



GET SUFFOLK WORKING 2025

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

What is economic inactivity and why is it important?

In the UK, economic inactivity refers to people who are not in employment and who have not been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next two weeks.

There are many and varied reasons as to why someone may be economically inactive. It includes those who are in full time study, those caring for children or other family members, those who may have decided to retire early and even those who are in unpaid training, internships or voluntary work but not seeking paid employment. However, economic inactivity can also be related to a long-term health condition, a disability and even disillusionment with the labour market.

For the purposes of this plan, we are using the following definitions:

Economically active: Aged 16 to 64 and either in employment, unemployed (but looking for work and could start within two weeks of an offer), or unemployed but waiting to start a job that had been offered and accepted.

Economically inactive: Aged 16-64 and either unemployed and not looking for work or unemployed and looking for work but cannot start within 2 weeks of an offer.

Whatever the reason for economic inactivity, it is important to note that many people who are economically inactive would prefer to work but are unable to do so.

Addressing economic inactivity by removing barriers for those who could otherwise be part of the workforce not only improves the health, wellbeing and life prospects for our residents but also helps to:

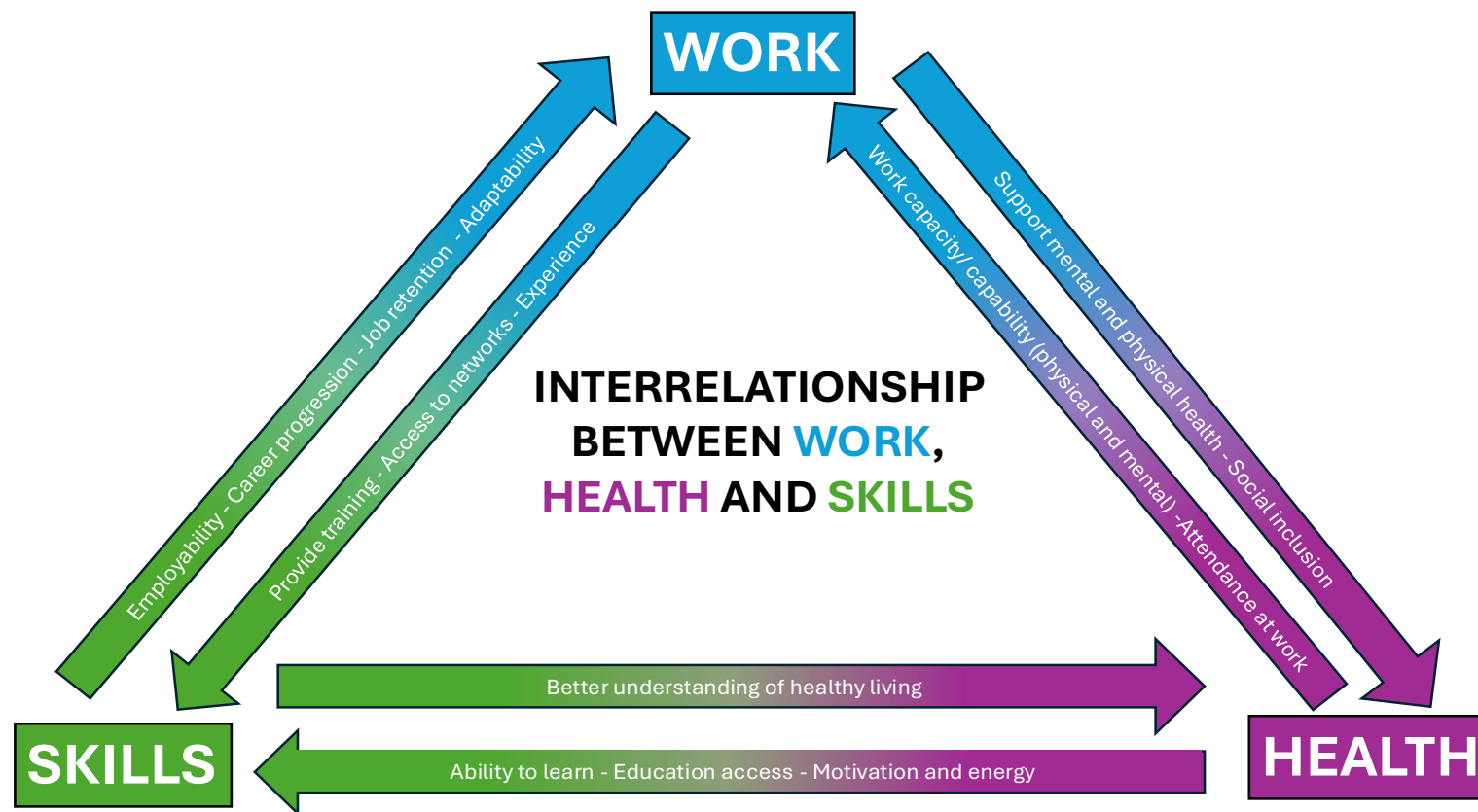
- boost economic growth as more people working means a greater ability to produce goods and services
- reduce pressure on public finances as fewer people rely on benefits like Universal Credit or disability payments and more people contribute through income tax and National Insurance
- address key labour shortages and gaps by re-engaging inactive workers to fill vacancies
- support demographic sustainability as our population ages and higher participation is needed to help sustain pension system
- increase diversity in the workplace by enabling more people from under-represented categories into work

It is also imperative that all efforts are taken to keep all those that are economically active in employment due to the direct link between moving from employment to unemployment and substantial increases in health needs and costs.

A summary of the benefits at an individual, community and economy level can be found in Annex A.

Many factors impact on the levels of economic activity and employment in any given area, with particularly strong interdependencies between work, health and skills.

Figure 1: The interrelationship between work, health and skills



Get Britain Working

The 'Get Britain Working' White Paper was published in November 2024 and set out a long-term ambition for the UK to achieve an 80% employment rate. This is a key part of Government's mission to kick-start growth and build an inclusive and thriving labour market where everyone has the opportunity of good work, and the chance to get on at work.

Achieving this would reverse the trend of the last 5 years which has seen employment rates in the UK fall, the only major economy in which this has happened and the only G7 country to not return to pre-Covid levels of employment. As our population lives longer, the country is beginning to see gaps in skills and the number of workers versus positions available. This gap is widened further by the growing number of people who are unable to work due to health conditions/disability. In the UK there are nearly 800,000 or 40% more people of working-age who are economically inactive for health reasons than there were in 2019¹. The growth in this number is nearly 10 times the growth of the working age population. By 2030, 600,000 more people could become economically inactive if current trends continue, losing out on opportunities in the workplace, experiencing financial hardship, widening the skills gap, suffering from health inequalities, and making a tight labour market even more so for employers².

The White Paper identified 6 key issues that need to be tackled:

- too many people are excluded from the labour market – especially those with health conditions, caring responsibilities or lower skill levels
- too many young people leave school without essential skills or access to high-quality further learning, an apprenticeship or support to work so that they can thrive at the start of their career
- too many people are stuck in insecure, poor quality and often low-paying work, which contributes to a weaker economy and also affects their health and wellbeing
- too many women who care for their families still experience challenges staying in and progressing in work
- too many employers cannot fill their vacancies due to labour and skills shortages, holding back economic growth and undermining living standards

¹ [ONS – Rising ill-health and economic inactivity because of long-term sickness, UK: 2019 to 2023](#)

² Keep Britain Working Independent Review

- there is too great a disparity in labour market outcomes between different places and for different groups of people

The White Paper also identified a key role for all local areas to develop local Get Britain Working plans and to convene local partners to work together to deliver these.³

Get Suffolk Working

An enhanced approach to addressing economic activity would support many of our ambitions for Suffolk. This includes, in the Suffolk Economic Strategy, the ambition to expand our talent pool by growing our economically active population by 35,000 by 2045.⁴

This 'Get Suffolk Working' plan sets out the first steps we intend to take to build a shared understanding of demand and better join up local work, health and skills support in a way that will meet the needs of our people, our businesses and our communities. It focuses on the first of the 'Get Britain Working' challenges identified. Namely to reduce the amount of people excluded from the labour market by addressing economic inactivity. Future iterations of the plan will expand the scope to all other Get Britain Working challenges.

The plan

- provides an analysis of the local labour market in relation to economic inactivity produced through a combination of data analysis and obtaining local intelligence from relevant services
- highlights what we currently know about some of our most disadvantaged groups and where we need to take action to improve that understanding
- identifies the primary drivers and causes of economic inactivity in the county and how the current system at a local level is looking to address these challenges
- outlines ways in which this approach could be enhanced moving forward

In doing so, it provides a starting point for all key stakeholder organisations to build from, it establishes and strengthens the partnerships required and sets out a framework for further action to be taken.

³ [Get Britain Working White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

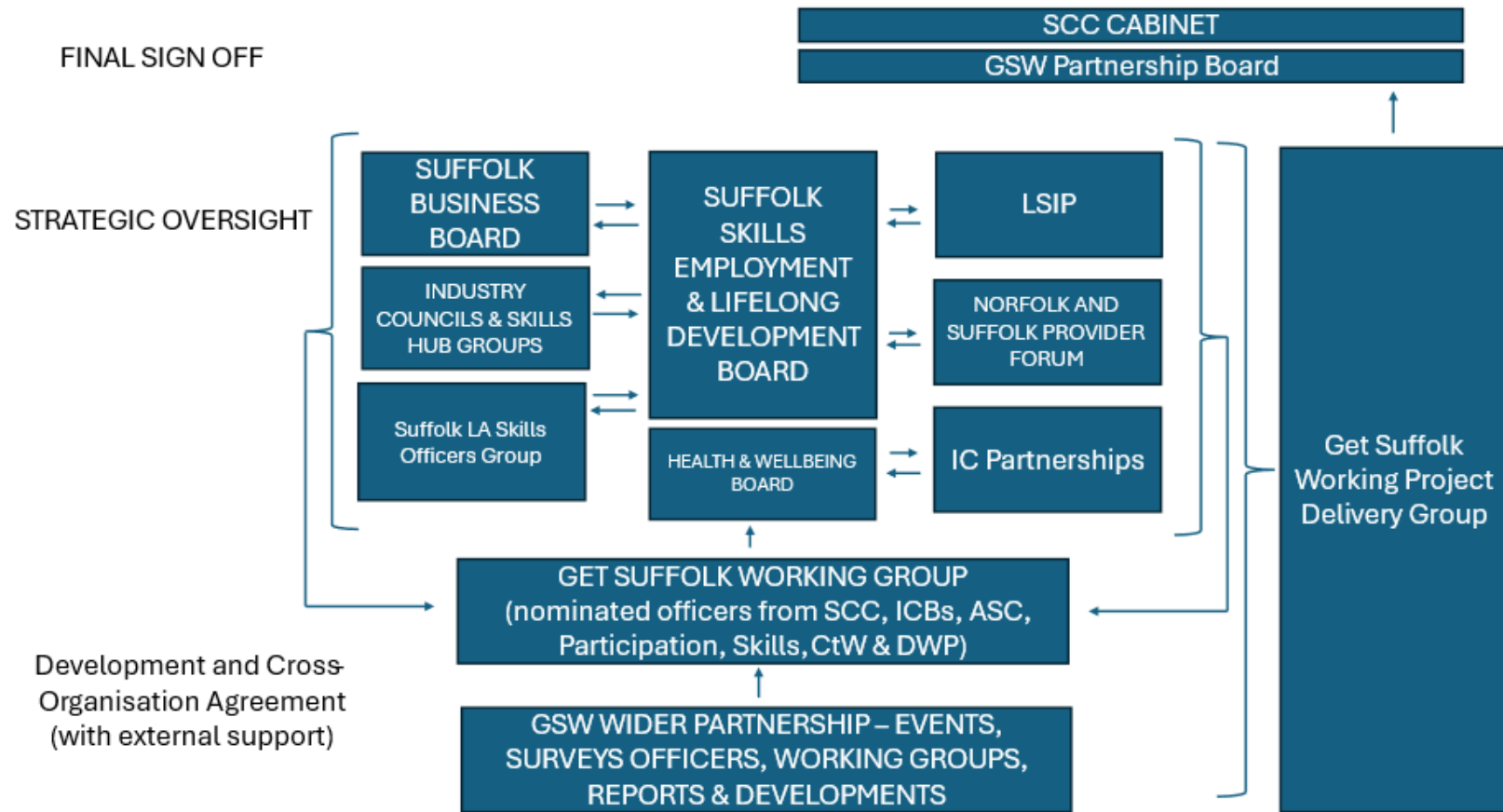
⁴ Suffolk Economic Strategy

Approach to Development

Suffolk County Council, as the accountable body for the 'Get Suffolk Working' plan has established clear and comprehensive Governance arrangements for the development and agreement of the plan at a local level. The diagram below outlines our approach to wide system involvement in inputting into, developing and approving the Plan. This builds on the system of boards and committees that already existed and includes a dedicated Project Delivery Group. These arrangements will evolve to provide the means to further develop and deliver on the next steps included in this initial plan. Further details are provided in the initial action plan included later in this document. A full list of all organisations who have been involved is included at Annex B.

Key stakeholders including, but not limited to, regional DWP Jobcentre Plus leads, Integrated Care Board officers and relevant representatives from across local authority departments (i.e. public health, economic development, skills, education and adult social care) have contributed significant time, information and perspectives to inform the plan.

Figure 2: Oversight and Governance



Suffolk County Council also commissioned OPR Consulting Ltd. to provide much of the research, coordination and information required as well as a set of independent recommendations, many of which are included later in the plan. This work has included direct engagement with the economically inactive cohort and consultation with all key stakeholder organisations as well as a range of secondary research including a desktop review of relevant national and local plans and strategies, a mapping of existing services and additional analysis of the Suffolk labour market.

This has supplemented the contributions made by organisations from across the work, health and skills partnership.

Whilst primary research has been undertaken, the plan necessarily draws prominently from work that had previously been undertaken by relevant parts of the local work, health and skills system. It also references strategies and plans due to be published that will provide greater levels of detail on the approach to 'Get Suffolk Working' by specific partners. Most prominently this includes the Integrated Work and Health Strategy currently being developed by the Suffolk & North-East Essex (SNEE) that, once published, should be read as a key part of the 'Get Suffolk Working' plan.

Throughout this plan we have used the data available that provides the most accurate or up-to-date reflection of Suffolk's challenges and opportunities. It should however be noted that there are, of course, limitations to many of the datasets available and further work will be undertaken to test some of the assumptions reached in this initial plan. For some datasets we have chosen to look at trends as well as current positions. This is especially important when using sources such as the APS which can fluctuate due to small population samples used. This also explains the disparity between the employment rate baseline for Suffolk Oct 2023-2024 (74.2%) provided in the Get Britain Working Local Plan Guidance and the information about Suffolk's employment rate included in this plan. The Get Britain Working % is a clear anomaly across a longer-term trend.

An Initial Plan

Government has required all local areas to complete and publish initial 'Get Britain Working' plans but recognising that all areas of the country will be at differing stages of working as an integrated system.

In the timescales provided extensive engagement and information gathering has been undertaken in Suffolk and an agreed position reached with all key stakeholder organisations on the conclusions drawn and next steps identified within this plan.

However, it is recognised throughout this document that further development of this plan will be required.

SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING ECONOMIC INACTIVITY IN SUFFOLK

Suffolk in Context

Suffolk has a total resident population of approximately 786,231. Over the past 10 years this has increased by 5.6%⁵.

Suffolk has an ageing population. The majority of the recent growth in the population has been in the 67 and over age group, which has grown by 24,500 people (16.8% since 2015) and is projected to grow by a further 22.7% in the next 10 years (2025 to 2035)⁶. By 2043 Suffolk's overall population is forecast to grow 8.9%, however the ratios between age groups is set to widen further with the 67+ age group increasing by 33.9%, the 18-66 age group increasing by only 5.1% and the 0-17 age group projected to decrease by 8.7%.⁷

As outlined in the Suffolk Economic Strategy⁸ Suffolk contributes £21 billion to the UK economy, with a strong foundation of business growth and sectoral diversity. It is home to over 30,000 businesses, with a notable 90% growth in business incorporations between 2019 and 2024, more than double the UK average increase.

Further statistics and information on the key strengths of our local economy can be found in the [Suffolk Economy Strategy](#) and the supporting evidence base.

However, Suffolk is not without socio-economic challenges:

- **Productivity** is below the national average, at £30.96 per hour compared to £35.86 in England.
- **Average wages** are also lower, at £31,000 versus £36,200 nationally.
- **Qualification levels** lag behind national benchmarks, particularly for higher levels (RQF Level 4+), which inevitably impacts on employability and career progression.

⁵ Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics

⁶ Subnational Population Projections, Office for National Statistics

⁷ Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics

⁸ Suffolk Economic Strategy, Suffolk County Council

- **Pockets of high deprivation and low social mobility.** 79,130 people live in Suffolk's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are within the 20% most deprived in England (including health, income and education)⁹, and all areas of Suffolk - apart from Mid-Suffolk - contain social mobility cold spots that are in the lowest 20% nationally for social mobility¹⁰.

These are interconnected factors which impact on economic activity levels in Suffolk.

Economic Inactivity Headlines¹¹

During 2024 (January to December), 80.5% of people aged 16-64 (442,100 residents) in Suffolk were economically active. This is slightly higher than both the overall proportion of economically active in East of England (80.2%) and the UK (78.7%). Long term trends indicate that Suffolk has consistently tracked higher than the national average.

Inversely, 19.5% (86,000) of individuals in Suffolk aged between 16-64 were classed as economically inactive during 2024.

While the rate of economic inactivity has remained relatively constant over the past 10 years in Suffolk, the reasons that people are economically inactive has changed over time.

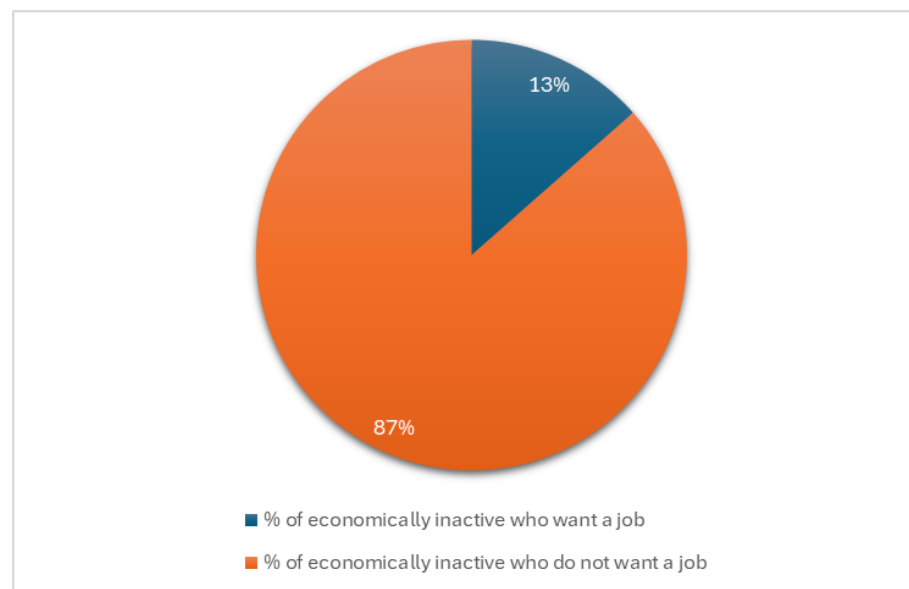
- In 2024, 29.6% (25,500) of those defined as economically inactive were classed as having a long-term sickness, compared with 24.7% in 2019. Suffolk's 2024 proportion was also higher than the East of England (24.7%) and the UK (27.4%).
- In Suffolk there is a higher proportion of people economically inactive due to retirement (16.5% compared to the national average of 12.4%).
- Of those who were economically inactive in Suffolk during 2024, just 13.5% (11,600) were reported as wanting a job. This was lower than the proportion of economically inactive wanting a job in the East of England (13.9%) and the UK (18.6%) and is the lowest it has been since the pandemic with a fall from 21.3% in January-December 2023

⁹ English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

¹⁰ Social Mobility Index 2017, Social Mobility Commission

¹¹ Annual Population Survey, NOMIS

Figure 3: Proportion of economically inactive who want a job 2024 (Annual Population Survey)



In 2024 (January-December), Suffolk's employment rate was 77.4% and unemployment rate was 3.9% (equating to 14,000 people), slightly better than national averages of 75.6% and 4.0% respectively. Over the last 10 years, Suffolk has consistently performed better than national average for employment rate, this figure has ranged from 76.6% to 80.0% over the last 10 years compared to national ranges from 73.8% to 76.0%.

Economic Inactivity Breakdown

Health Conditions and Disability

More working-age people in the UK are self-reporting long-term health conditions, with 36% saying that they had at least one long-term health condition in Quarter 1 (January to March) 2023, up from 31% in the same period in 2019 and 29% in 2016. For those economically inactive because of long-term sickness, nearly two-fifths (38%) reported having five or more health conditions (up from 34% in 2019), suggesting that many have interlinked and complex health issues¹²

¹² Rising ill-health and economic inactivity because of long-term sickness, UK: 2019 to 2023, Office for National Statistics

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is considered disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (EA core definition). This includes neurodivergent conditions such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia.¹³ Nationally, just 31% of neurodivergent people are in employment compared to 54.7% of people with disabilities overall¹⁴. This disparity underscores the need to recognise the distinct challenges faced by different groups within the disabled community, so that interventions can be better tailored and more effective.

Approximately 139,000 people in Suffolk are considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010, this equates to 18.3% of the total population (compared to 17.3% nationally). Whilst nationally this proportion has decreased slightly by 0.6% (17.9% in 2001 to 17.3% in 2021), locally this proportion has increased by more than 1% (17.1% in 2001 to 18.3% in 2021).¹⁵

In Suffolk, approximately 71,000 people who are disabled under the equality act are in employment. However, 45% of Suffolk's residents who are considered disabled under the equality act are economically inactive¹⁶ and in Suffolk in 2024, the unemployment rate for EA core or work-limiting disabled was 6.1%, this was slightly higher than the East of England average (6.0%) but slightly lower than the national average (6.4%)¹⁷.

The 'disability employment gap' is the difference in the employment rate of people with disabilities and people without disabilities. In Suffolk (2022/23) our disability employment gap varies across categories. Whilst the gap for those with a long-term health condition or for those in contact with secondary mental health services is smaller than the national average (9.0% compared to 10.4% for long-term health and 62.4% compared to 66.1% for mental health), Suffolk exceeds the national average for those with learning disabilities. In Suffolk this employment gap is 75.8% (versus 70.9% in England). This suggests individuals with learning disabilities in Suffolk may face greater barriers to employment than elsewhere in England. ¹⁸ Given the growing number of people in Suffolk with a disability it is imperative that we look to focus in on narrowing all aspects of the disability employment gap.

