

February 2017 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

GCSE results continue to improve

Validated figures published on the Department for Education's website confirm that Suffolk's GCSE progress has for the first time risen above the national average. Suffolk is now ranked in the top half of all authorities for progress at GCSE level, at 55th out of 151. This is a real improvement since 2014 when Suffolk was ranked 119th for English progress and 108th for maths. It is important to recognise that the way a school's progress is measured has changed this year nationally. Progress 8 is the Government's new way of measuring GCSE results. It measures how well pupils of all abilities have progressed by comparing them with students who achieved similar levels in Key Stage 2 across the country. More information about the new Progress 8 measure can be found on the Department for Education's website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure>. Across Suffolk, 60.1% of students achieved the national measure of attaining a grade C or above in English and maths. This is 3% higher than last year and marks a 6% increase since 2014. Suffolk students have also closed the gap to the national average state funded schools from 6% in 2014 to just 3% this year. Suffolk continues to be above the national figure of 59.3% for all schools. This is a real sign that Suffolk is making good progress. We are now into the fifth year of the Raising the Bar programme which aims to improve levels of educational attainment and ensure that every child in Suffolk is able to achieve their full potential. Since the programme began in 2012, there has been a more than 20% rise in Suffolk Schools being judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. This rate is currently improving more than twice as fast as those across the country. We will not become complacent and will continue to build on the momentum of the positive results we have seen since the programme started.

New report announces vision for mental health in Suffolk

Suffolk's Director of Public Health releases his annual report on 26 January 2017 setting an ambition to improve mental health services in Suffolk over the next 10 years. *Suffolk Minds Matter: Suffolk Annual Public Health Report 2016*. An estimated 1 in 100 people are affected by severe mental ill health in Suffolk and around half of lifelong mental ill health conditions develop before the age of 14. In the same month that the Prime Minister outlined government commitments to better mental healthcare for young people and the wider population, this new report sets a Suffolk-wide aspiration for improved mental health at all ages. The independent report, which has been produced in collaboration with a range of partners, lists seven cross-cutting recommendations to promote good mental health and reduce demand in Suffolk over the next five to 10 years:

1. To work to promote mental health and to reduce stigma and discrimination;
2. Promote emotional wellbeing and resilience in communities throughout Suffolk by working to address the social determinants of mental health;
3. Ensure those with physical health needs have good mental health, and that those with mental ill health have equal support to improve their physical health;
4. Promote the mental health of women and ensure children have the best start in life;
5. Ensure the effective recognition and treatment of depression in older people, especially those at increased risk;
6. Work to promote active healthy ageing programmes to delay the onset of dementia at any age;
7. Reduce suicide in Suffolk by 10% over the next five years using the 2012-14 data as our baseline.

The report is divided into sections that correspond with different stages in people's lives, from pre-birth children to older people's mental health. It recognises that good mental health is a fundamental human right for everyone and that good mental health is essential for good physical health, and vice versa.

Ipswich to become one of 12 'Opportunity Areas'

The secretary of state has announced that Ipswich is to be one of 12 'opportunity areas' across the country. Ipswich will be among the first areas to access a package of education programmes designed to help young people progress from nursery school through the education system and into employment. The first six 'opportunity areas' were previously announced in October, they are: West Somerset, Norwich, Blackpool, Scarborough, Derby and Oldham. With it, this new approach will bring an additional £6 million funding for the area (a share of £72 million across the 12 areas). This will be used to fund local, evidence based programmes and projects which will explore new methods of addressing specific barriers in the area. One such programme introduced will be the 'Teacher Leadership and Innovation Fund' which will focus on improving quality of teaching and leadership in schools.

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