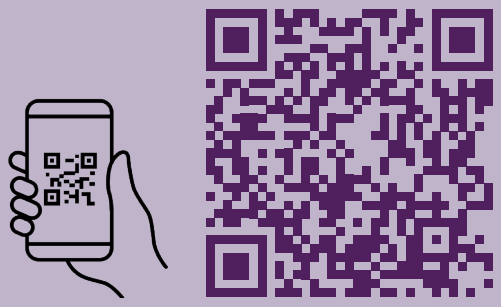
We're working with Suffolk County Council and its Public Health, Communities, and Public Safety directorate to gather stories of caring for others.

When helping becomes caring – we need your stories of supporting friends and family in Suffolk.

If you help a family member, partner or friend because of illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, please take part in this research.

You can share experiences whether or not you access support for your caring role (for example, from Suffolk County Council or Suffolk Family Carers).

Take part at:
www.smartsurvey.co.uk/t/ProvidingSupport



Learn more:
knowingworks.co.uk/our-work/helpingothers/

Our insights will be shared with people and professionals working in the NHS, council, and other local organisations so they understand more about the support people need.

The project will include people's views and experiences in both a local 'Health Needs Assessment' and an all age carers strategy for Suffolk. Taken together, they will help to shape the support people receive around caring in Suffolk.

Don't miss the chance to be included. Take part to share your experiences before the end of 2026.

Are you a family carer?

A carer is anyone who supports somebody who, due to an illness, disability or mental health problem, cannot cope without their support.

Providing unpaid care often develops gradually and can impact on your daily life. However, many people do not identify as family carers and may not realise that support is available to them.

More information & support:
www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/signposting/carerssupport

Veteran support
‘Mobile awareness’ & a new signposting page

We’ve been busy visiting communities across Suffolk to gather and share information about services and support available to veterans.

Our project aimed to increase awareness of the support services available to veterans and their families across Suffolk. This ‘mobile awareness’ initiative is all a part of a national project known as Thrive Together.

Our work has been supported by Bob, a veteran who helped to shape and deliver our engagement activities. This ensured lived experience was a part of everything we did in the project. The feedback we gathered has helped us to build and share a clearer understanding of the needs, challenges, and experiences of the veteran community.

Find help for veterans

Whether you’re a veteran, a family member – or someone supporting a veteran, finding the right help can sometimes feel difficult. That’s why we have brought together information about organisations and services that can help.

Our page has been designed following the feedback and information gathered during our mobile awareness initiative Find it at:

www.healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk/signposting/veteranssupport









Children & young people with SEND
Preparing for adulthood

We would like to say a big thank you to each and every person who took part in our project about preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities for adulthood.

The insights from our survey have been shared with the Local Area Partnership and will be included in its ‘Preparing for Adulthood’ strategy in Suffolk. Our report and key findings will be published to our website when the strategy has been published.



More on the way from Knowing Works
What's coming up?



Making care home choices

We'll publish reports following our work with Suffolk County Council to understand people's experiences of choosing local care home options. The insights will help the council to shape its 'Choice of Accommodation' policy as well as the information, advice and guidance it offers to local families choosing care. Expect our reports to be available later in Autumn 2026.



My Health, Our Future (MHoF) phase ten

More than 9,000 young people across Suffolk responded to our MHoF survey this year. Our report will explore young people's responses to questions about behaviours in friendships, feelings of loneliness, self-harm, bullying, and much more.

Look out for our full report toward the end of 2026.

Suffolk Voluntary and Statutory Partnership
Share information about mental health

The VASP is a long-standing, trusted, and free open forum for anyone with an interest in mental health and wellbeing in Suffolk.

About the network

This independent network is hosted and supported by us (Knowing Works CIC).

VASP meetings take place across Suffolk to enable local organisations across the voluntary and statutory sectors to:

- Work in partnership
- Raise awareness
- Make connections
- Reduce stigma
- Improve services
- Identify gaps
- Link people
- Offer a voice

VASP

This network allows services and groups to meet and exchange information in the seven Locality VASP meetings, plus in the countywide VASP meetings.

There is also a free weekly newsletter that collates mental health and wellbeing related news from across the county.

Want to join?

Visit the Suffolk VASP website to learn more and sign-up:

www.suffolkvasp.co.uk

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