¹³ Equality Act 2010, Legislation.GOV.UK

¹⁴ Employment prospects for neurodiverse people set to be boosted with launch of new expert panel, Department for Work and Pensions

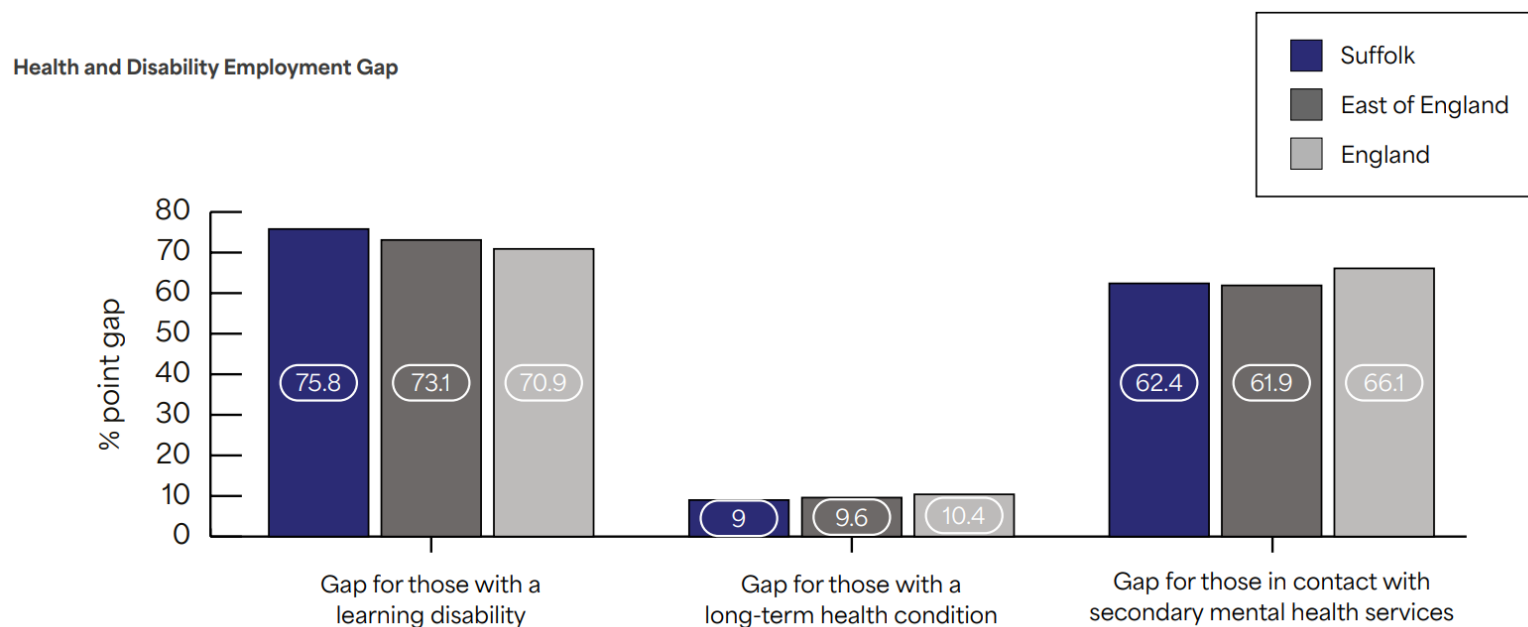
¹⁵ Disability, England and Wales: Census 2001, 2011, 2021, Office for National Statistics

¹⁶ 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

¹⁷ Annual Population Survey, NOMIS

¹⁸ The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Fingertips, Department of Health and Social Care

Figure 3: Employment Gap 22/23 (Suffolk Observatory, OHID)



Mental Health and Wellbeing

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a benefit designed to support people who are unable to work due to illness or disability. Almost 13,000 people were claiming ESA in Suffolk in November 2024. Mental and behavioural disorders account for almost half of claims (48%)¹⁹. There are between 7,000 and 10,000 new depression diagnoses in Suffolk every year (2013/14 to 2023/24)²⁰. Anxiety in combination with depression is the most prevalent reason for people in Suffolk & North-East Essex receiving personal independence payments (PiP) and being economically inactive due to health needs²¹. This is likely to be a long-term trend due to the prevalence of mental health conditions among young people, influenced by factors such as academic pressure, social media influence and the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁹ Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions

²⁰ The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Fingertips, Department of Health and Social Care

²¹ Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions

As noted in the Tackling Poverty Together²² report, the relationship between mental health and poverty is complex. Struggling with mental health and wellbeing can lead to financial difficulties, which in turn exacerbates mental health issues, trapping people in a vicious cycle, enhanced by long waiting lists and delayed interventions.

The report also highlights the difficulty of maintaining employment while struggling with mental health and wellbeing issues. It is important to have a supportive workplace, one where individuals can openly discuss their struggles without fear of repercussions and be reassured reasonable adjustments will be made.

Caring Responsibilities

In Suffolk, 16.7% of our economically inactive cohort are inactive due to looking after a family/home²³ and only 45% of 16–64-year-olds who provide 50 or more hours of unpaid care in Suffolk are in employment²⁴

It is important to note the limitations of available data. Without a breakdown of who the unpaid care is provided for (i.e. children, elderly, ill or disabled individuals) it is difficult to determine the barriers to work to be addressed and the level of need for specific interventions.

Suffolk's ageing population and the rising prevalence of complex care needs are placing increasing pressure on local health and social care services. However, the sector is already facing significant recruitment and retention challenges, particularly in roles such as care workers and home carers, which are persistently in high demand²⁵. These pressures are further exacerbated by external factors, including changes to immigration policy, rising national insurance contributions, and increases in the national living wage. Collectively, these factors are driving up the cost of care for service users. As a result, a growing number of individuals are likely to undertake unpaid caring responsibilities, further contributing to economic inactivity.

Understanding this challenge in greater depth may also present an opportunity. If we were able to harness the skills and experience of those who are economically inactive due to caring responsibilities, it may be possible for pathways to be created for them to enter and excel in the health and social care sector when they are ready to return to work.

²² Tackling Poverty Together, Healthwatch Suffolk

²³ Annual Population Survey, NOMIS

²⁴ 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

²⁵ Job Posting Analytics, Lightcast

Qualifications

In Suffolk, there is a skew towards lower qualifications compared to both regional and national averages.

The Adult Skills sub-domain of the Indices of Deprivation (2019)²⁶ measures the lack of qualifications in the resident working-age adult population. Of the 21 English county local authorities, Suffolk ranks 7th worst. 16% of Suffolk's LSOAs are within the 20% most deprived nationally for this measure.

Despite this, a slightly greater proportion of Suffolk's working age population hold at least a Level 1 qualification (90.0%) compared to the national average (89.0%). However, a smaller proportion of our workforce hold higher-level qualifications with only 61.0% qualified to Level 3 and above (compared to 67.3% nationally) and only 38.9% holding an RFQ L4+, compared to the national average of 46.8%²⁷.

²⁶ English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

²⁷ Annual Population Survey, NOMIS

Spatial and Demographic Disparities

Geography

Suffolk-wide economic activity and employment rates can mask regional disparities and pockets of deep deprivation and disadvantage. Suffolk's diverse mix of rural, coastal, and urban communities presents varying social and economic challenges.

Rural

- Public transport in rural Suffolk is often infrequent or unavailable, meaning residents in our rural areas often have limited transport options making access to key services more difficult and potentially limiting social mobility.
- Many rural areas in Suffolk have fewer local employers and limited job diversity. Residents often need to travel to urban centres like Ipswich or Bury St Edmunds for work, which can be an additional barrier.
- Although Suffolk's digital infrastructure is improving, some rural communities still experience poor broadband and mobile coverage, limiting access to remote work, online training, and job search platforms.
- Suffolk has a thriving agriculture sector offering a wide range of skilled and technical career opportunities; however, some roles can also be seasonal, low paid and physically demanding.

Coastal

- There are stark health inequalities within Suffolk, the percentage of the population not in good health ranges from 2.2% to 36.1% across Suffolk's neighbourhoods.²⁸ With much poor health concentrated along our coastal line.
- Some of our coastal communities have some of the poorest health outcomes in England, often alongside particularly high levels of deprivation and lower educational attainment.
- They also have a significantly higher economic inactivity rate²⁹ with several of our coastal communities in Suffolk amongst the most deprived nationally. For example, part of the Kirkley & Pakefield ward in Lowestoft in East Suffolk, is the 25th most deprived LSOA in England out of 32,844 LSOAs³⁰.

²⁸ 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

²⁹ Coastal Navigators' Network, Coastal Communities

³⁰ English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

- Suffolk's visitor economy contributes high levels of employment to the economy. However, particularly in coastal areas, availability of jobs is seasonal, which can lead to underemployment and discourage long-term workforce participation.
- Those in coastal communities often note particular issues in accessing opportunities, not least in part a result of the 'half compass effect' (180-degree recruitment radius due to the geographical location).
- Our coastal towns often have a higher proportion of older residents, many of whom are retired.
- The 'Turning the Tide' report, commissioned by NHS England and Suffolk & North East Essex ICB highlighted that long-term unemployment is projected to rise by 20% within a decade without intervention with intergenerational worklessness identified as a major challenge.³¹

Urban

- Urban areas often face pressures on affordable housing, in turn meaning social housing is more concentrated in urban areas of Suffolk, such as Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds, due to greater population density and pockets of deprivation. In Suffolk, 14.9% of tenure is 'social rented: rents from council or local authority or other social rented. This figure is 20.8% in Ipswich.³² Individuals in social housing often face multiple disadvantages, including low income, poor mental and physical health, low educational attainment, and stigma/discrimination which in turn can create environments where economic inactivity becomes entrenched, often across generations.
- Over 80,000 people live in the 11% of Suffolk's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that are within the 20% most deprived in England³³. Concentrations of deprivation differ across the county. Pockets of greater relative deprivation can be found in more built-up areas, such as Beccles, Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe, Ipswich, Lowestoft, and Stowmarket.
- Suffolk's urban areas also tend to have higher numbers of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs).

Our diverse spatial areas and the varying socio-economic challenges which come with them means our interventions must be specific and place based.

There are some variations in the rate and causes of economic inactivity that can be seen in data at a district level. For example, geographic analysis can be used to show significantly higher concentrations of economic inactivity due to long term sickness in Suffolk's urban areas (Ipswich, Lowestoft and Felixstowe) and in pockets of rural and coastal areas (Leiston, Stanton and Mildenhall).

³¹ Turning the Tide 2024, NHS England and Suffolk & North East Essex ICB

³² Ownership and tenancy type (2021), Suffolk Observatory

³³ English Indices of Deprivation 2019, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

However, given the small sample sizes used to gather the data, there are wide fluctuations, and we must be cautious in drawing definitive conclusions based solely on this.

Data and information on local variations is provided in Annexes C and L.

Gender

In Suffolk, the economic activity rate for males 16-64 is 87.2%, higher than the East of England average (84.9%) and England average (82.5%). On the other hand, the economic activity rate for females aged 16-64 is 74.8%, lower than the East of England average (75.7%) and England average (75.3%)³⁴. This means that Suffolk has wider than average gender disparity.

However, over the last 10 years the general trend shows the number of females economically active increasing and the number of males economically active decreasing. Understanding the reasons for this shift requires a consideration of the structural and societal barriers that shape labour market participation.

Currently more women are economically inactive than men due to a combination of structural, social, and economic factors that influence their participation in the labour market.

Factors such as gendered expectations, access to childcare, gender disparities in occupational sectors and health disparities can all contribute to these trends. We need to explore and understand these barriers through an intersectional lens to ensure that employment interventions are appropriately designed, equitable, and responsive to the diverse realities of individuals across society.

Women are more likely to take on unpaid caring responsibilities, children, elderly relatives, or family members with disabilities. Availability of affordable and flexible childcare or adult care options often forces women to leave or reduce their participation in paid work. Structural challenges such as limited access to training, low confidence after career breaks, and workplace cultures that may not always be inclusive or supportive of returners, further compound the issue. Upskilling and reskilling our career returners is essential to reducing economic inactivity among women in Suffolk.

³⁴ Annual Population Survey, NOMIS

Although narrowing our gender disparity gap should be a key focus, further research to monitor and understand the trend of increasing female and decreasing male economic activity should be undertaken to determine any correlation between an ageing population, the roles that males are employed in across Suffolk, and whether they are at greater risk of economic inactivity due to specific health conditions as they age.

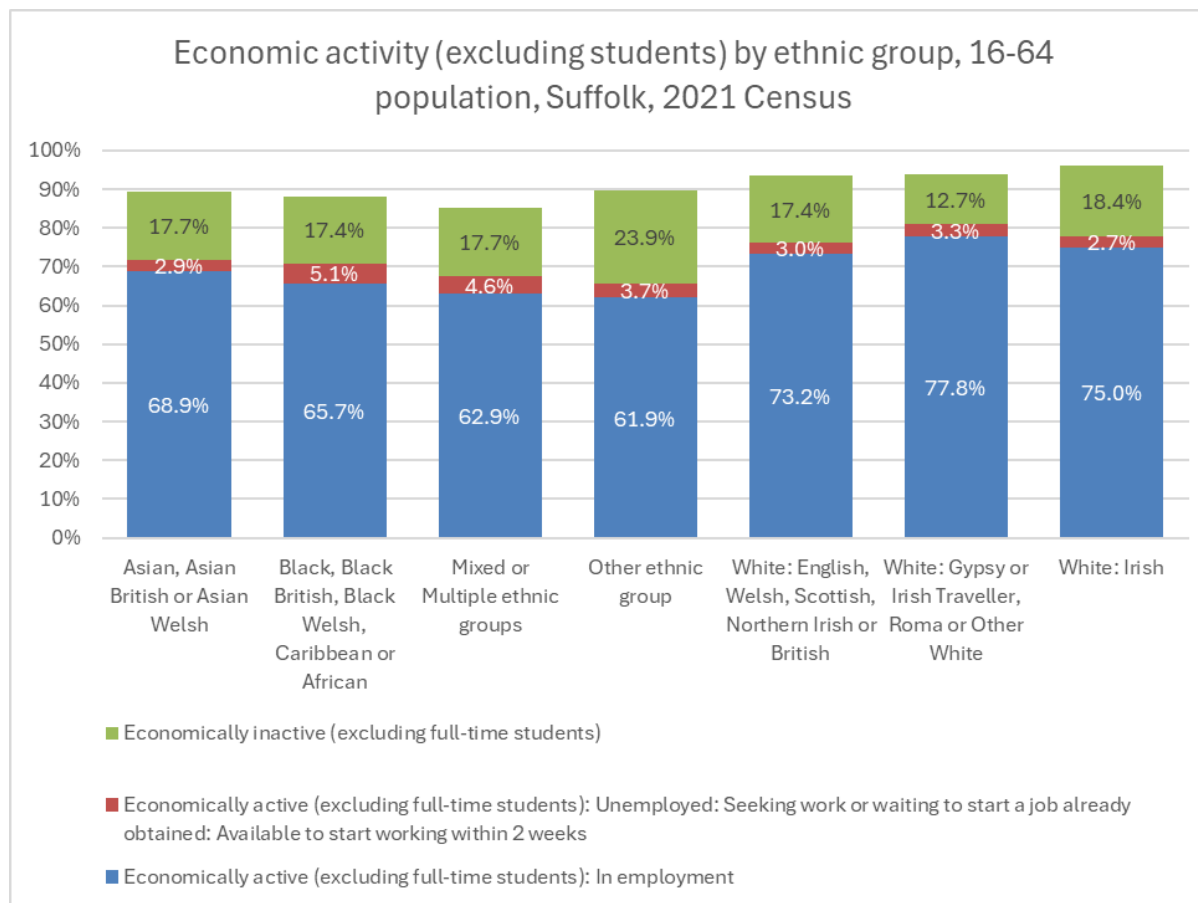
Ethnic Background

A review of economic inactivity data in Suffolk, split by ethnic group, reveals clear disparities, as shown below³⁵. We see highest levels of unemployment among Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African individuals (5.1%). Individuals from Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh, Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African, Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups and other ethnic group backgrounds all have a lower employment rate than White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British, White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller, Roma or Other White and White: Irish.

To understand the disparities in economic activity and employment rates between different groups we must consider the different structural barriers these groups are prone to experiencing. These can range from discrimination in the job market, health inequalities and cultural expectations. It is essential to move beyond a siloed analysis of structural barriers and groupings of individuals. Structural barriers do not operate in isolation, and individuals' experiences are shaped by the intersection of multiple factors, including ethnicity, gender, age, disability, and socio-economic background.

³⁵ 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics

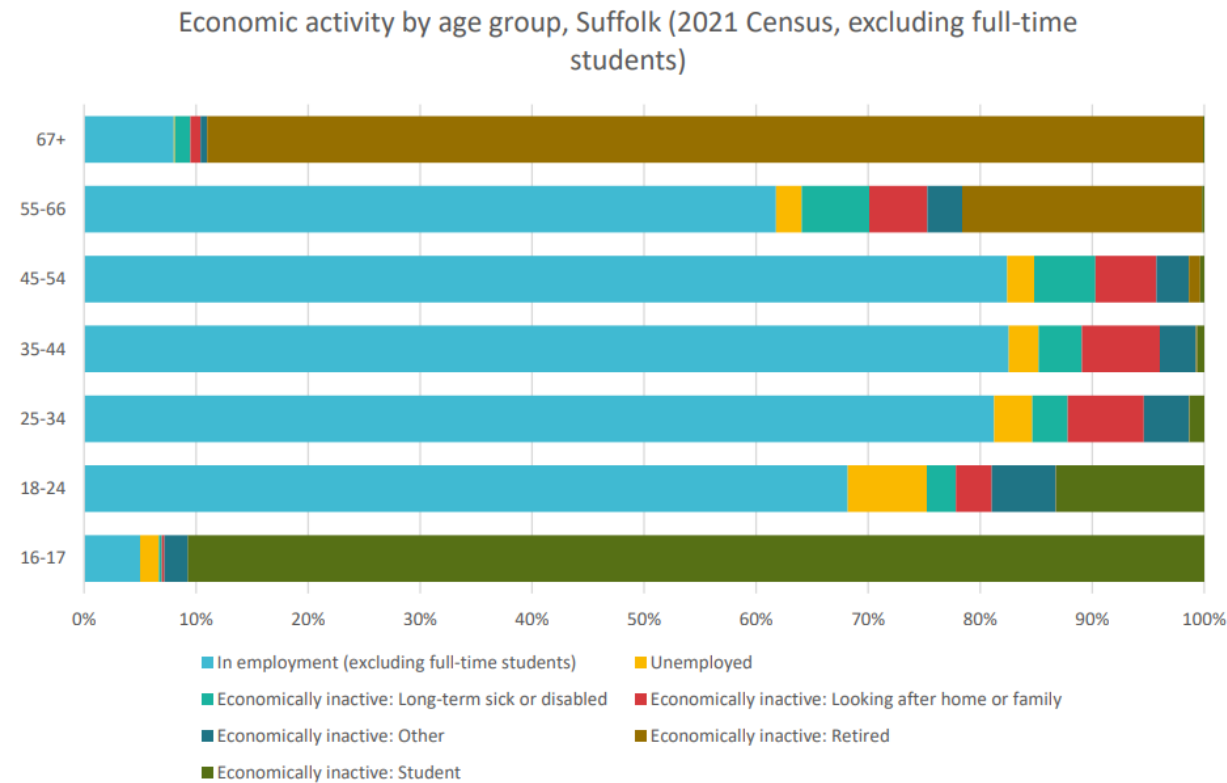
Figure 4: Economic Activity, (Census 2021)



Young People

The chart below indicates that economic activity is highest in the 25 – 54 age groups, unemployment is highest in the 18 – 24 age group and there is a high percentage of 55 – 66-year-olds who are economically inactive due to early retirement.

Figure 5: Economic activity by age (Census, 2021)



Understanding the current challenges faced by young people in Suffolk is essential for our understanding of economic inactivity in future years. In 2023/24, at Key Stage 2 (Age 11), only 58% of Suffolk pupils met the expected standard in reading, writing, and maths — 3 percentage points below the national average of 61%.

In 2023/24, at Key Stage 4 (Age 16) 62.8% of Suffolk pupils achieved grade 4 or above in English and maths, below the national average of 65.4%. By age 19, only 54% of Suffolk's young people achieve Level 3 qualifications, compared to 58% nationally, limiting access to higher education and skilled employment.³⁶ Suffolk also has a lower proportion of young people at academic age 16 and 17 known to be 'in learning' (90.18% for Suffolk compared to England 91.85% March 2024-25).³⁷ Trends in recent years also reveal the number of apprenticeships starts among under-19s and intermediate apprenticeships are decreasing at a disproportionate level.³⁸

Suffolk's proportion of young people at academic age 16 and 17 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and unknown was 5.60% in March 2025 (compared to 5.05% in the East of England and 5.25% nationally)³⁹. Whilst this proportion has remained fairly static, actual numbers are increasing as cohort sizes increase.

Children in Care and Care leavers (aged 16 – 25) are at particular risk of poor educational outcomes and unemployment, 57% of Suffolk's 17- to 18-year-old care leavers were in education, employment or training in 2023 compared to 66% Children in Care and Care leavers across England⁴⁰.

An increasing proportion and number of young people are requiring additional support to achieve their full potential, placing increasing demand on services. This includes those with special educational needs, disabilities and mental health challenges.

The above trends present a significant risk for future economic inactivity. These early disadvantages can have long-term consequences, as young people without qualifications or work experience are more likely to face barriers entering and sustaining employment. Therefore, Suffolk may see a growing segment of its working-age population excluded from the labour market. Some of the interventions with the greatest long-term impact is therefore those that address the economic inactivity of our young people.

There is a strong link between worklessness and health, particularly in how it affects children growing up in households where no one is employed. Evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) indicates that children aged 5 to 15 whose parents have never worked are nearly twice as likely to experience mental health issues compared to their peers whose parents are in low-skilled jobs⁴¹.

³⁶ KS2, KS4, KS5 published performance data for 2023/24, Department for Education

³⁷ NEET and Participation or Participation in Education, Employment and Training age 16-18, Suffolk County Council

³⁸ Apprenticeships and traineeships published data, Department for Education

³⁹ NEET and Participation or Participation in Education, Employment and Training age 16-18, Suffolk County Council

⁴⁰ State of Children in Suffolk (Autumn 2024), Healthy Suffolk

⁴¹ Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families Indicators 2024: Data for 2005 to 2023, Department for Work and Pensions

Support for young people often diminishes significantly once they leave the formal education system or surpass the age of 24. This creates a critical gap in support, where individuals at risk of long-term disengagement, particularly young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who are disproportionately represented in the NEET cohort, may fall through the cracks, ultimately contributing to the broader challenge of economic inactivity.

