

Reflections on two years of the Keep Moving Suffolk campaign

April 1st marked the second anniversary of the Keep Moving Suffolk campaign.

Mobilised within nine days of the first lockdown, its ambition has been to help people stay active or become active during the pandemic.

Two years on, the campaign is being celebrated for helping thousands of Suffolk residents to move more in ways that suit them.

Councillor Andrew Reid, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Protection at Suffolk County Council, said:

“Our immediate focus was to work with willing partners to quickly and collaboratively create a trusted resource and programme that the people of Suffolk could turn to for encouragement and support to be active at a hugely challenging time.”

“There were virtual challenges, exercise supplements in the local media, activity booklets distributed to older people across the county and activity packs for vulnerable and isolated people in the local community.”

“When schools were closed, resources were provided to support parents and carers to integrate exercise into home schooling. When holiday activity programmes weren’t operating, activity packs were developed for distribution to children on free school meals and when sports clubs needed support to get back up and running, the campaign unlocked £500,000 of funding to help them do so.

Violence Against Women and Girls funding announced

On April 4th, Suffolk County Council announced £350,000 of funding to support the ambitions set out in the Suffolk Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2022.

This fund has been provided by Suffolk County Council to support the work of the strategy in preventing violence, supporting victims, pursuing perpetrators and strengthening the system.

Organisations will be able to apply for this funding to support initiatives that are synonymous with the objectives of the strategy and aim to stop violence against women and girls.

This funding cements our continued commitment to protecting our communities. Our focus for these projects is women and girls, due to the gendered nature of the crimes, but there is also scope to include projects to support men and boys as well as those that are transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming. This is a real opportunity to boost funding across Suffolk to harness creativity and innovation to help tackle this very important issue. The fund is to be launched in partnership with Suffolk Community Foundation. Any organisations wishing to make an application can do so by visiting Suffolk Community Foundation or contacting them on grants@suffolkcf.org.uk or 01473 602602.

Organisations can make an application for funding for up to £5,000 for pilot projects or up to £50,000 for projects which have already been piloted. These grants are available for up to 3 years.

Suffolk has launched its 3-year strategy for Violence Against Women and Girls, in line with the Government's plan to reduce and prevent this type of crime, improve collaboration between services and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice. The strategy has been prepared collaboratively by the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) – consisting of representatives from Suffolk County Council, district and borough councils, Suffolk Constabulary, Suffolk's Police & Crime Commissioner, community safety partnerships, health and probation services, the Norfolk & Suffolk Criminal Justice Board and Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership.

The SSCB have a shared commitment to tackle the incredibly important issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which includes, but is not limited to, domestic abuse, sexual violence, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and revenge porn – all of which have a devastating impact on victim-survivors, families, and communities

Import Surveillance team helping to keep consumers safe

As the weather hopefully warms up again soon, I'm sure that many of you will be likely to pay Felixstowe a visit over the coming weeks and months. Whilst the seaside town is known for its fish and chips, arcades and shingled shoreline, you may not be aware that it is also home to Britain's biggest and busiest shipping container port, which welcomes approximately 2,000 ships per year.

Since it opened in 1967, the Port of Felixstowe has continued to grow and now employs 2,500 people, who help handle the millions of container units passing through. These contain goods which originate from, or are destined for, one of over 700 ports around the world, from far flung places such as Singapore, to across the channel at Calais. A variety of products are transported in this way including toys, cosmetics, bicycles and electrical equipment – meaning that you probably have items in your home which have entered the country via Felixstowe.

Although the majority of these goods will be legitimate, this sadly isn't always the case. Fortunately for consumers, Suffolk Trading Standards' Import Surveillance Team continues to operate from the Port of Felixstowe to find these dangerous items and stop them from making their way into the marketplace.

Last Friday, I had the pleasure of visiting the team at the port to learn more about their important work and see some of the unsafe items detained already this year. Officers operate from one of the port's examination warehouses, 70 Shed, where they examine containers identified by the Office for Product Safety and Standards as potentially carrying high-risk consumer products. As I entered the warehouse, I was met with items recently detained by the team, including hundreds of welders probably destined for online marketplaces. Whilst these may have seemed like a good deal for DIY enthusiasts, they did not meet electrical safety requirements and posed a risk of fire, explosion or electric shock due to the poor construction and design, which included a fuse modified with wire.