The Youth Opportunity Index 2025⁴², developed by the Learning and Work Institute, is a composite measure designed to assess and compare the education and employment prospects of young people across local and combined authorities in England. It draws on a range of indicators, including GCSE and Level 3 attainment, progression to higher education, apprenticeship starts, NEET rates, employment levels, and underemployment, to provide a holistic view of youth opportunity. Each area is scored with higher scores indicating stronger outcomes and greater opportunities for young people. Suffolk is in the lowest quartile of English local authorities with an overall score of 41 out of 100.

Figure 6: Youth Opportunity Index Score across Local Authorities in East of England

Score out of 100

Local Authority Name	Overall	GCSE Attainment	Level 3 Attainment	Progression to Higher Education	Apprenticeship Starts	NEET Rate	Employment Rate	Net Underemployment
▲								
Bedford	54	39	53	45	39	83	86	32
Cambridgeshire	53	58	52	52	24	72	55	55
Central Bedfordshire	57	42	47	40	56	71	86	58
Essex	55	45	51	40	45	58	74	70
Hertfordshire	63	67	79	69	32	75	76	42
Luton	44	42	46	59	23	69	18	52
Norfolk	46	43	39	29	35	52	57	70
Peterborough	41	36	32	41	27	43	32	78
Southend-on-Sea	62	77	81	63	36	80	53	47
Suffolk	41	38	46	33	49	45	26	51
Thurrock	52	40	44	33	46	68	70	62

⁴² The Youth Opportunity Index (2025), Learning and Work Institute

Jobs and Employment in Suffolk

Overview of Suffolk's Labour Market and Economy

Suffolk's economy is on a strong trajectory as set out in the Suffolk Economic Strategy. Underpinned by leading sectors in Clean Energy, Agri-Food & Drink and Ports and Logistics with a growing presence in ICT & Digital Creative, Life Sciences & Biotech and Financial Services, Suffolk is playing a vital national role in powering, feeding and connecting the UK.

High levels of growth in those leading sectors will increase workforce demand and create additional employment opportunities for Suffolk residents.

By 2025 the clean energy sector is projected to more than double to £1.5 billion. Suffolk already has 54% more clean energy jobs than the national average and further jobs will be created as nationally significant windfarms are completed and the supporting supply chains develop alongside. The construction of Sizewell C itself is expected to see up to 7,900 individuals employed on site at peak construction periods.

Suffolk has one of the largest agri-food and drink sectors in the country with 3,500 businesses employing over 41,000 people. Over the last decade the agri-food and drink sector has outpaced national job growth by 1.6% annually and is projected to grow a further two and a half times by 2050 to £4 billion.

Ports and Logistics contributes £1.2bn to the economy with 32% more jobs in Suffolk (29,400 employees) than the England average. The sector in Suffolk is set for continued growth, not least through the continued development of Freeport East which has the potential to create 13,500 jobs with a skills strategy to ensure that this expansion benefits local residents.

There are other sectors with notable presences in the county and strong potential for growth in businesses and new jobs resulting from close relationships with surrounding places and economies. This includes financial services and insurance, ICT Digital Creative and Life Science and Biotech.

Value growth opportunities exist within our large employment sectors where there will be continued and increasing high demand for labour and skills. As the two largest employment sectors in Suffolk, the health and social care sector and visitor economy account for circa 90,000 jobs between them. The advanced manufacturing and engineering (AME) sector employs 39,200 people across over 3,000 businesses, with a particular focus in West Suffolk. Suffolk has around 22% more construction jobs than the national average with a significant increase in demand

expected in future years due to the high volume of significant infrastructure projects in the region. The Suffolk Economic Strategy focuses on improving the productivity and the quality of job opportunities in these sectors.

The forecast increase in workforce demand will provide opportunities for Suffolk residents but will also exacerbate what is usually a tight labour market. There are currently around 3,000 fewer unemployed people in Suffolk than there are job postings.⁴³ Although job vacancies have dropped in recent months albeit to a lesser degree than national trends (from around 15,000 to 13,000), many employers are still likely to struggle to fill all their vacancies. This is despite there being more people of working age than jobs available according to the job's density ratio.⁴⁴ It is therefore a case of too few people being economically active, rather than there simply being too few people.

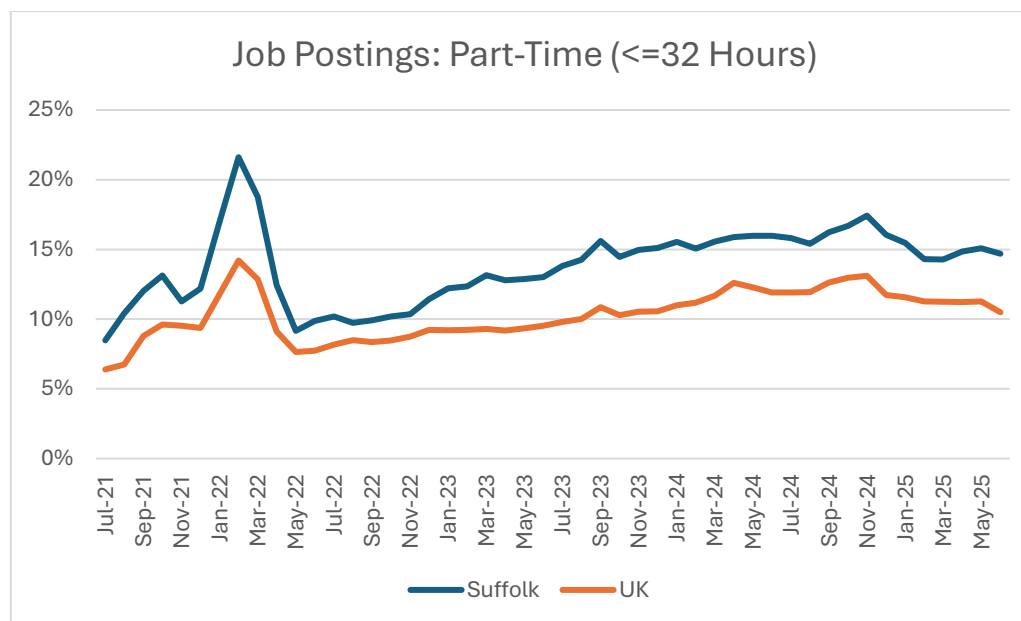
Demand across Suffolk's economy can and does fluctuate, particularly within some of Suffolk's key sectors including agri-food, hospitality and construction. All can experience significant volatility that can be masked within annual figures given the seasonal nature of some work and sensitivity of the sectors to wider economic forces. For individual workers this can result in a lack of job and financial security that can stifle an individual's ability and opportunity to develop and progress.

Although full time roles (>32 hours/week) consistently dominate Suffolk job postings, making up around 75%-85% of job listings over the past 5 years, Suffolk also has a greater proportion of part-time and flexible hours job postings than the national average. This is partly due to Suffolk having a high employment density in industries with a high proportion of part-time staff, such as Wholesale & Retail Trade, and a lower employment density in industries with a low proportion of part-time staff, such as Information & Communication and Financial & Insurance Services.

⁴³ Job Posting Analytics, Lightcast

⁴⁴ Job Density, NOMIS

Figure 7: Job Postings for part time roles (Lightcast)



There is consistently high demand across the Suffolk economy for roles generally requiring lower-level qualifications resulting in a wage profile below the national average.

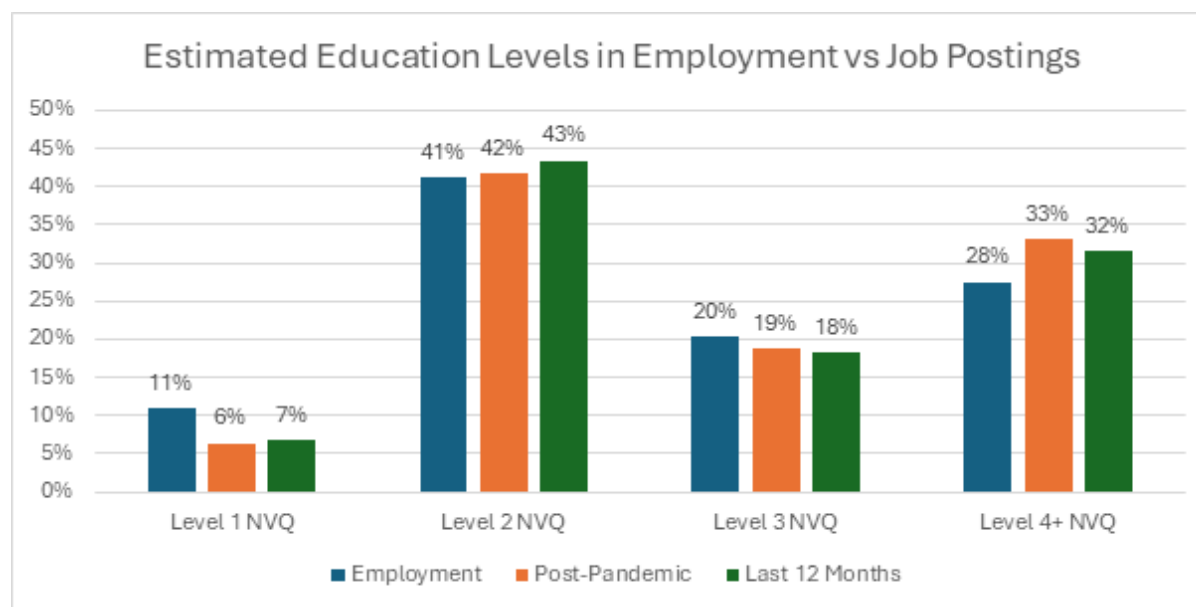
Elementary Administration and Service Occupations alongside Caring Personal Service Occupations are currently, and consistently, the occupational areas with the highest average number of unique monthly job postings. More specifically (using 4-digit SOC codes), there has been consistent demand for care workers, cleaners, nursing professionals and sales and customer service-related occupations over the last five years. However, in the last year, whilst we have seen reductions in most occupational areas there has been notable increases in demand for transport and mobile machine drivers and operatives, perhaps a reflection of the expansion of demand in both the construction and ports and logistics sectors, as well as kitchen and catering assistants, dental and early childcare practitioners.

As would be expected based on the demand by occupation data, roles requiring no more than a Level 2 qualification remain the backbone of Suffolk's labour market with an estimated 41% of current employment share and 42% of job postings since the pandemic. This is driven by the

high volumes of postings for cleaners, domestics and warehouse operators, care workers and customer service roles, particularly in the main urban areas of Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds.

Demand by qualification is, however, shifting towards higher level roles as the labour market starts to reflect the changes we are seeing within the economy, including cross-sector adoption of new methods and technologies as well as the high level and emerging growth referenced above and described in more detail in the Suffolk Economic Strategy. The % of job postings requiring level 4+ is higher than their current employment share (33% over the last five years compared to 28% market share) whilst Level 1 role vacancies are advertised significantly less than their current market share.

Figure 8: Education levels vs job postings (Lightcast)



By considering a number of factors, including posting intensity, duration, competition between employers and differences between advertised and current wage levels we can look to provide an indication of which vacancies in demand are the most hard-to-fill.

Mirroring to a degree those occupations that are the most in demand, the hardest to fill vacancies in Suffolk over the past five years have been across caring, health, sales and elementary administration and service occupations. However skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades have also been consistently hard to fill, appearing to increase by more than any other area apart from caring occupations over the last year. This is important to note given the increase in demand expected in mechanical, heating and electrical roles across the construction, engineering and energy sectors.

Most of the skills requested in postings reflects the findings of the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan. This includes communications which is the top common skill required in postings in Suffolk over the past five years and problem solving which has seen a notable increase in demand over the past twelve months. Specialised skills in consistently high demand since the pandemic include auditing, finance, personal care and warehousing.

More detail on the demand for roles by sector can be found in Annex K.

Geographic Disparities

Job availability does vary across the county, a useful indication being the average monthly job posting per area ranging from as little as 0.15 per business unit in Babergh to 0.79 in Ipswich.

The full table below highlights that whilst job posting has reduced in the last twelve months, postings in Suffolk have held up well in comparison to the national drop in postings with the Mid Suffolk average slightly increasing. However, Suffolk's average monthly job postings per business unit remains consistently lower than the UK average, both post-pandemic and in the last 12 months, indicating relatively lower recruitment activity per business in Suffolk than some other areas of the country.

Region	Avg. Monthly Job Postings per Business Unit (Post-Pandemic)	Avg. Monthly Job Postings per Business Unit (Last 12 Months)
Suffolk	0.42	0.36
United Kingdom	0.70	0.47
<i>Babergh</i>	<i>0.15</i>	<i>0.15</i>
<i>East Suffolk</i>	<i>0.28</i>	<i>0.29</i>

<i>Ipswich</i>	<i>0.99</i>	<i>0.79</i>
<i>Mid Suffolk</i>	<i>0.17</i>	<i>0.19</i>
<i>West Suffolk</i>	<i>0.50</i>	<i>0.39</i>

Primary Drivers and Causes of Economic Inactivity

The information provided in preceding sections helps us to identify and understand the drivers and causes behind some of the reasons for economic inactivity and, as a result, where attention is required to address economic inactivity in Suffolk. The following section sets out what we believe those main drivers and barriers to be by considering both the data analysis above and information gathered from service users and stakeholder organisations for the development of this plan.

Health is now the primary driver of economic inactivity in Suffolk with a long-term health condition, disability or illness being the top single reason given (29.6% of all those economically inactive). This is the highest it has been in the past ten years and has risen from 24% in the last three years.

DWP risk analysis also identifies health reasons as a major risk factor for economic inactivity, with the presence of two or more health conditions significantly impacting a young person's chances, to an even greater degree than education⁴⁵.

The top three causes of health impacting a person's ability to work are mental health conditions, musculoskeletal and neurological. Mental health conditions are increasingly prevalent, particularly those in the younger age cohort. Recent research by the British Chambers of Commerce found that one in four young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) are unable to work due to their mental health⁴⁶ and in Suffolk, the percentage of children in school with social, emotional and mental health needs has increased each year since 2016/17.⁴⁷

Organisations across the work, health and skills system are increasingly recognising and looking to respond to this issue, including employers with 65% of employers agreeing that the workplace should provide mental health support for employees⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Keep Britain Working, Department for Work and Pensions

⁴⁶ Creating Job Opportunities for Gen Z (2025), British Chamber of Commerce

⁴⁷ Mental Health in Children and Young People (2025), Suffolk County Council

⁴⁸ Employer Survey (2024), Department for Work and Pensions

The proportion of people with a long-term musculoskeletal condition in Suffolk is consistently similar or slightly better than the national average⁴⁹. More prevalent in older age groups, it is the second most common reason for an Employment and Support Allowance claim, although it accounts for significantly less than mental health conditions (e.g. 12% compared to 48% in November 2024)⁵⁰. Treating and preventing cases of musculoskeletal conditions, as well as finding alternative forms of work for those suffering from such conditions, could remove barriers to employment for a significant number of people in Suffolk.

Developing a deeper understanding of the prevalence of health-related barriers by group would support the development of targeted interventions. For example, ensuring a wider understanding and awareness of women's health issues and the impact these can have on career and employability.

Long-term sickness is the main reason given by people with disabilities for being economically inactive. Department for Work and Pensions research reveals economically inactive people that are disabled are more likely to want a job than the full cohort.⁵¹ However, economically inactive people with disabilities are less likely to have had a job in the last two years.

This highlights a deep-rooted issue. People with disabilities who want to work are remaining economically inactive, not due to lack of motivation, but because structural barriers, perceptions and long-term exclusion from the labour market make it significantly harder for them to access and sustain employment. National surveys have suggested that many employers (54%) express concerns about the ability of a disabled person to do the job and that 28% of people with disabilities who left work experienced discrimination in the workplace⁵². National reports suggest that employers often find it difficult to know how to support those that are disabled, may fear the cost implications of reasonable adjustments and even where to find information and support to do so. Employers in Suffolk cite the need for a simplified, less fragmented support system to help businesses, and in particular SMEs, to navigate opportunities and match the needs of their staff with the support on offer. Examples of where improvements could be made include job adverts, being compatible with assistive technology and ensuring that physical and other accessibility concerns are addressed at interview. Candidates also need to be provided with the confidence (e.g. through psychological support and workplace education rather than intrusive forms) to disclose disabilities as employers also highlighted incidences of candidates and employees missing out on reasonable adjustments.

⁴⁹ The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Fingertips, Department of Health and Social Care

⁵⁰ Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions

⁵¹ The employment of people with disabilities (2024), Department for Work and Pensions

⁵² Disabled employee retention, SCOPE

A recent focus group⁵³ with parent carers looking to support the young people they care for into employment highlighted concerns that there remain prevalent perspectives that 'SEND' equates to low attainment and ability, and that there is a limited range of employment options for those with disabilities. It was suggested that full-time apprenticeships are often challenging and that very limited guidance exists on entrepreneur or self-employed guidance for this cohort.

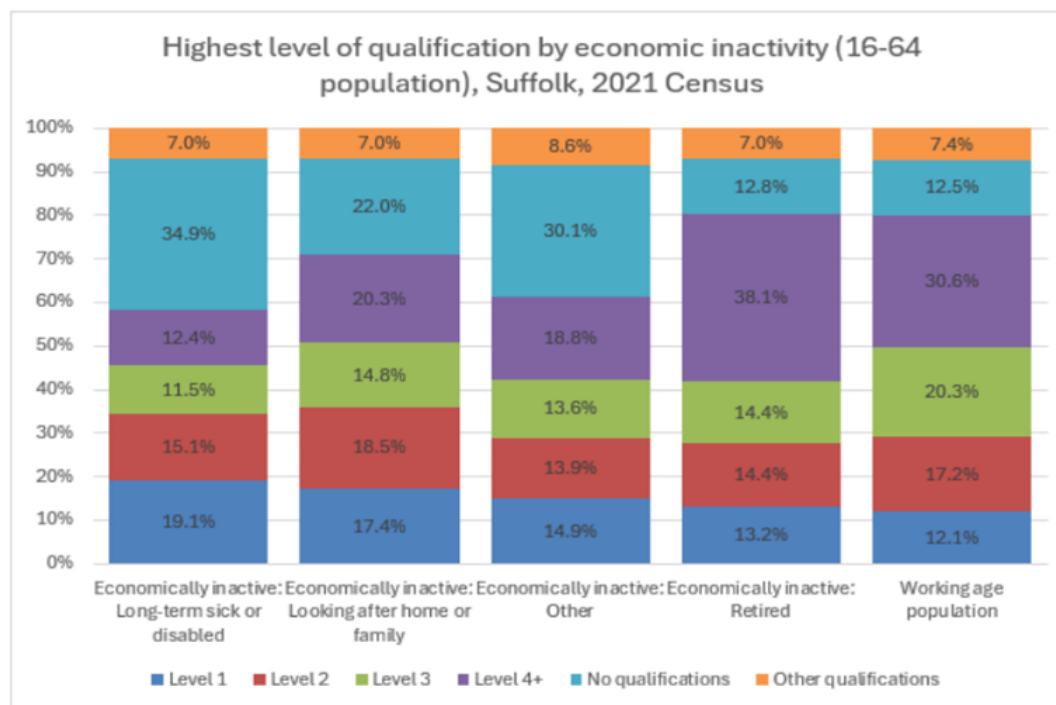
With a relatively higher proportion of those that are disabled in Suffolk than other areas, we need to identify, understand and address these structural barriers to ensure Suffolk is making the most of the talent that exists amongst those that have disabilities. We can also identify where good inclusive practices exist and look to promote and build upon them. Examples highlighted by employers in Suffolk include work experience programmes linked to SEND engagement, being a Disability Confident Employer and the use of analytics and specialist staff to build inclusive hiring environments and paid internships.

Low levels of aspiration and qualifications are also key drivers of economic inactivity. Lower qualification levels can limit growth, helping to entrench low productivity and low wages in the economy, limiting personal progression.

The following bar chart demonstrates the correlation between qualification levels in the Suffolk population and economic inactivity.

⁵³ Suffolk Parent Carers Forum

Figure 9: Qualification levels by economic activity (Census, 2021)



Those who are economically inactive (excluding those who have retired) are significantly more likely to have a lower or no level of qualifications than those in the working age population as a whole: a range of 22% - 34.9% no qualifications in economically inactive cohorts, compared to only 12.5% for the working age population overall.

Recent research from British Chambers of Commerce found, at a national level, 79% of 18-24 who are out of work due to ill health have only GCSE qualifications or lower.⁵⁴

Easy to access, entry level qualification programmes can provide the economically inactive cohorts the opportunity to gain a qualification while addressing the barriers they face (e.g. transport, caring needs, disabilities etc).

⁵⁴ Growth Through People (2025), British Chambers of Commerce

34.9% of people economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability have no qualifications which is notably higher than the working age average of 12.5%. 27% of adult skills enrolments in Suffolk were from a learner that considers themselves to have a learning difficulty and/or disability and/or a health problem while 15% of adult skills enrolments in Suffolk were from learners with no prior qualifications.⁵⁵ This highlights the integral role adult learning plays in reducing economic inactivity in Suffolk.

Efforts to raise aspirational levels are important as a means to help drive up both participation and qualification levels as part of a wider ambition to enable a culture of lifelong learning, personal and professional development. Work is underway in Suffolk through initiatives such as 'icanbea' (led by The Mason Trust and supported by Suffolk County Council) which provides details on the variety and wealth of careers options in Suffolk and the work being undertaken to ensure Sizewell C and Freeport East are used as catalysts for increasing aspirations across all age groups.

Work aspiration among the economically inactive appears low with only 13% of those in Suffolk who are economically inactive wanting a job. However, as the LGA report Make It Local⁵⁶ notes, not all the economically inactive cohorts can be seen as 'addressable'. Although some may have made conscious decisions to leave the labour market after becoming disillusioned or demotivated (and might therefore benefit from support), many of those not wanting a job will have reasons too challenging to be overcome and be very difficult to bring back into the labour market. It should, however, be noted that a low % of those who are economically inactive wanting a job may also suggest that those that do want a job are being supported into work.

Based on the local survey work undertaken for Get Suffolk Working, some DWP Work Coaches highlighted a lack of financial incentives to work as one of the top three reasons for economic inactivity. The Tackling Poverty in Suffolk report⁵⁷ also notes that for some people, 'if the job does not pay sufficiently, then it may actually make them worse off once the costs of work (e.g. travel and childcare) are factored in. This finding supports statements published by the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee that people without work can be incentivised to claim health-related benefits; and once in receipt of them, they have neither the incentive nor support to find and accept a job.⁵⁸ Instead, those who receive health-related benefits should be proactively helped to overcome obstacles rather than remain on benefits and out of work indefinitely. We will continue to monitor the impact of welfare reforms designed to remove any perverse incentives and, through the Get Suffolk Working partnership, provide the information and support needed to tackle a lack of aspiration.

⁵⁵ 2022/23 ESFA Localities Data Cube, Department for Education

⁵⁶ Make it Local, Local Government Association

⁵⁷ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/2022-07-18-tackling-poverty-strategy-2022.pdf>

⁵⁸ Economic inactivity: welfare and long-term sickness (2025), House of Lords Economic Affairs Inquiry

To strengthen our ability to tackle this we need to continue to strengthen our understanding at an individual level. We need to understand why people do not have the skills and qualifications required to get into employment, whether it is due to low aspiration or a lack of time, income or availability of the training and support they need.

The availability and accessibility of jobs and support differs across Suffolk and can be both a driver of economic inactivity itself as well as a barrier for those wanting to return to the labour market. In addition to the points made above regarding ensuring access into employment for those that are disabled, availability and accessibility is also determined by a number of other factors. The Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan notes transport and digital access as significant barriers to participation in both training and employment. For those that require it, accessibility to training to upskill or support and coaching to prepare them for work may also be a barrier. This signifies the importance of infrastructure enabling both digital and geographical connectivity across the county.

Access to transport is a key challenge in Suffolk with recent reports⁵⁹ analysing the prevalence of Transport Related Social Exclusion (TRSE). This is more of an issue in areas of the county with a smaller range and number of jobs available (primarily coastal and rural areas), and therefore a greater likelihood of residents needing to make longer journeys to work. Common themes arising from these reports includes:

- many rural areas lacking frequent, reliable public transport
- long commutes and poor connectivity hindering job opportunities
- access to colleges and post-16 training is uneven
- transport costs disproportionately affect low-income households

There is a wide range of TRSE risk levels across Suffolk neighbourhoods, but generally coastal and rural areas were classified as having a moderate to high risk.

These findings are supported by the responses from DWP Work Coaches to our Get Suffolk Working survey. 'Being unable to access work due to transport or rurality issues', was the second most prominent reason (behind health) given for economic inactivity and the main barrier highlighted by a small sample of JCP users in both Lowestoft and Sudbury.

⁵⁹ Transport Related Social Exclusion, Transport East

Transport as a barrier also featured prominently in the feedback from several organisations working with those that are economically inactive, including the VCFSE sector. Our employer forum highlighted that although some larger employers may sometimes be able to take steps to offset this issue (e.g. laying on transport options or subsidising driving lessons), SMEs lack the capacity and resource to do so.

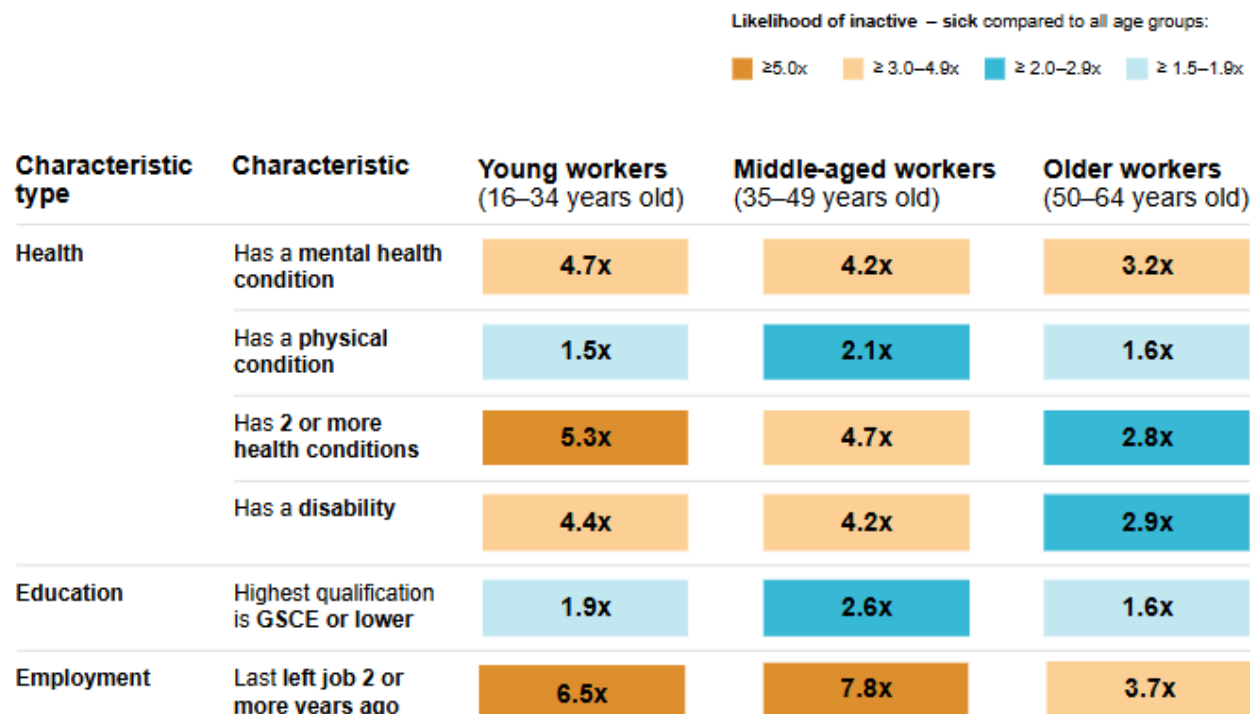
Digital poverty can result from one of, or combination of, a lack of a digital connection, digital skills or sufficient data to meet their essential needs. According to the Digital Poverty Alliance, this can affect people of all ages with 20% of people in the UK affected and 26% of young people lacking access to devices like laptops. Technological advancements are also widening an existing inequality gap based on income. Digital exclusion is identified as a major barrier to improving circumstances of those suffering from poverty or low incomes.

Key groups that are disproportionately impacted by transport and connectivity barriers are young people, those in rural or coastal communities, those with low incomes and those with a disability impacting mobility or the ability to drive.

It is important to note that the primary reason that some 17% of those who are economically inactive in Suffolk is because they have caring responsibilities. This tends to be concentrated in urban areas, but with some rural hotspots including Stanton, Mildenhall, Rendlesham and Reydon, with females disproportionately impacted. However, without a more detailed breakdown of the reasons for care being required (e.g. a disabled family member, a terminal illness, financial or personal decision to look after children) it is difficult to draw clear conclusions about the associated drivers of economic inactivity linked to care provision in Suffolk. We therefore need to strengthen our understanding of caring responsibilities and the limitations these place on a person's ability or aspiration to work in order to identify possible actions.

All of the above drivers and barriers need to be considered to help get Suffolk working. Several groups are identified as being particularly susceptible to certain drivers, but we need to do more to improve our understanding at a local level of the intersectionality between drivers and various groups to enable us to target finite resources on clear priorities that will have significant impact. We can do so by building off research that has been undertaken at a national level such as the analysis, undertaken by DWP below, to identify the likelihood of economic inactivity by characteristic and age.

Figure 10: Likelihood of economic inactivity by characteristics and age group (Labour Force Survey 2024)⁶⁰



Key Conclusions

Suffolk’s employment and economic activity rate currently compares favourably with national averages. However, the population of Suffolk is ageing, meaning the ratio of workers to ‘dependant’ populations is decreasing. At the same time there is likely to be a significant increase in demand for labour across our high growth, emerging and value growth sectors, driven by new developments (such as significant infrastructure projects), innovation and increasing demand for services such as health and social care. This means, that despite a recent drop in job postings, a

⁶⁰ Keep Britain Working Review, 2025, Department for Work and Pensions

tight labour market is likely to become even tighter and there is a need to increase the economic activity rates of the working age population as much as possible.

To achieve this, we must aim to tackle an increasing rate of health-related economic inactivity and unemployment, as well as further focus on the disability, age and gender disparities.

This will need to be achieved despite expected increases in levels of disability and mental health conditions within the working age population that will further increase the scale of support needed.

As the requirements of our employers change in line with innovation and growth in the economy, we will also need to ensure our workforce adapts to mitigate against movement from employment into unemployment and potential economic inactivity. This includes women, young people aged 20-24, and part-time workers who are most likely to be in roles at high risk of automation⁶¹ including A.I.

Employers play a vital role in fostering an inclusive workplace culture that supports individuals with mental health conditions and disabilities to enter and remain in employment. By creating environments that prioritise flexibility and accessibility, employers can break down barriers that often lead to economic inactivity. When employers actively champion diversity, equity and inclusion, they can empower individuals to thrive and benefit as organisations from a more engaged, resilient, and productive workforce.

The proportion of economically inactive individuals who want a job compared to those who do not want a job fluctuates year on year. A higher number of individuals who want a job could indicate untapped potential. The reasons why they are not in work will vary and, in some cases, be complex. However, it may also suggest that existing barriers are not being effectively addressed. A higher number of individuals who do not want a job could reflect a growing sense of frustration or disillusionment among those who feel excluded from the labour market. The different possible interpretations of these trends underscore the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of both groups to ensure interventions are inclusive and responsive to the full spectrum of needs.

Despite a lower than average % of those economically inactive wanting to work, we need to identify, engage and support them to do so, whilst continuing to raise aspirations and remove barriers where possible for those who state they do not want a job. Identifying and engaging these individuals will require coordination across the work, health and skills system.

⁶¹ JSNA Work and Health in Suffolk 2024, Healthy Suffolk

There are, of course, multiple underlying and interconnected factors which contribute to, and exacerbate, economic inactivity and the disparities we see in Suffolk. Although we know what many of these individual drivers and causes are (as outlined above), some of the reasons that people are economically inactive can be deep-rooted and complex, even contributing to intergenerational worklessness. We need to strengthen our understanding of the intersectionality of these causes and drivers, and how they affect particular groups (including by ethnicity) so that we can ensure our interventions and effort are targeted and impactful.

We also need to consider job availability and the expected demand in particular sectors, especially those sectors and developments that may be able to provide the entry level roles that many of our residents with barriers to employment could benefit from. For example, could we harness the skills and experience of those who are economically inactive due to caring responsibilities, and create pathways for them to enter and excel in the health and social care sector where we have a consistent and increasing demand.

Some of the work to respond to these challenges is already being undertaken. The rest of the Get Suffolk Working plan sets out what is already happening and provides an initial plan to further enhance the impact of activity across the work, health and skills system.

SECTION 3: CURRENT SYSTEM AND OFFER – ADDRESSING ECONOMIC INACTIVITY IN SUFFOLK

Work is already being undertaken by a wide range of organisations to help address the causes and drivers of economic inactivity in Suffolk and provide the support and provision needed to move individuals closer to, and into, the labour market.

Current Strategic Landscape

There is a strong golden thread of priorities, ambitions, objectives and actions focused on addressing economic inactivity running through regional and local strategies and plans. This includes the following.

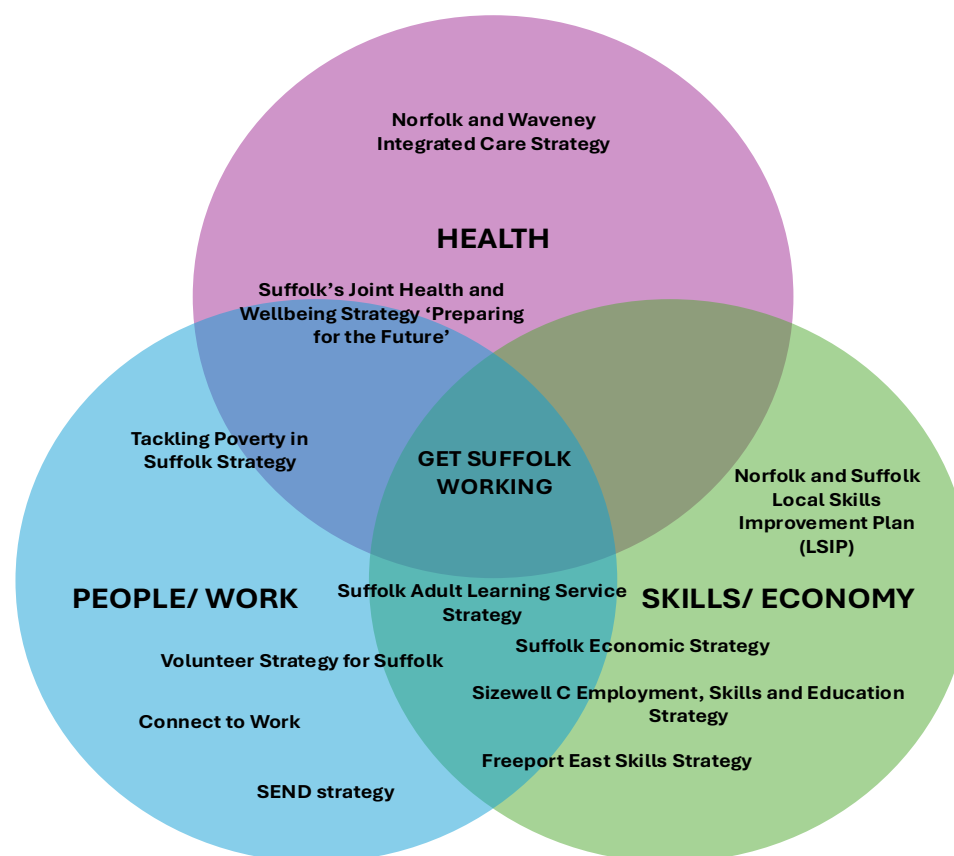
- The **Suffolk Economic Strategy (2024)** aims to boost productivity through workforce health and wellbeing initiatives and build an inclusive talent pipeline for the Suffolk economy. This includes an ambition to grow the economically active population by 35,000 by 2045. The strategy includes the EPIC framework, which aims to guide decision-making and ensure investments focus on interventions with the highest impact for achieving our collective goals. The “I” stands for “Inclusive”, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and shared prosperity. Inclusive growth is central to addressing economic inactivity, as it helps ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from Suffolk’s economic future.
- The **Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)** aims to address the skills gaps and shortages in the region by improving accessibility to high-quality training, education, and employment opportunities for the local workforce. It is addressing this by strengthening collaboration between employers and further education (FE) providers to ensure training is aligned with local needs. The plan also emphasises the importance of soft skills, such as communication, adaptability and teamwork. Soft skills play a role in reducing economic inactivity because they enhance employability across all sectors.
- The **Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Strategy** looks to address health inequalities, reflecting the importance of decent work on good physical and mental health
- Suffolk’s **Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy ‘Preparing for the Future’ (2022-2027)** addresses the wider determinants of health and wellbeing, including employment, and supporting good mental health for all. One of the priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board is good work and health.
- **Tackling Poverty in Suffolk Strategy (2022)** sets out actions to support people living in crisis, those whose disposable income is decreasing and could be at risk of experiencing poverty and addressing the root causes and impact of poverty
- **SEND Strategy 2024-2029** – co-developed with partners from across health, education, social care and the voluntary sector, this sets out how services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Suffolk are delivered, including those that look to prepare those with SEND for change and transition into adulthood
- **Volunteer Strategy for Suffolk (2025-2028)** supporting people to volunteer, and be more engaged in their community to enhance wellbeing and actively encourage participation.
- Strategies to capitalise on specific developments such as the **Freeport East Skills Strategy** (providing additional employment opportunities for all, but especially those who are currently inactive, unemployed or underemployed) and the **Sizewell C Employment, Skills and**

Education Strategy (providing access to training and skills along with commitments to help support those furthest from the labour market).

- In addition, there are many delivery plans of particular service areas and projects that support the progression of those who are, or at risk of being, economically inactive. Examples include the **Suffolk Adult Learning Service Strategy** and the **Connect to Work** Delivery Plan. More information on both of these and other specific service areas is provided below.

The Get Suffolk Working approach is intended to bring together, align with and support rather than duplicate these, and all other related, pre-existing strategies. A detailed list of the aims and ambitions aligned to Get Suffolk Working are provided at Annex H

Figure 11: Strategic Landscape



Activity and Support - The Work, Health and Skills System

Department of Work and Pensions

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) is a government agency, funded by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) that provides the core support on offer in England to help individuals of working age who are on welfare or unemployed to find work including the provision of several related benefits including Jobseeker's Allowance, Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments and the Disability Living Allowance.

There is a wide range of support offered by JCP across Suffolk to help individuals—especially those on working-age benefits—overcome barriers and move into work. This includes targeted support programmes for individual's dependant on various characteristics (such as age), current personal circumstances (such as disability, long-term unemployed) and previous experience (such as military leavers or those transitioning from custody).

DWP also offers a comprehensive employer offer, including help with job matching, work experience, advertising, and pre-employment training (such as Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes).

Support specifically aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities or health conditions to enter and stay in work is also available including specialist advice, funding for workplace adjustments and 'passports' to help individuals communicate their support needs to employers.

More information on the DWP offer can be found in Annex E.

Integrated Care Boards

Suffolk & North East Essex (SNEE) and *Norfolk & Waveney* (N&W) ICBs have a responsibility to support the health and work agenda by improving outcomes in population health and health care through strategic commissioning, supporting the social and economic development of Suffolk, tackling inequalities in outcomes, experience, and access and enhancing productivity and value for money.

In addition, the ICB is a large-scale employer and contractor. SNEE and N&W have a current clustering arrangement which provides an opportunity to unify the existing momentum around the agenda to collaboratively develop and implement an *ICB Health and Work Strategy* which is currently in development.

Neither the ICBs nor the wider health sector, can achieve this in isolation. It is their responsibility to collectively articulate the socio-economic drivers of health, identifying the relationship between work and health and how they relate to our system partners and respective priorities and strategic planning. The ICBs work closely with NHS provider organisations to support them to maximise their impact, whilst recognising the potential of wider 'Anchor' organisations and how we collectively address the root causes of economic inactivity, as well as providing opportunities for citizens to move into and/or remain in employment.

Public Health and Communities

The Public Health and Communities (PH&C) directorate within Suffolk County Council is responsible for helping people stay healthy and protecting them from threats to their health. A key pillar of the directorate's work is supporting the population to be well in mid-life and age well. It aims to reduce economic inactivity by improving population health, tackling health inequalities, and enabling people to enter, remain in, or return to work. It fulfils key roles within the wider health, work and skills system, directly providing health improvement and prevention activity, workplace health promotion, data & intelligence and strategic leadership and collaboration.

Specific PH&C services and programmes of work that support those who are economically inactive or at risk are included in our annexes.

PH&C also delivers criminal exploitation training to DWP with the aim of preventing vulnerable young people being drawn into criminality. It also has a range of accommodation options in the county for high-risk victims fleeing domestic abuse who, as part of holistic support, are (at the right time) supported into work.

Local Authorities

Local Authorities in Suffolk, those at both a County and District or Borough level, have a major role to play in addressing economic inactivity, both as strategic coordinators and direct deliverers of related research, services and activity.

Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care (ASC) directorate works directly with a growing number of adults who are eligible for support through the Care Act 2014. Primarily this means working with people who are 18 years and over, and includes those with a physical or learning disability, mental health need, autism, sensory impairment along with adults struggling with alcohol or drug dependency and at risk of abuse or neglect. ASC services are delivered and commissioned across three tiers of support including help to help yourself (Tier 1), short-term support/re-enablement (Tier 2) and on-going long-term support (Tier 3); prevent, reduce and delay are the golden threads across all three.

Suffolk County Council's Adult Learning Service receives an annual contract from the Department for Education to provide Adult Learning Programmes across Suffolk. Suffolk County Council provides the leadership, central management and the strategic direction. All learning is subcontracted and delivered through a network of local organisations and in academic year 2025-26, this will also include the three Further Education Colleges in Suffolk.

The intent of the service is to provide high quality learning opportunities for those adults in Suffolk who face the greatest barriers to securing employment or playing a full part in society, so that they can make progress in securing a better future for themselves, their families and communities with a target of at least 60% of learners being either unemployed and/or economically inactive. The Service aims to deliver in excess of 4000 learning aims each academic year for over 2000 learners, and through its subcontractors delivers a broad and balanced programme of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities across the County.

Suffolk County Council also provides youth support services for those who are not accessing education, employment or training. They work collaboratively with schools and other key partners to identify young people who may need extra support to successfully transition at year 11 and decide who is best placed to offer this, including exploring options for in school and local community support. The children who are most likely to become NEET are our most vulnerable i.e. children in need, children in care, young carers, and children with mental health conditions and/or SEND.

The SCC Virtual School hosts a number of mechanisms to support the Leaving Care Service in addressing unemployment inequalities in Suffolk's care leaver cohort. The Family Business initiative is creating employment pathways that empower care leavers. The Family Business helps to create ringfenced apprenticeships and paid work placements in the local authority and support through a dedicated coordinator, tasked with upholding a level of support akin to a real family business. Anchoring this work, the Skills Academy programme equips care leavers who are NEET with the confidence, credentials, and networks to thrive. In addition, the Virtual School continues to facilitate a regular panel which brings together key professionals to troubleshoot and coordinate tailored support for care leavers.

District and Borough Councils play a crucial role in addressing economic inactivity in Suffolk. While they don't lead on skills and employment policy, they deliver a range of local services and interventions that help people move towards and into work. This includes housing and homeless support. Secure affordable housing is a key foundation from which an individual can build towards employment. Our local authorities in Suffolk provide temporary accommodation and work closely with other organisations including housing associations and charitable organisations like Shelter and Emmaus to respond to and prevent homelessness in their areas. Other key services that contribute to supporting the economically inactive includes local welfare and financial support, practical help to access essentials like food and warmth, community development and outreach, working to create job growth and availability and collaborating with or commissioning charities and social enterprises to deliver various

schemes such as employment readiness programmes and mental and physical health and wellbeing support, including through Feel Good Suffolk, a public health funded healthy lifestyle service.

District and Borough councils play an important role in supporting locally led skills initiatives that are designed to reflect specific local needs. These may include tailored training and upskilling opportunities that complement national provision but respond more directly to gaps and demands identified within local labour markets. They have also been involved in youth employment schemes, such as the Suffolk-wide Thrive scheme and the YES provision in East Suffolk.

Further and Higher Education

The Further Education and Higher Education institutes in Suffolk provide education, training, guidance and outreach that supports local people to overcome barriers to gaining and sustaining employment. Not only do they equip both young people and adults with the skills, qualifications and competencies required in our local workforce but can also provide the inclusive environments and wraparound support that many of our residents (e.g. care leavers) need to fulfil their potential.

We are fortunate in Suffolk to have a strong further and higher education offer with all three Further Education Colleges (East Coast College, Suffolk New College and West Suffolk College) recently rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and a university (University of Suffolk) with a growing reputation (recognised as the University of the Year for 2025 by the WhatUni Student Choice Award) which hosts the Integrated Care Academy, a partnership between education and partners from the Integrated Care System focused on supporting the best integrated care for all.