These weren't the only dangerous electrical items shown to me during my visit, with poor plugs, faulty air fryers and lethal lights all due to be destroyed after being discovered by the team. Even more worrying was a host of unsafe LED anti-aging face masks confiscated by Trading Standards officers. Although I've not used one myself, I'm informed that these are taking the beauty industry by storm and have a price tag of hundreds of pounds. This makes it even more tempting for people to seek out a budget alternative but, having heard first-hand about the dangers of these masks, I can assure you that it isn't worth the risk.

It's not just electrical goods posing a danger to life, with the team often finding non-compliant toys that could cause death or serious injury to children and toddlers. I was absolutely appalled to learn of the number of dodgy dolls or cuddly toys that contain loose parts or unsecure battery compartments, which could easily lead to a child choking or swallowing harmful batteries. Thankfully for the UK's families, these have been detained and destroyed before they can even go on sale.

There is no doubt that the efforts of the Import Surveillance Team have prevented fire, serious injury or even death by keeping dangerous goods out of our county. But your help is also needed with this. At a time of energy price increases and rising fuel costs, it can seem like a great idea to try to grab a bargain. However, no saving justifies the potential consequences of having an unsafe product in the home. It is crucial to only buy items from reputable retailers and remember that if a price looks too good to be true, there's probably a reason why. Although you think you're getting a good deal, you could end up paying for it with your life.

If you're concerned that you may have purchased substandard goods, please contact the Citizens Advice consumer helpline on 0808 223 1133 so that we can help you and other consumers.

And when you're next at Felixstowe and spot a ship laden with cargo, I hope that it will serve as a reminder of the tireless work going on behind the scenes from Trading Standards to keep Suffolk, and the rest of the UK, safe from high-risk products. Andrew Reid.

'Just say hello, just listen, just reach out'

A new film featuring various partners from across Suffolk has been released which aims to prevent suicide.

The 'Just Say Hello' campaign aims to raise awareness of how a simple 'hello' can make the difference to a person's mental wellbeing, whether it be a loved one or a stranger.

With evidence suggesting that 75% of people who die by suicide have no contact with mental health services, or even their GP within the 12 months preceding their death, it is important that everyone knows they can play their part. Simply reaching out and starting a conversation can be enough to help someone or by interrupting their thought process and encouraging them to get further help.

Featured in the film is Terry Waite who used to work as a hostage negotiator in some of the most dangerous parts of the world and unfortunately was captured and spent almost five years in strict solitary confinement. He says, "Each year in Suffolk alone, 65 people die this way. And those figures are frankly tragic and unacceptable."

This video highlights suicide being the biggest killer for men under the age of 45, with 3 in 4 deaths by suicide being men.

The video shows the importance of suicide prevention and how it can affect anyone. Everyone needs to know that suicide is not the only option. We want to help people in Suffolk to feel better prepared to help a person who may be in need. By just saying "hello", anyone could potentially save someone's life by making that all important connection with them.

If you would like to learn more about helping someone who may be in need, useful resources are available, and you don't need special skills to speak to someone. Free online training is available from the Zero Suicide Alliance that provides the knowledge and the confidence to talk to someone who might be at risk of or thinking about suicide.

Alongside this, the Samaritans website provides more advice on becoming a better listener to support loved ones who may be struggling to cope or to open up about how they are feeling. Everyone in Suffolk can play their part by talking openly about their mental health and knowing that help is available.

More 'Just Say Hello' campaign films will be available over the next coming weeks including bereavement by suicide liaison workers Annabelle Bennett and Chelsea Thorpe speaking on the new service available throughout Suffolk and Northeast Essex.

If you or someone you know is in mental health crisis and requires serious or life-threatening emergency mental or physical care, dial 999 immediately.

99% of pupils receive a preferred primary on National Offer Day

This year 99.22% of children were offered a place at one of their parents' three preferred schools and 95.6% were offered a place at their first preference school.

Suffolk County Council received 7144 applications from parents indicating which primary school they would prefer their child to join in September 2022.

Families who applied online are able to log on to the Admissions Portal from today to see the school their child has been offered. They will also receive an email with details of the school place offered.