In addition to their core qualification-based offers, these civic institutions are well positioned, with an extensive reach out into their communities, to provide flexible, non-accredited programmes, funded by alternative streams (previously including the European Structural Investment Funds), that have a major role in supporting those with disadvantages or specific needs to progress, often in collaboration with local VCFSE partners and each other.

Employers

Employers play a central role in addressing economic inactivity by ensuring an availability of, and access to, employment opportunities for all that support from the wider work, health and skills system can move residents towards. Collectively this can then create a more inclusive and resilient workforce for Suffolk.

Local employers in Suffolk are already contributing to our Get Suffolk Working ambitions through a wide range of commitments, projects and actions. This ranges from instilling inclusive recruitment practices to creating healthy and inclusive workplaces, from engaging with Jobcentre Plus offices to create clear pathways for those that are unemployed to offering earn and learn opportunities providing entry points for those at an early point in their careers. From ensuring they make reasonable adjustments to get the most out of their employees to investing in upskilling and reskilling to play their part in the development of a skilled, adaptable workforce.

To maximise the involvement of employers and the prevalence of inclusive practices, strong employer engagement is required with a key role for our employer representative bodies and business associations. These bodies are well placed to help promote the benefits of health in the workplace, resulting in more productive employees, greater retention and reduced costs as well as help demonstrate the return on investment of inclusive recruitment practices.

The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce is already firmly embedded within the work, health and skills system. It engages employers from across the county on matters related to Get Suffolk Working, supporting work such as the Good Health at Work Programme, through various means including the Chamber's People and Skills Group and the wealth of events arranged as part of the Chamber's delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Plan. It then ensures that Suffolk's employer voice is heard and understood across the system, through representation on the Suffolk Business Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Skills, Employment and Lifelong Development board.

Many other business bodies have key roles to play in linking employers to the Get Suffolk Working agenda including, but not limited to the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), the Institute of Directors (IoD) and sector-specific bodies such as the East of England Energy Group (EEEGR).

Independent Training Providers

Independent Training Providers (ITPs) can also provide support to employers to access a broader range of talent by engaging with individuals and offering targeted training programmes that upskill these individuals for specific roles. Some of the Skills Bootcamp programmes delivered by ITPs in Norfolk and Suffolk focus on supporting the unemployed and the launch of 'Connect to Work' will increase their involvement in supporting those economically inactive in Suffolk.

Voluntary Sector

The voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector (VCFSE) in Suffolk plays a significant role in both preventing and addressing economic inactivity. The sector works within local areas, often at neighbourhood level and are recognised as being able to reach those who are often hidden from more mainstream, statutory services. Organisations in the VCFSE sector are often well positioned to provide wrap-around services that support the whole person and strengthen the link between good health, right skills, improved employability.

The sector plays a key role in preventing and addressing economic inactivity, through:

- engagement with health partners to promote good health and supporting individuals to be fit for work
- providing support to those who are economically inactive through delivery of support to enhance skills, confidence and access to employment opportunities.

VCFSE organisations are key to the delivery of commissioned programmes (from statutory partners) as well as the provision of direct support through voluntary funding to provide advice, guidance and programmes to support those who are economically inactive

The sector works closely with health partners to promote good health and support individuals to be fit for work. In Suffolk, the VCFSE sector is an equal partner in the Integrated Care System (ICS) and is involved via both the Suffolk & North East Essex (SNEE) and Norfolk and Waveney VCSE assemblies to plan strategies and deliver services at neighbourhood, alliance and board level.

The sector is characterised by a range of organisations that vary significantly in size, reach, cohorts supported, and services provided. At a national level there is a network of Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs), which work to bring coherence and cohesion to the sector and engagement with statutory partners.

At a county level, Suffolk County Council works closely with the Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO) which is Community Action Suffolk (CAS).

Community Action Suffolk (CAS) supports VCFSE organisations through guidance, funding and volunteering support. The organisation advocates for the sector and hosts conferences, workshops, events and specialist networks to identify issues and share best practice. CAS works across the “system” with a range of partners including Suffolk County Council, districts and borough, town and parish councils, health partners, the police, local businesses and is in the partner network for the Suffolk Business Board.

As well as representing the voice of the sector, CAS works to promote volunteering across the county and leads on the Volunteering Strategy 2025-2028.

Active Suffolk

Physical activity plays a powerful role in helping economically inactive individuals by addressing both personal and structural barriers to re-engagement through improving physical health, boosting mental wellbeing, building social connections, boosting confidence and self-efficacy, and creating routine and purpose. Active Suffolk is the body charged with leading the physical activity sector in the county. Their work makes a direct contribution to this agenda, not least through the Sport England Place Programme, a targeted, community-led initiative that invests in areas with the greatest need to tackle inactivity and health inequalities by co-creating local solutions with residents and partners.

Housing Associations

Housing associations provide secure and affordable housing to those furthest from the labour market, are recognised as a community champion and can provide a convening, place-based function for the wider support on offer. As noted in recent research⁶², those in social housing face greater barriers to accessing and retaining work compared to the general population.

The social rented sector can

- Act as a community anchor to connect residents with a wider network of support and programmes
- Use their role as a large local employer and commissioner of services to address economic inactivity
- Provide generic employment support and career advice to their tenants and communities
- Deliver personalised support to tenants and families given their greater understanding of the multiplicity of needs facing them
- Work with the media and recruiters to tackle any stigma that may exist from having a social housing address

Housing Associations in Suffolk provide a myriad of support for those facing barriers to employment including funds, skills development, guaranteed interviews and advice.

Justice System

The Justice system also contributes to addressing economic inactivity in Suffolk by working to support those coming out of custody into employment, a proven factor in reducing re-offending, as well as promoting inclusive recruitment practices and tackling the stigma and perception of employing those with experience of the justice system.

⁶² <https://www.housing.org.uk/globalassets/files/welfarereform/building-opportunity-summary.pdf>

A more detailed and comprehensive description of the remit, responsibilities and current activity of key organisations from across the work, health and skills system with specific examples of activity is provided at Annex F.

Current Governance Arrangements and Decision-Making

There is a good track record of partnership working across Suffolk and the wider region.

As well as the core decision-making structures of individual organisations there are several additional arrangements which bring together individuals and organisations from across the Suffolk work, health and skills system to coordinate resource in line with specific ambitions, make decisions and drive activity impacting on economic activity levels. The following sets out the main purpose and membership of each. Details are provided in later sections of this plan to explain how we intend to achieve greater integration by enhancing and adding to these arrangements.

The Suffolk Business Board was established in 2024 to represent the local business community and steer the delivery of Suffolk's economic strategy. It brings together leaders from business, local government and education to foster innovation and growth.

The Suffolk 'People and Skills' Group, facilitated by the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, serves as a forum for Chamber members to explore best practice with other businesses, public sector organisations, colleges and the University in relation to helping young people move into work, developing the skills of existing employees, improving physical and mental health in the workplace and maximising local skills benefits.

The Suffolk Skills, Education and Lifelong Development Advisory Board (SELDA) was recently established in June 2025 to provide strategic and coordinated leadership across the skills and employment system in Suffolk. It provides a forum for detailed discussions between decision-making representatives from key organisations regarding skills, health needs, employment levels and lifelong development.

The Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board was established in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2012. It brings together system leaders from across the county to encourage integrated working between health, care, police and other public services to improve wellbeing outcomes for Suffolk. It is responsible for the county's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy which includes a focus on economic inactivity across a number of areas including public mental health, good work and health and shared projects that impact economically inactive people such as ex-prisoners.

The Suffolk Collaborative Communities Board is a Suffolk system approach to tackling strategic issues and projects linked to prevention and demand management within communities. The Board does this by taking a collaborative, system wide approach to tackling strategic issues via a number of subgroups which undertake a variety of workstreams which focus on improving the lives of Suffolk residents. This includes the Tackling Poverty subgroup which oversees the delivery of the poverty strategy action plan which seeks to increase financial resilience, reduce dependency

and provide support on money management. This includes interventions that provide support and put interventions in place for low-income families to avoid economic inactivity.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Skills Hub is a partnership between Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils providing a coordinated regional approach to strengthening the development of the workforce in key sectors across the economy. The partnership aims to better understand and identify means of improving the supply and demand of sector-specific skills needs, primarily through the facilitation of a number of regional sector skills groups including the Building Growth Skills Network (Construction), Agri-Tech Skills East, Digital, Skills for Clean Growth and Social Care and Health.

The Norfolk and Suffolk Learning Providers Forum brings together Independent Training Providers, VCFSE providers and FE Colleges to provide information to the regional learning provider community regarding national and local policy developments, to highlight regional challenges and priorities and encourage collaboration and sharing of best practice.

The Suffolk & North East Essex (SNEE) Integrated Care System VCFSE Assembly and the Norfolk and Waveney VCSE Assembly bring together the VCFSE sector to play a central role in improving health and wellbeing across the region. It aims to enable collaboration between VCFSE organisations and statutory partner (e.g. NHS, Local Authorities) and embed the VCFSE sector as an equal partner in system-level governance and decision-making.

Many other regular additional cross-organisation groups operating at a delivery level help to coordinate activity. Examples include the Work Inspiration Suffolk forum which aims to coordinate various offers to inspire the future workforce and the Suffolk Local Authorities Skills Group which brings together officers with a remit for skills from across County, District and Borough Councils.

Mapping the Offer

To further understand how the work, health and employment system in Suffolk (outlined above) provides the support, training and opportunities to move a Suffolk resident closer, into, and progressing within the labour market, a mapping of the services available has been undertaken by OPR Consultancy as part of the development of the Get Suffolk Working plan. To aid our understanding this mapping has been broken down into six identified key stages of the 'journey into employment'.

These are:

- **Addressing Barriers** – support to assess and address an individual’s needs across a broad spectrum and including, but not limited to skills, transportation, health considerations, inclusion factors, confidence and motivation
- **Becoming Work Ready** – supporting individuals with a range of transferable skills and training, managing workplace expectations, what to expect as an employee, what your employer will expect of you.
- **Becoming Job Ready** – support with specific skills and training to be successful in a chosen job, and how to apply for work. This could include programmes commissioned by councils and delivered via local colleges and the voluntary sector.
- **Supporting into work** – specific programmes designed to support individuals or cohorts to gain employment, this could include e.g. application writing and CV development and work placements / experience.
- **Sustaining employment** – on-going support and coaching to ensure individuals can retain a job once they have secured employment. This can also include employer-based support e.g. mental health in the workplace programmes.
- **Progressing within work** – on-going support to individuals or cohorts to progress within their current job role or to seek progression elsewhere, this could include e.g. business networking events and professional development courses.

This initial mapping is included at Annex G. It should be noted that this mapping is not yet considered to be comprehensive and will continue to be developed but has been used to help identify the key considerations and opportunities identified later in this plan.

Funding and Resources

Organisations in Suffolk are drawing on a diverse mix of funding sources to resource activity that helps address economic inactivity, each with varying degrees of security and longevity. Some services described above are currently funded via the core funds that organisations have available through ongoing Government grant settlements, taxes and some charges for some services.

Beyond this, the public sector funding landscape is fragmented, with a heavy reliance on short-term and often competitive grants. Many are subject to political priorities, with recent reductions in some allocations indicating low long-term security and with it, the ability to plan confidently for the future. This includes but is not limited to:

- the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF): A major national fund aimed at supporting skills, employability, and inclusive communities. Utilised and allocated by Suffolk District and Borough Authorities and used to support delivery across a range of activity including Apprenticeships Suffolk and support for young people who are NEET through the Thrive programme.
- Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF): A capital-focused addendum to UKSPF, supporting rural businesses and community infrastructure.

- Adult Skills Funding (ASF) – provided to adult learning providers across Suffolk including Suffolk County Council. Levels of ASF have been reducing across the country in real terms for many years.
- Local Skills Improvement Fund and LSIP funding – initially provided and used in Suffolk to support the understanding of the skills needs and challenges across the region – this translated into capital and revenue expenditure across the FE training providers, supporting projects to address skills needs in Soft Skills, Digital skills and net zero related training. The LSIP funding is set to continue from October 2025 to March 2026 and then the potential of a 3-year rolling model from April 2026. A full LSIP draft will be completed by March 2026 addressing key sector priority skills needs.
- DWP Work Well “leadership” Funding – DWP have provided funding to the ICBs for the last two financial years to provide local work and health ‘leadership’. This has funded a dedicated work and health post for SNEE and was used by Norfolk and Waveney to create capacity within the Health Inequalities and VCSE Partnering Team.

Local and community organisations, trusts and foundations can help to support local delivery, often undertaken by the VCFSE sector, tailored to the needs of a specific area and responding to any needs unmet through Government funded activity. These are often dependant on donor contributions from a variety of sources. For example, Suffolk Community Foundation provides grant funding to charities, voluntary and community groups and social enterprises including a number of health-related grant programmes and the Mason Trust continues to fund and directly deliver the [icanbea... careers website](#) for Suffolk.

The SCC Public Health and Communities Grants and Funding Team help promote external grant opportunities to the VCFSE Sector (voluntary sector) such as the National Lottery and Trusts and Foundation philanthropy funding. Requests for external grant funding advice typically include project proposal development, grant searches, and partnership engagement.

In addition, private sector investment is sought, secured and utilised as much as possible to support activity that will help address economic inactivity. The Suffolk Social Value Skills Offer⁶³ is one means by which contractors holding public sector contracts are currently expected and supported to add social value through investment and action. The planning system is also used to ensure developers are contributing positively to the area. Some of these expectations are set out in Suffolk’s Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy⁶⁴. Over the next few years there is a major opportunity to capitalise on the high levels of infrastructure development due to take place in Suffolk, and secure investment in the

⁶³ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/tenders-and-supplying-us/social-value>

⁶⁴ <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/planning-waste-and-environment/major-infrastructure-projects-including-nsips/energy-infrastructure-policy>

local area that will benefit local people, including employment opportunities and provision of support for those groups with barriers. Minimum contributions have already been secured and set for Sizewell C but there is an opportunity to supplement these by guiding and encouraging other developers to align their contributions. We will look to achieve this through the Regional Skills Coordination Function, a function delivered by Suffolk County Council.

Income is also generated through economic development activity such as Enterprise Zones and commercial arrangements inherited from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership are being utilised to help deliver against the ambitions in the Suffolk Economic Strategy, including those that will have a positive impact on levels of economic activity.

As part of the work of the Get Suffolk Working Delivery group we will review and look to identify any opportunities to do more to secure or utilise funding. This includes a collective consideration of how we can enhance the steering of apprenticeship levy transfers to deliver on local priorities.

Devolution, and the expected formation of a Mayoral Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk in 2026, will provide opportunities to secure greater local control and certainty over key funding streams already contributing to economic activity including the Adult Skills Fund, as well as identify priorities for additional investment through the Mayoral Investment Fund.

In addition to the formation of the MCA, other major structural reforms are expected. This includes Local Government Reorganisation, welfare reform, the aligning of JCPs and the National Careers Service and the reform of the Integrated Care Boards. This means there is high level of uncertainty as to the level of resource and capacity that will be available locally in the long-term to continue to deliver support and take forward the actions outlined within this plan.

Local partnerships and co-funding models will therefore be increasingly important to maintain continuity of service, capitalise on the opportunities we have in Suffolk and mitigate against the uncertain availability of funds and resource. We will look to achieve this, across the work, health and skills system, by utilising both the Suffolk SELDA Board and the Get Suffolk Working Group to play a coordinating role in the securing of resources and development and commissioning of further activity, thereby helping to find long-term solutions despite short-term funding arrangements and effective use of the resources available to us.

Key Considerations and Opportunities

Across the work, health and skills system there are a significant range of services and interventions available to help people to gain the competencies, confidence, qualifications, experience, training, and support into employment that they may need. However, this does not mean that the needs of all individuals are fully met.

The landscape is complex, many of the schemes receive time limited funding and are commissioned by different system partners, so the offer available in any given area, for any given group, is consistently changing and there is no single directory for service provision that is used across the health, skills and employer engagement network. System partners and service users are therefore not always aware of what is on offer or how to access support. The overwhelming response from engagement with service users and stakeholder organisations has been that there is rarely a clear journey for a person entering the system, and once in the system, the silo approach can intensify.

Given the multiplicity of needs faced by many of those who are economically inactive (e.g. training needed, support with childcare, transport) there needs to be a strong focus on individualised, tailored pathways through the support on offer. Many organisations state they provide wrap-around support, but without widespread clarity about what is available, the support and signposting that can be provided to progress an individual in an impactful way is limited.

The development of Get Suffolk Working has accelerated work that had already begun locally to gain a clearer directory of provision. The ICBs, the County Council and DWP will work together to establish a method of maintaining a dynamic system for all relevant partners to access and utilise. The aim will be to create a directory of skills, education, health and employment services that enable all system partners to direct people to the right place as early as possible and make every contact count as well as ensure that policy developed locally by system partners is embedded within, and adds value to, the support currently on offer.

Whilst there is a good record of partnership working across the region with both strategic and operational groups in place to help develop and deliver programmes and projects that will contribute to Get Suffolk Working, there is a room to strengthen these working arrangements to ensure the system works as an integrated work, health and skills system.

Key Overarching Findings

- Suffolk is well served by a range of organisations that support those who are economically inactive but due to the nature of funding (often short term or programme specific) there is only limited provision to support all those requiring support throughout the entire journey to work and to sustain employment with targeted support for employers. There is a different suite of services available in different localities. Some support is provided on a national basis, some is regional, some is Suffolk specific, and some is even hyper local. Coordinating work to identify and secure funds and resources could help to address the 'patchwork' nature of activity resulting from responses to funding opportunities and enable a more strategic response to local priorities.
- There is no single source for service provision that is used across the health, skills and employer engagement network meaning that there is often a less than coherent journey for a particular participant across various parts of the system. Maintaining an up-to-date list of

commissioned programmes is a challenge given the amount of different funding programmes and frequent changes in funding impacting on the availability of provision. There is potential to build on some existing coordination mechanisms such as Info-Link, owned and hosted by Suffolk County Council.

- There is no consistent referral method meaning that there is a risk of onward referrals being made on the basis of who referrers happen to know rather than the best available support for that individual.
- Due to the points above there is often little connection between programmes, with participants often completing one and then “leaving” the system.
- From the participant point of view there can be an over-whelming amount of information to sift through without coherent support to know whether an organisation or advice service (often online) is right for you
- Participants and some providers noted issues with achieving a critical mass for some programmes (e.g. literacy support in rural areas), which leads to courses or support being cancelled and possibly not offered again for some months, impacting a person’s employability chances.
- Greater unified data-sharing across the system could improve policy planning. Work is needed to develop an agreed data set available at a Suffolk level reflecting local issues, which can be monitored and reported to a wide range of audiences, including the DWP.
- Most programmes and services support those who are 18 years and over (some go down to 16 years and over and focus specifically on young people). Given the increasing number of those between 16 – 24 who are on Universal Credit and have already been on welfare for a number of years, more research to identify relevant targeted support for this age group should be considered.
- There is little easily identifiable support for those who are economically inactive and providing care. Services exist to support the person receiving care (e.g. a disabled young person), but the initial mapping does not provide clear links to services for those who provide care (e.g. a parent) and may want to secure a part-time role. Further action to identify the prevalence of this support, in line with a better understanding of the specific need, should be considered.

The development of Get Suffolk Working has also identified key considerations in specific system areas.

In relation to JCP provision, levels of employer engagement and resource availability were highlighted. Only around 1 in 6 employers nationally recruit through Jobcentre Plus offices⁶⁵. Feedback from Suffolk engagement sessions suggests that greater employer engagement with DWP is

⁶⁵ DWP Employer Survey 2024

needed to increase employer support of work trials and work experience to maximise EDI pathways. If a participant is working directly with a work coach, they can provide guidance, but these resources are very limited and there is little time available to engage.

The time pressure of appointments within JCP and a focus on job applications has been cited as the main reason why customers are not always made aware of the range of support and training available to them. A lack of feedback from employers after applying for a job was also consistently cited by both DWP staff and those seeking employment as an area of potential improvement.

The JCP offer and the benefits that can be accessed by individuals is currently undergoing significant reform following the welfare reform enacted through the Universal Credit Act. The changes are intended to help reduce economic inactivity and better support people into work. This will see changes to Universal Credit allowances, assessment requirements and ways of delivering support.

The national roll out of the Jobs & Careers Service across JCP is intended to further enhance reforms. Aligned with the National Careers Service to enable access to good work, remain and progress in work with a focus on careers and skills, the Service will aim to provide an enhanced focus on aligning employment support and having it work better with skills and careers advice. Embedding this new service in Suffolk will require collective working through the Get Suffolk Working partnership, adjunct Connect to Work, to develop a holistic employment offer that limits duplication while appropriate and responsive to place. The DWP is committed to learning from and working with local areas to develop a new service that is locally tailored and embedded, designed to meet the different needs of local labour markets, local people and local employers. Autumn 2025 is also expected to see the release of the Universal Insurance white paper which proposes to cover new claims for heritage benefits, Employment Support Allowance and Jobseekers Allowance. We will need to monitor, and respond to, the impact of these reforms locally.

To ensure the health system best supports our underserved communities and wider target cohorts (e.g. young people, carers, those with long term health conditions or a disability) to access employment, the ICBs recognise the need to integrate with system partners to provide family centred, wrap around services within local communities; to strengthen prevention strategies and offer targeted health and employment interventions. A greater alignment between health and work pathways could clearly identify how a health offer can support getting back into employment.

As an example, integrating additional health professions into the Fit Note process (e.g. mental health or physiotherapists) could enable earlier intervention, and identification of the root cause of health needs. With earlier engagement there is a greater chance of getting to the root cause of the issue and getting early interventions in place. A pilot is currently operating in Haverhill to require out of work customers to engage with social prescribing when they initially present to JCP, to try and address health needs. We will monitor the outcomes of this pilot.

Furthermore, in line with ambitions set out in the NHS 10 Year Plan, the ICBs have the opportunity to explore the integration of the health and work agenda with Neighbourhood Health, maximising opportunities to test and learn with Suffolk communities, employers, the VCFSE sector, and fellow statutory system partners to provide personalised and local support programmes.

Noted as a particular need for those leaving the justice system is the immediate need for support to reduce the risk of re-offending. We need to ensure such support is readily available and accessible (e.g. for those securing a role on release but needing equipment to take up the position).

Collective steps are being taken to reduce the rate of re-offending in Suffolk. A Reducing Re-offending roundtable has been established by the Officer of the Police and Crime Commissioner involving multiple key organisations to capture good practice and identify the main barriers to reduce re-offending including clearer pathways into paid employment. We will connect this work into the wider planning for Get Suffolk Working.

Previous research commissioned by the Local Government Association identified a patchwork of 49 national programmes, services or initiatives operational in England⁶⁶, which to some extent, can support specific or particular issues that economically inactive people may need to overcome in being able to find or be ready to work. Whilst not all of these programmes will be operational in Suffolk, this is indicative of the wide range and number of programmes being delivered within the county at any one time.

Local Authorities in Suffolk have an ongoing role to play in helping to coordinate nationally funded activity and maximising impact on a place-based basis as well as an associated role in developing locally designed and delivered programmes which meet an otherwise unmet need.

Support for working age adults has become the largest area of spend in Adult Social Care (ACS), with a greater proportion of people receiving high cost and high support level packages. Although not all of these individuals will be able to move to into the labour market, the service sees employment as a key gateway to independence and wellbeing and would like to improve access to employment. Suffolk has one of the lowest employment rates of this cohort regionally, with a particular pressure around adults with a learning disability and/ or autism in employment. For those people with a very low level of need and for those with physical disabilities, there is a need to remove barriers related to employment, volunteering and the wider use of public services. We need to ensure that the employment offer is clear, accessible and provides people with all the support needed to secure and sustain employment or self-employment. We have an aspiration to link employment to day opportunities services, through targeted activities that help people develop the skills to enter the world of work.

⁶⁶ LGA, Work Local, <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/work-local>

Suffolk County Council is also aiming to enhance the transition from Children and Young People to Adult Social Care, to better understand individual pathways and how support can be offered as young people transition to employment.

If unmitigated, the rate of young people needing ongoing support and to transition from children's services to adults' service will rise by 29% by 2030. Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) provision has increased 140% since 2015, whilst pupil numbers have only increased by 7%. The 2023 CQC assessment resulted in an overall rating of "Good" for the Local Authority in meeting its duties under the Care Act, however it was noted that feedback from both staff and those using services highlighted that improvements to the transition between services was needed in order to enhance the pathway and preparedness for young people to independent living, and potentially employment. Although many of these young people will not meet eligibility for ongoing adult social care support, they may require other support including help into employment.

To address the challenge, the Children and Young People Services Directorate and Adult Social Care are working closely together to improve the 'Transition into ASC' offer which will mean working with young adults from the age of 14 or Year 9 in school. This work will feed into a new Preparing for Adulthood 0-25 model where routes into employment will be key. Further information regarding this work was recently published as part of a SCC Scrutiny Committee item^[1].

More broadly, there is a recognition that all services, despite limited resources, collectively need to be working with those at 'most risk' as early as possible in their school life in order to make an impact on outcomes as they head towards adulthood. The earlier a child is identified the greater the opportunity to influence outcomes and prevent them from disengaging from school and then becoming NEET. The number of those that are NEET in Suffolk is increasing and the impact on the young person's life chances, and likelihood of future economic inactivity, are significant.

Our Colleges and University have a civic role to help tackle economic inactivity through advice, education, training and outreach with flexible, non-accredited programmes of particular importance. However, the engagement with our education settings as part of Get Suffolk Working highlighted that they are not always involved or connected by the rest of the system with the delivery of local employment support.

The Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), provides an opportunity to maximise the impact of our skills system by making education and skills development more accessible, flexible, and responsive to labour market needs. In the lead up to its launch in September 2026 we will plan to

^[1] Suffolk County Council Scrutiny Committee, 'Transitions from Children to Adult Services', 9 July 2025

ensure we align use of the loan with our economic priorities, helping individuals to move into or progress within sectors requiring skills locally and encourage use of the LLE by those most at risk of economic inactivity.

In a similar way, we will look to work collectively to maximise the positive impact of the Growth and Skills Levy as it is rolled out on increasing economic activity rates, including but not limited to, helping to redirect any unused levy to support apprenticeships for those most at risk of experiencing economic inactivity.

Suffolk is Already Working – Examples to Build On

The preceding analysis highlights several areas of potential improvement to the work, health and skills system.

However, it is also important to note that there many examples of approaches that are already supporting economic activity for us to continue to build on whether it be by taking a sector specific approach linked to one of our key sectors, methods of bringing together collective efforts focused on a particular group, or how we are looking to capitalise on major opportunities.

There are many examples of collaborative work being taken forward in Suffolk to help address economic inactivity, often capitalising on unique local opportunities. The following examples delivered by a range of different organisations provide an opportunity in Suffolk to build on successful activity. Many more than outlined here are identified in the mapping exercise in Annex G.

Sector Specific Approaches

Much work to help tackle economic inactivity in Suffolk is undertaken with the specific aim of increasing the talent pipeline for a specific sector. These approaches can be sector-led, sometimes resulting from deliberations across our industry groups such as the Building Growth Skills Network, the Visitor Economy Network Initiative (VENI) or NAAME (New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Group). Others are led by the VCFSE sector, one of the core public sector organisations or result from a specific business-education partnership.

Examples include:

- Visitor Economy - The Skills Business and Engagement group is a sub-group of the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). It builds on work of VENI (Visitor Economy Network Initiative) to develop and deliver WorldHost training to strengthen the skills base in the visitor economy.

- Road to Logistics – An example of a sector-specific not-for-profit organisation operating in Suffolk to tackle shortages in logistics and warehousing by offering free training, support and a pathway into employment with a partner employer to those that are unemployed, including priority groups such as those from deprived backgrounds and ex-offenders.
- Rail Engineering Skills Bootcamp - To support one of the many rail improvement projects in our counties, East Coast College working with NIS, developed an 11-week Skills Bootcamp programme readying learners for employment on completion across the national rail network. The first cohort of 8 unemployed participants have now secured well paid roles at Sizewell C.
- Sector Based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) - Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Councils along with The Range and local DWP Jobcentres Plus partnered to provide employment opportunities at the retailer's new distribution centre at Gateway 14 Ltd. The three-week programme was developed in partnership with The Range, West Suffolk College, DPM Training and JCP, and designed to support economic activity by building job readiness through a combination of tailored training, work experience and guaranteed job interview. Overall, the programme saw 55% of the 84 participating claimants starting work in warehousing while others improved their confidence and soft skills, enhancing future employment prospects.

Collaborative Work for a Priority Group

The support required to address economic inactivity differs between particular priority groups due to the different barriers experienced. Approaches to collating efforts across sectors and organisations focused on a particular group can therefore be particularly impactful and a useful way of meaningfully linking resources and activity.

Examples include:

- Suffolk Alliance for Care Leavers – provides a permanent, collaborative forum and support network for a range of Suffolk organisations and services across the public, private and voluntary sector that support young care leavers including key employer social value teams.
- Suffolk Armed Forces Veterans Covenant – provides information and support to Suffolk Veterans regarding employability. For example, the Suffolk Armed Forces Business Network aimed to promoting individual employment opportunities (mostly Suffolk Jobs Direct), local skills and learning initiatives and networking for those leaving the armed forces, service spouses or veterans in Suffolk, and the Suffolk County Council and NSFT NHS Veterans Integrated Service (Wellbeing) coordinates the Norfolk and Suffolk Veterans Multi Agency Network Group. This aims to improve information flow between services and informally network on issues and opportunities. DWP Armed Forces Champions attend the Veterans Multi Agency Network Group and are members of Suffolk Armed Forces Covenant Board. Connections are made and maintained between services such as Adult Learning and other veterans' services.

Maximising the Benefits of Significant Developments

Suffolk has specific natural and geographic advantages which have made it very attractive for the locating of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), particularly in energy generation and distribution. This means we have a high level of infrastructure developments taking place in the county as well as key strategic opportunities for inward investment. This presents an opportunity that needs to be maximised for our local residents, including those with barriers to work. SZC and Freeport East are two examples.

- The construction of Sizewell C (SZC) is projected to create up to 25,000 job opportunities (including short-term contracts) over a 10–12-year period. An Employment, Skills and Education strategy aimed at delivering substantial and lasting benefits to Suffolk was agreed between the project and the Local Authorities as part of the planning process and included in the Deed of Obligation. The measures within are intended to help maximise the benefits to Suffolk and includes a SZC Job Service to connect local residents to job opportunities, investment in local skills infrastructure and programmes to inspire young people and improve STEM engagement in school. The strategy looks to prioritise access for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, offering bursaries and pre-employment programmes to remove barriers to participation.
- Freeport East is, and will continue to, attract inward investment, boost trade and drive domestic economic growth, jobs, skills and innovation. Over 11,000 jobs are estimated to be created directly within the tax sites, including the custom sites there is an expected 13,500+ direct jobs in total. Providing ‘equity’ of opportunity to these jobs by proactively targeting, promoting and tailoring relevant roles to those individuals and those communities that are either disadvantaged or under-represented in the roles on Freeport East sites is a key component of the Freeport East Skills Strategy. Activity is being undertaken to gain clear commitments from employers on Freeport East sites to provide this equity of opportunity whilst FPE funding has also been allocated to projects to ensure access for local residents to provision that will equip individuals with the skills required by entry-level FPE roles, to projects using Freeport East as a catalyst to raise aspiration levels and to support particularly targeted at supporting those with barriers into roles (including part funding the Road to Logistics example above).

The few examples above demonstrate that whilst there are improvements to be made to better coordinate and integrate work across the work, health and skills system in Suffolk, there is a strong foundation of collaboration and impactful set of projects from which to build.

SECTION 4: AMBITIONS, PRIORITIES AND INITIAL ACTIONS

Ambitions, Priorities and Initial Actions

Suffolk County Council, the Department for Work and Pensions (Norfolk and Suffolk District) and both Integrated Care Boards serving Suffolk, will collectively work towards the following ambitions working alongside stakeholder organisations across the wider work, health and skills system such as, but not limited to, education and training providers, VCFSE organisations and employer representative bodies. These are the first set of 'Get Suffolk Working' ambitions to be agreed locally that will support the Get Britain Working ambition over the next ten years to increase the national employment rate to 80%:

- Match the national ambition for an **employment rate of 80%** alongside an **economic activity rate of 80%**
- This will be supported by **halting the rising trend of health-related economic inactivity**

Over time we will aim to reduce health-related economic inactivity (people aged 18 to 66), but for the period of the ICB five-year Health and Work Strategy our initial aim will be to halt the rising trend of health-related economic inactivity.

This ambition to work towards 'reducing and halting the increasing rate of health-related economic inactivity' will need to be a whole system approach as it is widely recognised that approximately 80% of our health is dependent on wider determinants, other than clinical care⁶⁷. This will require system change over time but is supported by long-term nature of our ambitions. This aligns with the wider NHS 10 Year Plan ambition to increase healthy life expectancy and halve the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest regions.

It is not enough to work towards achieving these three ambitions without acknowledging, and looking to address, the disparity in labour market outcomes that exist for different groups and communities. We need to ensure we are working to close those gaps where they exist and address all needs. Through an analysis of economic inactivity in Suffolk alongside additional stakeholder engagement we have identified the following set of additional ambitions for Suffolk, linked to the DWP outcome metrics for Get Britain Working:

- **Reduce the disability employment gap** for people aged 18 to 66
- **Increase the economic activity rate for women** aged 18 to 66, whilst also maintaining a focus on the reducing rate for men

⁶⁷ Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System, 'Narrowing the Gap' (2024)

- **Reduce the proportion of young people (18 to 24) not in education, employment or training**

In the initial action plan provided below we are committed to strengthening our understanding of the scale and causes of other apparent disparities, local variations and between different demographic groups (including those with protected characteristics), as well as differences in outcomes between Suffolk and other areas. This includes those in social housing, carers and refugees. Certain groups will require more detailed action setting, and this will be addressed in future iterations of our plan, including actions to be set by the Health and Work Strategy which is being developed by the ICBs alongside this initial Get Suffolk Working plan.

The launch and delivery of Connect to Work will support Suffolk to meet these ambitions alongside a selection of other significant work, health and skills delivery programmes which will help maximise impact. This core programme of delivery will sit alongside efforts to bring together and explore how to maximise the impact of activity already being undertaken (as outlined earlier in this plan) from across the work, health and skills system focused on:

- **preventing economic inactivity** through early intervention
- **finding and engaging** those who need support, education or guidance
- **supporting** individuals with an offer that is locally delivered and coordinated
- **progressing** individuals on their pathways through the support and provision available to ensure they are taking progressive steps towards (or within) employment

These aims are underpinned by the following Get Suffolk Working overarching priorities to:

- **strengthen our understanding** of the drivers and causes of economic inactivity
- **enhance the integration** of current services
- **take further action** to address unmet needs

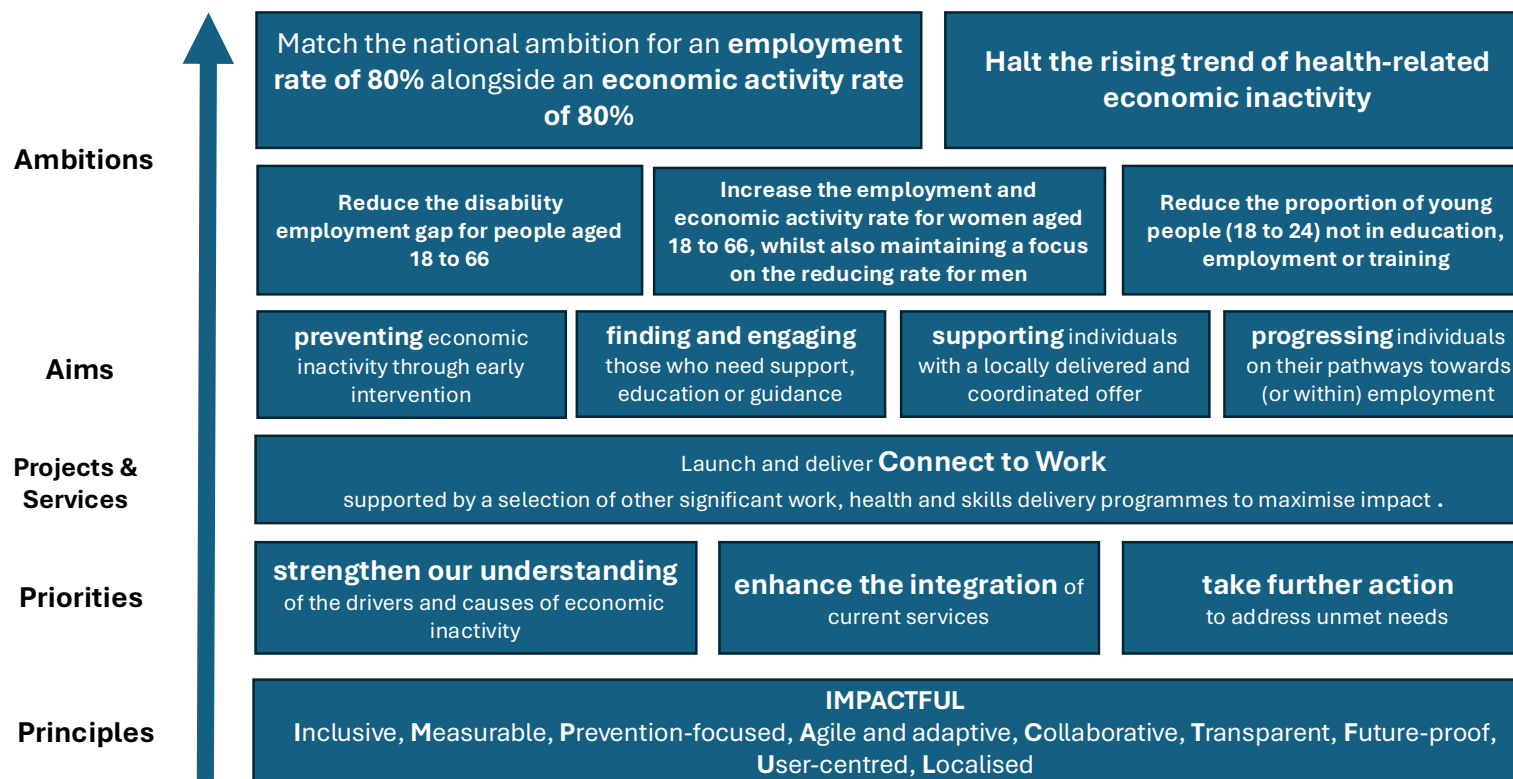
Get Suffolk Working provides us with the opportunity to strengthen the strategic alignment between the work focused on addressing economic inactivity and our wider ambitions for the people, businesses and places of Suffolk. Get Suffolk Working therefore builds on, contributes to, and will be supported by, the aims and ambitions set out in other related local strategies.

This includes the aims:

- in the **Suffolk Economic Strategy** to enable the clean and inclusive growth of the Suffolk Economy by supporting high growth, emerging growth and value growth opportunities
- in the **Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan** to better align the skills needs of local employers
- of both **Integrated Care Boards** covering Suffolk to address health inequalities and improve healthy life expectancy
- in the **Tackling Poverty Strategy** to support people into sustainable employment

A detailed list of the aims and ambitions aligned to Get Suffolk Working are provided at Annex H.

Figure 12: Get Suffolk Working



Connect to Work

A core component of our approach to Get Suffolk Working will be the delivery of Connect to Work, funded by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) at a national level but developed and delivered at a local level to ensure it is tailored to the needs of Suffolk.

We will align Connect to Work to our local priorities and deliver the project alongside a selection of other core programmes to maximise impact. Collectively, Connect to Work and these complementary initiatives will contribute a significant number of outputs to support our Get Suffolk Working ambitions. Along with the actions identified in the initial action plan, Connect to Work and the other initiatives mentioned below provide an initial joined-up programme of work focused on Suffolk's priorities.

Connect to Work aims to help people with disabilities, those with health conditions and people with complex barriers to employment to find sustainable work. Delivery in Suffolk will commence during October 2025 and is expected to be a five-year programme (subject to national spending reviews) with a target to support over 2700 participants to successfully complete the programme.

The Connect to Work delivery plan, published separately, sets out how we will maximise the impact of Connect to Work for Suffolk residents, communities and businesses. This plan was co-developed through the Connect to Work Working Group, established to provide input and expertise from across relevant organisations including Suffolk County Council, Integrated Care Boards, Adult Social Care and Public Health.

The programme will promote high aspirational careers for all and demonstrate that all our participants have the capacity to be employed. Through Connect to Work we will support our participants to get real jobs for real pay and promote that they have the same rights as any other jobseeker or employee. We will offer tailored support to eligible participants but focus support on those groups who will benefit most and deliver the greatest impact for our communities and local economy. Suffolk's Connect to Work Programme will be delivered through the following principles:

- We will respect individuality with each participant receiving a service that meets their unique needs and ensure each person is always treated with dignity and will operate a zero-rejection referral process for eligible participants.
- We will support each participant's right to make their own decisions and have access to high quality information that allows those decisions to be informed.
- We will empower participant's and build their capacity, supporting them to learn and develop and adapt our programme to give each person the opportunity to be successful.
- We will be clear and transparent with our local employer base and provide accurate information and tailored support for both the participant and employer.

Delivery will be Suffolk-wide and focused on area of greatest need, with at least three physical presences in Ipswich, Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds as the three largest populated areas of Suffolk, with a range of other flexible delivery options, including use of community buildings, to ensure accessibility for those in more rural areas of the County.

Connect to Work in Suffolk will work with all eligible participants who will benefit from the available support but have a particular focus on the following four participant groups:

- Carers and Care Leavers

- Young People (18-25) with Moderate Mental Health, Learning Disability, Learning Difficulty, those who are Neurodivergent, or have experience of the justice system
- Adults (25 years old and over) with a Learning Disability, Difficulty or those who are Neurodivergent
- People out of Work (for 6 months+)

These groups were identified through a combination of data-based research, aligning with other strategic plans and consultation via the Connect to Work Working Group with related service areas. Members from Adult Social Care have seen an increase in demand for Adults with SEND transitioning from education and out of day services.

In response to Mental Health strategy, SEND JSNA, and SEND Strategy, representatives from Public Health and Integrated Care Boards have expressed a high need for support for younger adults with SEND, moderate mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety and for those who are neurodivergent.

In terms of Care Leavers and Carers, Suffolk County Council has developed a model designed to empower care leavers on their journey to success. This innovative approach has increased the awareness of the needs of care leavers. It is expected that Connect to Work will work in alignment with this service to further develop opportunities.

Delivery of Connect to Work will be embedded into the local work, health and skills system with referrals into the programme expected from a wide range of sources including (but not limited to) JCPs, GP surgeries (social prescribing), Community Health venues, Adult Learning Hubs, education providers, local authority services, refugee centres, homelessness organisations, local employment support projects and supported housing hubs.

We will align delivery with the economic priorities set out in the Suffolk Economic Strategy and the intelligence gathered regarding employer needs by the LSIP and the Skills Hub sector groups to ensure that the programme is focused towards sectors with real job opportunities.

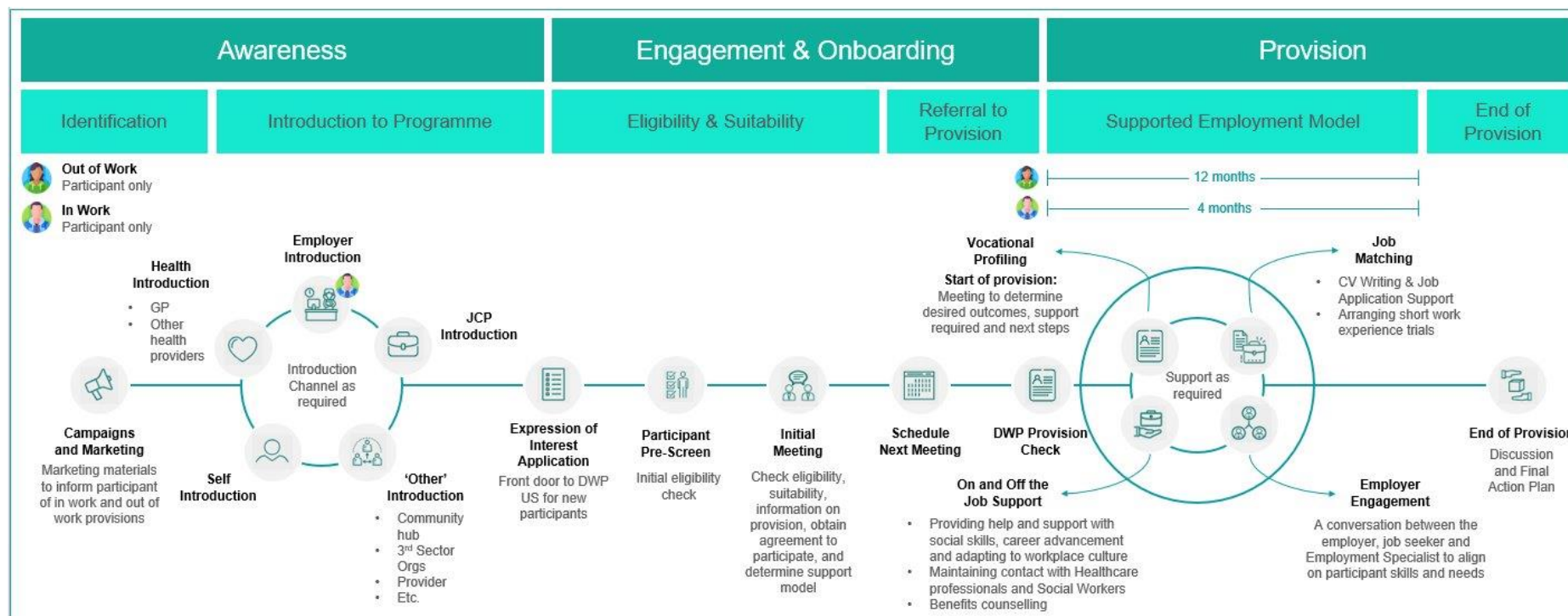
Employers have a major role to play in Connect to Work as providers of the employment opportunities for Connect to Work participants. Work has therefore already begun, involving employer representative bodies such as the Chambers of Commerce and their Local Skills Improvement Plan work, to help foster positive and mutual beneficial relationships between the programme and local employers. The programme will plug into the existing sector-specific and SME facing groups that already exist in Suffolk as well involve employment specialists who will contact local

employers and businesses to promote the skills and interest of their participant, linking in the support and advice available for employers to make their roles fully accessible and to maximise the productivity of the participant.