Letters will be sent to parents who made a paper application by second class post today.

It is very positive that so many children have been offered a place at one of their parents' preferred schools, especially with so many being offered a place at their preferred school. We appreciate that not all families may have received a place at their preferred school. If a parents' preference for a Suffolk school is refused, we will automatically add their child's name to the waiting list for that school. Parents and carers will also be advised about how to lodge an appeal should they wish to do so."

Any parents or carers with a child born between 1 September 2017 and 31 August 2018 who have not yet applied for a school place should make an application immediately. Information on how to make an application can be found on the School Admission pages or by contacting Suffolk County Council on 0345 600 0981.

Once school places have been confirmed, parents need to consider how their child will get to and from school. If their child is eligible for Suffolk County Council funded school travel they will receive an email by 13 May 2022 with details of how to opt-in.

For further information on how to view your offer online and guidance on what to do if you have not received your preferred offer, please read the School admissions FAQ page

Suffolk digital care project hits unprecedented milestone

A team of social care professionals in Suffolk is making strides in digital transformation by achieving a milestone in referrals for its digital care service.

Suffolk County Council, in partnership with Alcove and Rethink Partners, is pleased to have achieved a landmark number of 1,000 referrals for care technology in under nine months since the ground-breaking Cassius service went live on 19 July 2021.

The service has seen over 1,600 devices installed in people's homes to enable Suffolk residents to stay at home and live independently and delay the need to access additional care or move to supported accommodation.

Devices such as movement sensors, smart watches, wearables, falls prevention devices and other technology are allowing people to stay independently at home for longer and better manage risk when previously they may have needed additional help, such as home care or moving to a residential care home. Pioneering care technology such as this has also helped prevent the need for urgent care, thanks to its smart technology.

Suffolk County Council believes it has saved up to £2.2 million by enabling people to live well at home for longer, rather than having to access formal care and support before they were ready.

This is a significant milestone in our work to support Suffolk's most vulnerable residents to access the care and services they need. We're really proud of the work carried out by Cassius and the council's digital care team to improve and enhance our existing social care provision and look forward to seeing the continued benefits for the population of Suffolk. It's promising to see a steady rise in referrals for digital care to help improve the lives of our residents.

Suffolk County Council to freeze post-16 travel costs to schools and colleges

It was announced on April 28th that Suffolk County Council is to freeze charges for travel for over 16s to schools and colleges from September.

The council's Cabinet agreed fares should remain at 2021/22 levels for another 12 months to help families faced with soaring living costs. The decision means costs for the 2022/23 academic year will remain at £930 per year for mainstream transport and £750 for SEND pupils.

With the fuel, energy or other price rises at this time, Suffolk County Council does not feel it would be appropriate to ask families to pay any additional charge. We are particularly concerned that any uplift would affect less well-off families. We

are also concerned that any increase might be considered unaffordable and may limit post-16 options for students, which absolutely is not an outcome desired by Suffolk County Council.

The decision will be reviewed in 12 months' time.

The Post-16 Travel Policy applies to full-time learners aged 16-18 years, and those aged 19 years and over if they are continuing the same course started before their nineteenth birthday. It also applies to continuing learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) aged 19-25 years.

To qualify for funding under the scheme young people need to continue to study or train in one of three ways: • Study full-time in a school, college or with a training provider (at least 540 hours of planned learning per year) • Full-time work or volunteering (20 hours or more per week) combined with part-time education or training leading to relevant regulated qualifications (at least 280 hours of planned learning per year) • Be working in an apprenticeship, supported internship or traineeship

The council is not required by law to fund Post-16 Travel and does not receive any funding from central government to fund it.

Speeding – you might want to look into this.

the County Council has purchased 10 ANPR speed cameras and these will be available in July 2022 to parishes to loan for one week. Suffolk Constabulary will review the data and the worst offenders will be sent a letter. If the behaviour persists, there will be a visit from the police asking the offender to moderate their behaviour.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for the past year, your hard work and commitment to the community is valued and appreciated by everyone. It has been an odd year, with some returning to “normal” at different paces than others. It has been turbulent regarding the energy projects and those still to hit our doormats, it is important that we continue to support, consult, and represent all those people that put their faith in us.

Best wishes

TJ