In addition, Connect to Work will be embedded into the Suffolk Social Value Skills Ask and it is therefore expected the programme will work closely with major developments and public sector contracts to provide opportunities for Suffolk residents as well as workforce solutions for developers, contractors and their supply chains.

The Connect to Work programme in Suffolk will support each participant through five stages of supported employment. More details on these stages are available in the Connect to Work Delivery Plan.

Figure 13: Connect to Work



1. Referral & Eligibility

- The journey begins when local organisations identify and refer people who are economically inactive, have a disability or health condition, or are at risk of job loss. Eligibility and suitability checks ensure the programme complements other DWP or local support.

2. Engagement & Model

- Participants are introduced to the Supported Employment model (“place, train, maintain”), delivered by an Employment Specialist. Unlike traditional training-first approaches, participants are placed into work quickly, with tailored one-to-one guidance before and after employment begins.

3. Support Delivery

- Up to 12 months support for those out of work.
- Up to 4 months for people at risk of leaving work.
- Support includes job search, skills development, workplace adjustments, and regular follow-up to sustain employment.

4. Journey Steps

- Place: Rapid job entry aligned to individual goals.
- Train: In-work coaching and skills building.
- Maintain: Ongoing assistance, advocacy, and problem-solving to help participants stay in work.

5. Outcomes

- Participants achieve milestones such as:
- First earnings / job starts (e.g. 9 hours for 13 weeks).
- Sustained employment (e.g. 18 hours for 26 weeks). For those already in work, success is measured by job retention and progression.

We will create direct referral pathways and provide support to help individuals navigate between Connect to Work and other parts of the system so that individuals can progress through individually tailored pathways into employment.

SCC is the accountable body responsible for the implementation and successful delivery of the programme but will work alongside other partners to establish the programme, develop and implement the delivery plan, as well as monitor and report progress.

The Governance arrangements for Connect to Work will ensure that the programme is fully integrated into the work, health and skills structures in Suffolk. Arrangements will link directly with those established for the development, and ongoing delivery, of the Get Suffolk Working plan, with oversight and a strategic steer provided by the Suffolk Skills Employment and Lifelong Development (SELDA) Board and the Health & Wellbeing Board (see details of these boards below).

We will also look to expand the remit of our current Suffolk Adult Learning Board to become an Adult Skills and Supported Employment Programme Board that will make decisions on both the Suffolk Adult Learning Service and Connect to Work. It will bring together professionals from Economic Growth, Skills, Education, Health, Adult Social Care and DWP and avoid a duplication of meetings where certain members would be required to attend both an Adult Learning and a Connect to Work Programme Board.

A programme board with a focus on both Adult Learning and Connect to Work will create a more integrated approach to lifelong learning and employment, ensuring adults have access to the skills and support they need to thrive and move into and sustain employment. It will also bridge the gap between adult learning and the job market, addressing both individual learning needs and the skills required by employers. It will help to link related activity, such as the delivery of Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), by partnership organisations.

Finally, we will provide reports into the Norfolk and Suffolk 'Skills Hub Governance Group'. This will enable a consideration of the delivery of Connect to Work in Suffolk alongside several programmes being delivered across a Norfolk and Suffolk geography including the Norfolk and Suffolk Skills Bootcamp Programme and the Careers Hub. This will support discussions as to how Connect to Work will be delivered as we progress towards the establishing of a Mayoral Combined Authority for the region.

Governance Arrangements

Governance arrangements have been established to develop this plan by involving, and adding to, the pre-existing boards and forums helping to coordinate related action in Suffolk as outlined earlier in this plan. It is expected that these cross-system arrangements, detailed below, will continue to enable both the ongoing review and development of the plan as well as delivery against the recommendations and actions identified by the plan.

As accountable body, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet has approved the publication of this plan. A new 'Get Suffolk Working' Partnership Board (GSWPB) comprising of senior leads from DWP, both relevant Integrated Care Boards (SNEE and Norfolk & Waveney) as well as Suffolk County Council has been established to provide cross-system endorsement of the plan.

Moving forward, the GSWPB will remain in place to oversee and approve both the development of future versions of the plan and the delivery of actions. Current membership includes the DWP Senior Leader for Jobcentre Plus, the SNEE ICB Director responsible for Health Inequalities, the Norfolk and Waveney ICB Executive Director for Patients and Communities and the Head of Skills at Suffolk County Council. Membership will be reviewed and expanded as considered necessary by the respective partner organisations. The Board will also provide oversight for the implementation of the joint Norfolk and Suffolk ICBs Work and Health strategy.

A Get Suffolk Working Project Delivery Group (GSWDG) has met on a regular basis to review, monitor and agree the development of the plan. The group has comprised of officers from across SCC, DWP and the ICBs alongside an independent consultant (provided by OPR Consultancy) to

support the delivery of the plan. Current membership includes DWP Senior Employer Partnership Manager, N&W ICB Senior Programme manager for Health Inequalities and VCSE Partnering and the SNEE ICB Integrated Work and Health Lead.

Moving forward this group will continue to meet and membership will be reviewed and expanded to include wider representation from across the system, with clear links through to the related strategies and activity identified in this plan, to oversee the delivery of 'Get Suffolk Working' actions and related actions in the ICB Work and Health Strategy. This group will report directly to the GSWPB and provide updates to both the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Suffolk SELDA Board.

The Suffolk Skills, Employment and Lifelong Development Advisory Board (SSELD) board was formed in June 2025 to provide strategic and coordinated leadership across the skills and employment system in Suffolk, enhancing skills availability, fostering a culture of individual lifelong development and improving related social and economic outcomes stronger coordination. It advises on, and ensures wide awareness of, the development and delivery of key skills and employment initiatives including, but not limited to, Get Suffolk Working, Connect to Work, the Local Skills Improvement Plan and Adult Skills Funding. Get Suffolk Working was discussed, a steer provided and the role of SSELD confirmed on the 23rd June 2025. Membership includes local authorities, FE Colleges, DWP, VCFSE, Independent Training Providers, Chambers of Commerce, Local Skills Improvement Plan leads, Public Health, ICB and Business Board representation.

The Health and Wellbeing Board (H&W Board) was established in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to improve wellbeing outcomes for Suffolk and develop a stronger role promoting joint commissioning and integrated provision between health, public health and social care. Membership includes Suffolk County Council Councillors and Officers, representatives from other public bodies and voluntary groups

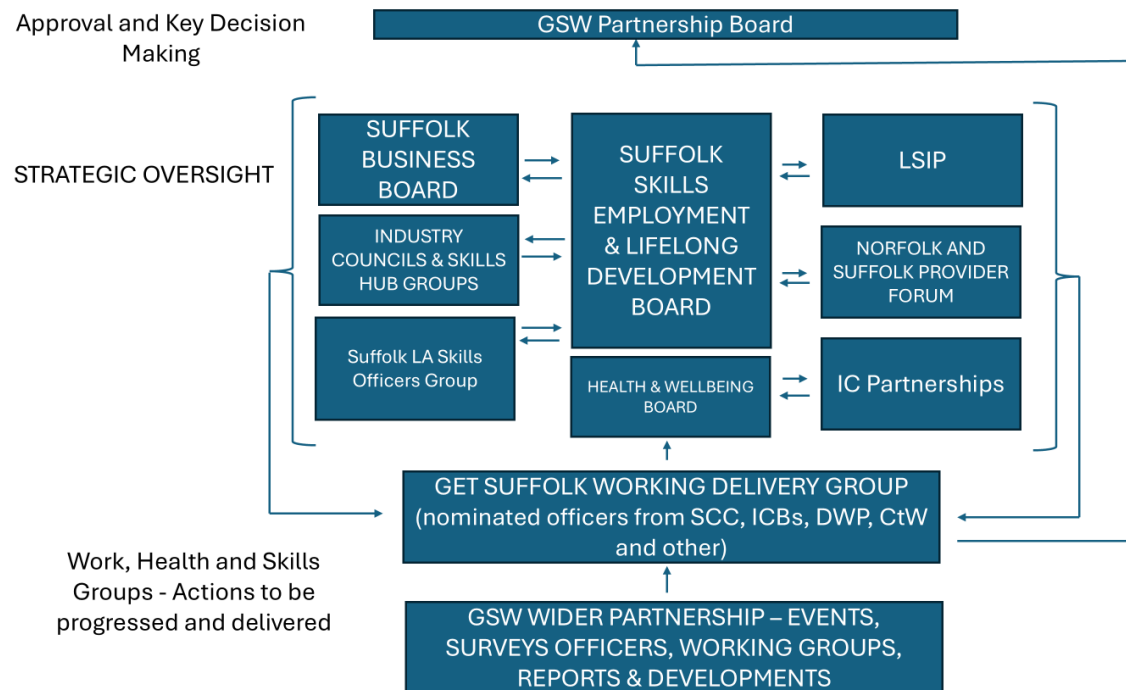
Moving forward the both the SELDA Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board will receive updates and provide constructive challenge and strategic advice regarding the delivery of the Get Suffolk Working plan. Additional forums such as a Suffolk Local Authorities Officers group (for skills), the Norfolk and Suffolk Provider Forum, the Integrated Care Partnerships and the Suffolk Business Board may also from time to time receive updates on the work of Get Suffolk Working in order to ensure alignment with respective strategies and workstreams.

A set of nominated officers from across a set of key organisations and service areas (Adult Social Care services, Youth Participation, Public Health, Skills, DWP, ICBs and Connect to Work) formed the GSW Partnership Working Group during development. This helped to ensure we had the work

of GSW considered by relevant staff from across the system as work is progressed. Moving forward members of this group will become part of the delivery group which will continue to meet.

The Get Suffolk Working Wider Partnership comprises of over 100 key stakeholders and interested parties that have received regular updates on the development of Get Suffolk Working and provided a range of input. As well as organisations mentioned in other parts of our Governance arrangements, membership includes Housing Associations, Business Associations, specific VCSFE organisations and District and Borough Councils. We will continue to keep this network of organisations live and involved in the delivery of the plan.

Figure 14: Our approach to wide system involvement in inputting into, developing, approving, and in the future, delivering on the Get Suffolk Working Local Plan.



Delivering the Plan

In addition to the Governance arrangements for delivery set out above we will also bring to bear the respective strengths and structural levers available via each partner organisation to deliver our Get Suffolk Working plan.

The organisations involved in developing the Get Suffolk Working plan have an extensive reach across, and into, the providers of support services, the employers and the communities that we need to reach. We will continue to strengthen and foster partnership working across these organisations to coordinate this engagement. We will look to larger employers within the partnership to explore any opportunities to lead by example and pilot specific initiatives and programmes.

The public sector, in particular the NHS and Local Authorities, are also significant procurers of goods and services from local supply chains and we will look to use our procurement and planning activity to support the delivery of our ambitions.

Delivery of Get Suffolk Working will be initiated during a period of significant policy and structural changes to the local work, health and skills landscape.

Suffolk is part of the Devolution Priority Programme which is expected to result in the establishing of a Mayoral Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk in 2026. The Government is also planning to simplify the operation of councils through Local Government Reorganisation which will see the replacement of the existing two-tier system of local government with unitary councils. Suffolk & North East Essex ICB and Norfolk & Waveney ICB are due to be reconfigured by the end of 2025. DWP operational boundaries have changed to support devolution and the JCP offer is set to align with the National Careers Service to create a new jobs and careers service.

These changes present opportunities as well as some uncertainty and risk.

Devolution of powers to a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) for Norfolk and Suffolk (once established) is expected to provide greater local control over some of the funding streams (such as the Adult Skills Fund) and responsibilities relevant to addressing some of the drivers and barriers causing economic inactivity. However, details and the extent to which this will support our Get Suffolk Working ambitions will only become clear closer to the establishing of the MCA. We will work closely with Norfolk County Council to ensure the respective Get Britain Working plans are aligned in preparation for devolution and the election of the mayor whose role will be pivotal to the work, growth and health inequalities agendas.

The merger of ICBs is expected to lead to a significant reduction in capacity and a more strategic role in relation to population health. Wider NHS reforms would also have an impact on capacity levels. Many of the intended actions within the Get Suffolk Working plan are reliant on the ICBs and the wider health system providing the resource and capacity to progress and deliver. It is also essential that effective ways of working are not lost through merger and re-structuring, such as the SNEE VCFSE assembly that currently collaborates on key issues and progressing workstreams.

Local Government Reorganisation is intended to provide a simpler, more efficient and impactful means of delivering on our ambitions but the transition to a new Local Authority landscape will need to be carefully managed.

In addition, global economic impacts and significant reforms, outside of local control, such as reforms to employment law and the welfare system, will continue to have impacts on the local labour market.

The impact of changes to organisational capacity, remits and configurations on the delivery of Get Suffolk Working, and the ability to align programmes, delivery and funding streams, will need to be monitored, managed and reflected in future iterations of this plan. This initial plan has been developed based on current structures.

However, the development of the Get Suffolk Working plan has provided an opportunity to identify a clear direction and shared set of ambitions and intended actions to help support social mobility and economic activity in Suffolk ahead of this period of change. This means that although there is some uncertainty regarding the nature and impact of proposed changes, connections have been strengthened across the work, health and skills system and a clear direction agreed which will serve to ensure a collective approach to addressing economic inactivity as new organisations are established and new structures, responsibilities and levels of capacity are confirmed.

It is also noted that our ambitions will not be achieved through local action alone. To support the achievement of our Get Suffolk Working ambitions we will look to work closely with Government to maximise the local impact of decisions taken, and action developed, at a national level to improve the employment and economic rates of the country.

Delivery Principles

Delivery principles are essential as they provide a clear and consistent foundation for how any additional interventions will be developed and delivered across the Get Suffolk Working partnership in a way that is inclusive and impactful.

Delivery of this plan will be based on the following key principles:

- I Inclusive:** Ensuring equity and access for all communities.
- M Measurable:** Grounded in evidence, data, and outcomes.
- P Prevention-focused:** Tackling root causes early.
- A Agile and adaptive:** Responsive to change and future needs.
- C Collaborative:** Working across sectors and systems.
- T Transparent:** Open, honest, and accountable in delivery.
- F Future-proof:** Building resilience for long-term impact.
- U User-centred:** Shaped by the voices and needs of individuals.
- L Localised:** Tailored to Suffolk's unique places and people.

Annex I sets out what these principles mean in the context of our Get Suffolk Working Plan.

Initial Get Suffolk Working Action Plan

The ambitions and priorities set out above have been agreed by the Get Suffolk Working Partnership Board.

The following tables provide a set of proposed actions to further enhance the work already being undertaken related to each of our aims. These have been identified through interaction and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. This is an initial plan with further details regarding delivery (e.g. timescales) to be set and agreed by the Get Suffolk Working Partnership and then regularly reviewed in line with the ongoing reform to the wider work, health and skills system. The action plan is therefore a 'live' list that is subject to change with actions to be added or revised in further iterations of the plan.

In line with our agreed ambitions, delivery of these actions will particularly look to focus on people with health needs/disabilities, those with a long-term health barrier, young people or on addressing gender-specific barriers.

Overarching Priorities

Priority 1 – Strengthen our Understanding

This initial plan has provided a starting point by setting out the data, information and insights currently available into the challenges we face and the opportunities we have to move everyone who is able into meaningful employment.

It has also highlighted limitations in the data and prompted further questions in some specific areas.

The following action have been proposed to develop an even deeper and clearer understanding of the root causes and drivers of economic activity in Suffolk and how to address them. Further knowledge and insight can be gained from the organisations involved in delivering support and opportunities, from our communities, from our employers and, most importantly, from those that require support and services.

Different parts of the work, health and skills system can also learn from each other, to increase knowledge and capabilities to better address economic inactivity across the county.

Action 1: Data-Sharing and Knowledge Exchange	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Develop a shared and agreed 'Get Suffolk Working' dataset available at a Suffolk level reflecting local issues which can be used to monitor key causes and drivers of economic inactivity.	SCC	Overarching

Develop a repository of evaluations from across the system to ensure a collective learning of lessons and sharing of best practice to ensure continuous improvement of the support on offer in Suffolk.	SCC	Overarching
Continue, and expand, use of population health management data to identify priority groups of people who require targeted interventions to optimise their health and wellbeing, ultimately enabling them to remain in work/education or commence work/education.	ICBs & SCC	Reduce health-related economic inactivity
Action 2: Monitor and Respond	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Monitor the impact of national welfare reform in Suffolk through the 'Get Suffolk Working' partnership, identifying any need for action to be taken to support specific groups, to maximise positive impact or to reassess our ambitions or approach during the transition.	DWP	Overarching
Identify projects and activity funded by UKSPF and other time limited funds and therefore at risk of closing. Determine the likely impact of their closure on our Get Suffolk Working ambitions and monitor the impact of any that end.	Suffolk Local Authorities	Overarching
In the lead up to its launch in September 2026 we will plan to ensure we align use of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement with our economic priorities, helping individuals to move into or progress within sectors requiring skills locally and encourage use of the loan by those most at risk of economic inactivity.	SCC	Overarching
Action 3: Additional Research		
Undertake further investigation into the barriers to employment and economic inactivity for different groups including those in social housing, different ethnicities and refugees to move beyond a siloed analysis of structural barriers and groupings of individuals, especially those with protected characteristics with higher incidences of economic inactivity or unemployment.	SCC & DWP	Overarching
Further investigate the drivers behind the increasing number of those between 18 – 24 who are on Universal Credit and have already been on welfare for a number of years.	DWP & SCC	Reduce the proportion of young people (18-24) not in education, employment or training (NEET)
Better understand what is driving the current decrease in the proportion of those who are economically inactive wanting a job and whether relevant action is required.	DWP & SCC	Overarching
Further investigate Suffolk's higher rate of early retirees to determine if a greater focus is needed on supporting those who want to work later in their careers and any link with a reducing employment rate for men.	DWP & SCC	Reduce regional variations in employment rates

Identify which communities are most likely to experience digital poverty and exclusion that could otherwise reduce the barriers of health, rurality, and transport blocking pathways into work.	SCC	Reduce regional variations in employment rates
Identify any gender-specific health issues that may have an impact on career and employability and determine to what degree this is driving a lower economic activity rate for women or a reducing economic activity rate for men.	ICB & SCC	Increase the female employment rate
Build on the recent work undertaken by Transport East to understand the impact of limited transportation to workplaces and education settings as a barrier to skills, development and employment.	SCC working with Transport East	Reduce regional variations in employment rates
Further determine the relative density of demand for skills and skills infrastructure strengths in relation to each of the Skills England and Industrial Strategy priority sectors.	SCC	Reduce regional variations in employment rates
Update our understanding of the uplift in technical skills required, as previously outlined in the Technical Skills Legacy Report, due to large scale infrastructure projects.	SCC	Overarching

Priority 2 – Enhancing our Integration

Through the development of the initial ‘Get Suffolk Working’ plan we have already begun to better connect those working across the work, health and skills system in Suffolk.

In particular, Suffolk has developed a strong triumvirate between County Council, DWP and ICB colleagues to enable the co-creation of this plan. The Suffolk & North East Essex ICB Work and Health Strategy (published in November 2025) developmental activity has been incorporated into this plan to ensure a robust system approach to supporting our citizens. That strategy will detail the health-related elements of this plan in more detail.

We will look to build on these first steps to further integrate the development of local policy and decision-making Suffolk-wide. We want to collectively continue the work initiated through the Get Suffolk Working Partnership to develop a shared language, agreed priorities, publicise best practice and constructively challenge where joint working can be further embedded across institutions.

This will be achieved, in part, by the Governance arrangements outlined above and complemented by the proposed actions below:

Action 1: Build on Initial Mapping	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Maintain and extend the initial mapping of support available (please see Annex G) to highlight gaps where new services are needed and help inform all, including social enterprises, where to target their efforts.	SCC	Overarching
Investigate how an interactive online directory of skills, education, health and employment services could be developed with the aim of providing both service users and providers of support with a clear view of the support on offer and enable direct referrals from system partners. Explore the feasibility of enhancing and promoting the use of Info-Link, owned and hosted by Suffolk County Council, to fulfil this aim or the potential application of the JOY system.	SCC & ICBs	Overarching
Develop a 'Health Related Employment Roadmap' to reduce the numbers of future people developing work limiting health conditions, enabling people with health conditions to enter work, and supporting people with health needs to remain in work. This will build on the mapping for Get Suffolk Working and development work undertaken for the ICB Work and Health Strategy.	ICBs & SCC	Reduce the health related economic inactivity rate
Engage with partners across the system to explore and test the possibility of a cross-system 'Cradle to Career' model. This would aim to provide a clear pathway of services and interventions for children and young people to optimise health, wellbeing, life skills, attainment and work opportunities.	SCC & ICBs	Reduce the proportion of 18-24 year olds not in education, employment or training
Action 2: Collaborative Delivery	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Support the provision of a 'no-wrong door' response to individual needs across system partners by developing and creating a set of inter-system training opportunities. This could include core competencies for health, skills, training and education workforce to provide healthy lifestyle education and signposting to all citizens who are economically inactive. The aim will be to enhance the ability of front-line staff to help support people to access support from other parts of the system. For example, a health awareness training programme could be offered to DWP work coaches to enable more informed conversations with customers and more accurate signposting.	All	Overarching
Increase levels of coordination across the health, work and skills system on funding applications and plans to secure future resources and the development of funding applications for programmes to support the economically inactive.	All	Overarching
Work closely with national government to ensure the development, by DWP, of a Jobs and Careers Service in Suffolk that connects with local knowledge and activity, limiting duplication while providing an offer that is appropriate and responsive to place.	SCC & DWP	Overarching

Enable and incentivise our contracted 'Connect to Work' providers to embed delivery of the programme within our local work, health and skills system, and provide onward individualised progression pathways for all those that engage with the programme.	SCC	Overarching
Action 3: Strengthen Governance and Joint Decision-Making		
Continue to evolve the delivery and governance arrangements for Get Suffolk Working in line with need and the various structural changes likely, including the formation of a Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk and ICB reconfiguration. From November, these arrangements are likely to expand to oversee the delivery of the Joint Norfolk and Suffolk ICBs Work and Health Strategy.	All	Overarching
Expand the remit of our current Suffolk Adult Learning Board to become an Adult Skills and Supported Employment Programme Board that will make decisions on both the Suffolk Adult Learning Service and Connect to Work bringing together professionals from Economic Growth, Skills, Education, Health, Adult Social Care and DWP.	SCC	Overarching

Priority 3 – Taking Further Action

Strengthening our understanding and enhancing the integration of current provision will help us to identify where further action is needed. However, there is action that we know we can take. Some is already planned and some has been proposed and identified through the development work for Get Suffolk Working.

Where these actions relate specifically to one of our key aims they are included in the respective tables later in the document.

Actions of significant scale, or that cut across multiple key aims, are included in the table directly below:

Action 1: Develop New Interventions	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Work up options for what a rollout of the Youth Guarantee in Suffolk could achieve across different organisations by exploring relevant models, policies (e.g. young future hubs and youth hubs), past projects (e.g. Youth Pledge and MyGo) and taking learning from the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer areas.	ALL	Reduce the proportion of 18–24-year-olds not in education, employment or training.

Action 2: Deliver New Activity	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Launch, deliver and maximise the impact of Connect to Work from October 2025 ensuring that we: • offer tailored support to all eligible participants but primarily target support at those groups who will benefit most • support our participants to get real jobs for real pay • respect individuality with each participant receiving a service that meets their unique needs and ensure each person is always treated with dignity and will operate a zero-rejection referral process for eligible participants • support each participant's right to make their own decisions and have access to high quality information that allows those decisions to be informed.	SCC	Reduce health related economic inactivity rate. Reduce the disability employment rate gap
Action 3: Stimulate Additional Action and Investment	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Review and refine the Suffolk Social Value Skills Ask to ensure benefits that can be gained for Suffolk through procurement are being maximised, ensuring suppliers create good employment, development and training opportunities for local people that are accessible to all. Promote and share the benefits of our approach across the wider system.	SCC	Overarching
Explore the potential benefits and feasibility of developing an anchors organisation network focused on improving employment outcomes for all. Anchor institutions are large organisations within a geography, who collectively can maximise social, economic, and environmental benefits, improve health outcomes and tackle health inequalities through their role as local employers, purchasers, land and asset owners and how they impact the environment and work with their local community. Anchor institutions can lead by example and incentivise other large employers to engage. We could consider the development of a MoU between Suffolk anchor institutions and DWP to promote appropriate job opportunities through JCP.	All	Overarching

Aims

Aim 1 – Prevent

To reduce incidences of economic inactivity we need to take action and ensure that work, health and skills system partners collectively focus on prevention, retention, early intervention and rapid support in education, the workplace and our communities.

Action 1: Wider External Awareness and Understanding	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Review and bring together resources and information aimed at increasing and broadening residents understanding of disabilities and health conditions to create a joint communications and education campaign, reducing the likelihood of unconscious bias or discrimination when accessing their community or workplace. The campaign will explain the health benefits of working, and the contribution that people with health needs can bring to the workplace. This may include the development of a range of short films about common conditions that may impact someone's ability to work, explaining how it presents, what reasonable adjustments can be put in place, show a lived experience of someone working with that condition, and how to obtain support (e.g. Access to Work) for employees.	ICBs & SCC	Reduce health related economic inactivity rate
Work in collaboration to further develop and enhance the content, reach and accessibility of resources and training available to support employers in Suffolk to participate in healthy and reasonable changes within their organisations. We will promote the economic and social benefits and success of employer approaches to inclusive recruitment and retention by identifying success stories and disseminating.	SCC working alongside the SCoC (LSIP)	Reduce health related economic inactivity rate Reduce the disability employment rate gap Increase the female employment rate
Target health checks and healthy lifestyle messaging to economically inactive residents to support them be as healthy as possible.	ICBs & SCC	Reduce health related economic inactivity
Review and strengthen the waiting well support currently in place for those who are waiting for treatment (a third of which are economically inactive) to provide advice and signposting that helps individuals remain in work.	ICBs	Reduce health related economic inactivity
Action 2: Focus on Young People		

Build on the successful 'Breaking Barriers' conference in Suffolk to maximise the impact of Career Professionals and the Careers Hub in addressing the barriers to employment that young people may encounter.	SCC working alongside the Careers Hub	Reduce the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or a job with training
Explore the potential for integrating additional health activity and support prior to 16 that could help address rising numbers of young people with mental health & wellbeing and SEND needs and support participation levels.	ICBs	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates Reduce the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training
Take further action to identify and address gaps in the sufficiency of post-16 provision.	SCC	Reduce the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training
Action 3: Interdisciplinary Family Support	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Review the ICB Strategy proposal for an interdisciplinary family support offer to prevent future generations becoming economically inactive, especially in areas where we are aware there is higher levels of intergenerational worklessness	ICB	Reduce the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training
Action 4	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Monitor Drivers and Causes Develop a Suffolk-specific high-level dashboard of risks of becoming economically inactive by taking work initiated nationally by the DWP further. This is with the aim of identifying likely requirement for new actions and interventions ahead of need.	DWP & SCC	Overarching

Aim 2 – Find and Engage

Identifying those in Suffolk who most require, and could most benefit, from support to address economic inactivity and engaging them through effective methods with content and support focused on their needs will be key to achieving our Get Suffolk Working ambitions. This includes those who may be hardest to reach who are not currently engaging with work, health and skills services.

We need to identify those who could benefit from support at the earliest opportunity to provide preventative support such as early health interventions as soon as work limiting health needs arise. Engagement approaches need to be tailored to enable us to target particular groups and maintain engagement as well as ensure equal access to the support on offer.

Different parts of the system have a greater or lesser ability to contact and engage particular groups or those experiencing specific barriers. We need to provide access to a suite of work, health and skills provision, personalised to all types of need, no matter what part of the integrated system an individual initially engages with.

Action 1: Hidden Needs	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Work across both DWP and the health system to consider how to better find, assess and support people who may be hidden and economically inactive or have previously been identified as having “no work requirements” and therefore on universal credit without recall. We will do this by: - investigating how to support the DWP pathfinder model (reaching out to people who had no work requirements) through health, skills and development integration. - exploring how data sharing and knowledge exchange between ‘Get Suffolk Working’ partners could support (for example housing association tenant data and ICB Neighbourhood Teams). - strengthening our engagement and collaboration with our underserved communities by building on best practice and existing models e.g. the Community Voices Programme.	DWP & ICBs	Overarching
Action 2: Co-production	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Review how to best ensure the voices of potential beneficiaries and, in particular, our vulnerable groups are heard and reflected as actions related to Get Suffolk Working are developed by either linking in to current service user forums or establishing additional participant panels. This approach reflects the need for different methods of engagement with different groups.	All	Overarching
Action 3: Early Engagement	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Review how earlier advice and support could be provided from a health professional or social prescriber to access community assets which will help them manage their health needs and focus an individual on	ICBs & SCC	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates

their abilities, not their disabilities prior to a DWP work capability assessment, reducing the likelihood of a 'no work requirements' outcome. This will be part of a wider focus on supporting the engagement of working aged people with the community assets that exist in Suffolk.		
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Aim 3 – Support

We need a range of high-quality support accessible to all those that need it across Suffolk. This range of support should address multiple barriers, meet differing needs and equip our residents with all that is required to move towards and into employment.

This support needs to be as sustainable and long-term as possible. Such certainty helps build trust and understanding of the offer from employers, residents and professionals working across the system itself. It better enables the local area to identify where there are any unmet needs or opportunities to add to a pre-existing offer of support and ensure any additional resources secured are used to add value and avoid duplication.

There should be both a universal layer of high-quality integrated work, health and skills support available on offer across Suffolk as well as place-based and industry-based initiatives that focus in on particular priorities in a localised or sector-specific area.

Action 1: Embed Cross-System Priorities and Offers into Delivery	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Pilot an approach to embed virtual work readiness and job searching/returning support alongside mental health interventions provided for adults.	ICBs and SCC	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates
Identify opportunities to embed sector-based approaches into existing employability programmes. Approach to be informed by local employers and involving both the LSIP and our regional sector skills groups, to better tailor employment support to the requirements of the economy and monitor results. As a minimum, ensure that Connect to Work is focused towards sectors with real job opportunities by aligning delivery of the programme with the economic priorities set out in the Suffolk Economic Strategy and the intelligence gathered regarding employer needs by the LSIP and the Skills Hub sector groups.	SCC	Overarching
Determine how a multi-agency approach could be developed building on the work of the Coastal Navigator Network (CNN) who are supporting Felixstowe and Leiston neighbourhood teams and VCFSE partners to support young people with life skills, work readiness, substance misuse support,	ICBs and SCC	Reduce the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training

and a pathway into entry level employment job roles within the health and care sector. The learning and outcomes from this work could be used across all coastal communities and built on for the rural population.		
Action 2: Seek Funding and Resources to Maintain and Enhance Support Available	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Seek and secure longer-term funding for key programmes of support, particularly those working with specific groups and at risk of ending. This may include, but is not limited to, funding to: • continue to build on the work of the Suffolk Care Alliance and the Suffolk Family Business to empower care leavers in Suffolk on their journey to success • continue the work of the Apprenticeships Suffolk and Thrive Skills and Employment Service to support economically active and inactive people, offering them tailored advice and guidance to develop the skills they need to take a first step into employment, education or progressing within a career. • continue to support the creation of workplaces in Suffolk conducive to good health and wellbeing through further 'Good Health at Work' activity • maintain impactful VCFSE led projects (e.g. the Autism Education Leavers Passport led by the Suffolk Law Centre to assist young people who are neurodivergent to understand and assert their rights in employment). • support digital inclusion by bidding into the Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund.	All	Overarching
Action 3: Enhance Available Support	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Investigate the opportunity to increase the impact of the support on offer through the use of Artificial Intelligence such as AI Apps within musculoskeletal and pain pathways, to minimise absence from work, increase independence and health outcomes. Build on examples like 'Good Boost' which uses AI-driven customisation to create aquatic and land-based exercise rehab sessions tailored to individual needs with plans that evolve over time.	SCC & ICBs	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates
Seek resource to enhance Musculoskeletal Employment Advisors pathway. Employment advisors would enhance the support provided to patients who are being seen by the physiotherapists who are either in work but are on sick leave, struggling to maintain normal duties or wishing to get back into employment.	ICBs	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates
Seek resource to develop a small team of Occupational Therapists working at a neighbourhood level to provide a holistic view of a person's health, wellbeing and wider determinants of health before partnering with system partners to provide a personal centred support plan.	ICBs	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates

Aim 4 – Progress

The differing needs of individuals and variable access to support means that pathways through the support on offer in Suffolk are rarely the same, and journeys through and into work aren't always linear.

We need to optimise pathways and progression through various parts of the system recognising that individuals require journeys tailored to their needs.

We also need to make sure that there is a culture of lifelong development and inclusiveness across our economy to help ensure availability and access to employment and training opportunities for all and a sufficient supply of labour and talent for our businesses.

We will work alongside employers, working with employer representative bodies, to enhance their culture, operations, and workforce programmes to be as healthy and inclusive as possible, thereby improving recruitment and retention (particularly those with health issues or caring needs) and making the most of the talent available in Suffolk for their business.

It should, however, be recognised that employers are currently working to align their business models with the significant changes to national employment policy including national insurance contributions, minimum wage and employment rights. For Get Suffolk Working to be successful, we must aim to work with employers to ensure that addressing the barriers for those who are economically inactive is balanced against the capacity and benefits for the employer.

Action 1: Clear Navigation and Progressive Pathways	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Create direct referral pathways and provide support to help individuals navigate between Connect to Work and other parts of the system so that individuals can progress through individually tailored pathways into employment.	SCC	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates Reduce the disability employment rate gap Increase the female employment rate
Explore the potential benefits of, and how, a concept of a 'passport to employment' might be utilised by our residents, detailing the services they have accessed, what needs have been identified and what lessons have been learned to enable an exchange of information between	SCC	Overarching

system partners to assist them in identifying and reaching the next step on their employment journey.		
Develop the Suffolk 'Preparation for Adulthood' plan to provide details on how all young people with SEND needs will be supported through leaving education, achieving independence and finding training, day care or employment.	SCC	Reduce the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training. Reduce health related economic inactivity rates Reduce the disability employment rate gap
Progress work on enhancing transition journeys within SCC, between CYP and ASC support. Any lessons learned and good practice identified to be shared with the wider GSW partnership.	SCC	Reduce the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training. Reduce health related economic inactivity rates Reduce the disability employment rate gap
Launch Suffolk Bright Futures to deliver 1-1 coaching to enhance work, health and life prospects through support, coaching and progression. Monitor its effectiveness to create stronger pathways between learning and employment and clearer progression opportunities for adults with barriers to learning and or employment. Evaluate the impact of the Adult Learning Champion role in promoting lifelong learning across the county and its success in supporting participants to navigate the adult skills and employment landscape.	SCC	Overarching
Action 2: Increase Availability and Accessibility of Opportunities to Progress	GSW Lead	DWP Outcome Link
Continue to work in collaboration with local employers and representative bodies (e.g. Chamber of Commerce) and through the LSIP, to offer inclusive employment opportunities, recruiting local people, and contributing to the growth of the economy. DWP to also develop employer readiness. Anchor organisations to role model this approach.	All	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates Reduce the disability employment rate gap Increase female employment rate

Investigate how the support available to an employer to ensure a particular individual fulfils their full potential in a role could be made clear at the point of employment. This would help a shift from employers focusing on perceived (but often not actual) risk or costs, to the benefits of employing and retaining someone with health needs.	SCC & DWP	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates Reduce the disability employment rate gap
Alongside and as part of the delivery of the 2025-2028 Volunteer Strategy, we will review non-traditional progression routes to employment such as self-employment and volunteering for people with disabilities, using case studies to demonstrate impact and support future funding bids for pilot work.	SCC & DWP	Reduce the disability employment rate gap
Identify those with barriers who have found and maintained employment and use their stories as a means to promote inclusive practices and raise aspirations.	DWP & SCC	Reduce health related economic inactivity rates Reduce the disability employment rate gap Increase female employment rate
Explore how to encourage and enable use of the growth and skills levy in Suffolk to help create employment opportunities for particular groups.	SCC working alongside SCoC and post-16 learning providers	Overarching
Continue to make progress against the priorities identified in the Norfolk and Suffolk Social Care and Health Sector Skills Plan. This includes increasing the potential workforce pool by raising the profile of social care careers to those who are economically inactive (particularly due to care responsibilities).	ICBs and SCC	Overarching
Enhance the quality and availability of Supported Internships as a means of supporting young people with health needs to transition from education into employment. Internships are reliant on employers offering meaningful placements, supported by workplace training, job coaching, and ongoing support for both the young person and the employer. We will increase awareness and support quality by locally coordinating the Supported Internship Quality Assurance Framework (SIQAF) assessments.	SCC working alongside supported internship providers	Reduce the disability employment rate gap Reduce the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training.

Current Delivery Programme

In addition to the above, and alongside the delivery of Connect to Work, we will continue delivery of the following programmes (and more), all of which provide significant contributions to our Get Suffolk Working ambitions.

- **Suffolk Adult Learning Service** – a range of accredited and community learning opportunities for adults focused on empowering residents to lead fulfilling lives, take part in society and develop the skills they need to secure sustainable and productive employment.
- **Norfolk and Suffolk Bootcamps Programme** – provides flexible, short and intensive (from 60 hours to 16 weeks) provision aligned with specific employer needs to bridge existing skills gaps, address recruitment needs and help individuals gain employment, get promoted or take on more work if self-employed.
- **Apprenticeships Suffolk** - an impartial and completely free service offered by Suffolk County Council as part of their strategic aim to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships within the county. Supports individuals 16+ to break down barrier to gain an apprenticeship or other meaningful employment.
- **Thrive for Young People** – a wide partnership of providers from across education and the VCFSE sector that provides young people in Suffolk with tailored support and skills that they may need to take a first step into employment, education or training.
- **Good Health @ Work Programme** - providing Suffolk businesses with access to support, guidance and services that impact positively on the health and well-being of their employees, including a specific financial wellbeing element.
- **Sector Based Work Academy Programme** - designed to support jobseekers by building job readiness through a combination of tailored training, work experience and guaranteed job interview.

Get Suffolk Working Activity Key Indicators

Activity or Indicator	Ambition / Target	Timescale	Contribution to Get Suffolk Working
Connect to Work	2700+ participants supported	By March 2030	Reduce the disability employment gap for people aged 18 to 66
	2,295 out of work participants over 5 years	By March 2030	Increase the economic activity rate for women aged 18 to 66, whilst also maintaining a focus on the reducing rate for men
	50% of out-of-work participants achieving earnings in the first year	Each financial year	Reduce the proportion of young people (18 to 24) not in education, employment or training Will 'place, train and maintain' in work those who otherwise would have barriers to employment. A high proportion of participants expected to have a disability. Will support the overall economic active and employment rates as well as help close the disability employment gap.
Adult Learning Service	4000+ enrolments	Each academic year	Reduce the disability employment gap for people aged 18 to 66 Increase the economic activity rate for women aged 18 to 66, whilst also maintaining a focus on the reducing rate for men Reduce the proportion of young people (18 to 24) not in education, employment or training Provides high quality learning opportunities for those adults in Suffolk who face the greatest barriers to securing employment of playing a full part in society with a target of at least 60% of

			learners being either unemployed or economically inactive.
Apprenticeships Suffolk	148 economically inactive people engaging with support services	By March 2026	Reduce the disability employment gap for people aged 18 to 66
	44 people supported to participate in education	By March 2026	Increase the economic activity rate for women aged 18 to 66, whilst also maintaining a focus on the reducing rate for men Reduce the proportion of young people (18 to 24) not in education, employment or training Provide support, guidance and create pathways into employment, especially apprenticeships, with a specific focus on those who are economically inactive, including those with health or special needs and with criminal records.
	26 people sustaining employment for 6 months	By August 2026	
Good Health @ Work	Improve employer understanding of good work and health principles	May 2024 – May 2026	Reduce the disability employment gap for people aged 18 to 66 Increase the economic activity rate for women aged 18 to 66, whilst also maintaining a focus on the reducing rate for men Reduce the proportion of young people (18 to 24) not in education, employment or training Contributes directly to the ‘prevent’ aim to reduce incidences of economic inactivity by focusing on prevention, retention, early intervention and support in the workplace.
	Improve employer confidence in supporting workplace health and wellbeing Improve workplace, workforce and employee health and wellbeing outcomes		
	490 businesses referred to the programme.		
	125 Good Health@ Work awards achieved.		

Norfolk and Suffolk Skills Bootcamps Programme	1,414 learners enrolled onto Skills Bootcamps programmes.	By September 2026	Reduce the disability employment gap for people aged 18 to 66 Increase the economic activity rate for women aged 18 to 66, whilst also maintaining a focus on the reducing rate for men Reduce the proportion of young people (18 to 24) not in education, employment or training The Skills Bootcamp Programme helps prevent economic inactivity by supporting and progressing individuals through short flexible skills programmes positioned at level 2 to level 5. Programmes designed with local businesses' input to help fill vacancies and skills gaps. Provide pathways to support individuals into employment or upskill employees to take on more responsibilities and support retention.
	60% achieving a job/new responsibilities /new contracts if self-employed.	By September 2026	
Thrive: Suffolk Skills and Employment Service (Young People)	367 people reached	By March 2026	Reduce the proportion of young people (18 to 24) not in education, employment or training Thrive contributes directly to supporting both economically active and inactive Suffolk residents. Thrive is unique partnership funded by Local Authority UKSPF and delivered under contract by Suffolks FE Colleges and VCSE partners. Thrive accesses individuals who may not already be engaging with DWP Support Services and provides targeted individualized support for young people
	51 people supported to participate in education		
	208 People gaining a qualification or completing a course following support		

			aged 16 and over who are, or may be at risk of becoming NEET.
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Get Suffolk Working – Key Outcomes

Indicator	Baseline (Source)	GSW Ambition	Related National Ambition*
Economic Activity Rate	80.5% (APS)	Maintain at least 80% and continue to track higher than the national average***	N/A
<i>Economic Activity Rate for Women</i>	74.8% (APS)	Increase to at least meet the national average	Increase the employment rate of women aged 18 to 66 from 72.3%.
Employment Rate	77.4% (APS)	80%	80%
<i>Disability Gap</i>	22.2%**** (APS)	Reduce the disability employment gap	Reduce the wider Disability Employment Gap from 30.1% (ONS)
<i>Disability Gap for Learning Disabilities</i>	75.8% (APS)	Reduce (towards the national average of 70.9%)	Reduce the wider Disability Employment Gap from 30.1% (ONS)
Proportion of young people (academic age 16-17) NEET & Unknown*****	5.25% (Suffolk Participation Data)	Reduce the proportion of young people (18-24) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	Reduce the proportion of young people (18-24) not in education, employment or training from 15.8% (ONS - LFS)
Health Related Economic Inactivity	5.8%** (APS)	Reduce and halt the increasing rate of health-related economic inactivity	Reduce from 6.8% (DWP Analysis of the ONS Labour Force Survey)

*National Ambitions have been set using some datasets that are not available locally or are not considered to be the most robust to use at a local level. Despite these differences there is a clear link between the measure we will focus on locally and a contribution to achieving a relevant national outcome.

**This is the proportion of the working age population (16—64) economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability not the proportion of those who are economically inactive due to health. It is the best local indicator we have but is not directly comparable to the national LFS figure. 5.8% is therefore 25,500 as a % of 442,100.

*** Although Suffolk's economic inactivity rate is already at 80%+, it does fluctuate over time and maintaining this across the next 5-10 years despite challenges, increasing proportions of health conditions, an ageing population and changes to the labour market.

****Difference between EA Core/Work Limiting Disability and Non-EA Core/WLD

*****Further indicators for 18-24 NEET under consideration

Future Iterations of Get Suffolk Working

This plan primarily focuses on addressing economic inactivity and the first ‘Get Britain Working’ challenge focused on supporting individuals, especially those with health conditions, who are excluded from the labour market. The remaining five ‘Get Britain Working’ challenges are of course interconnected and as a result the plan also covers (to varying degrees):

- youth employment (too many young people leave school without essential skills or access to high-quality further learning, apprenticeships or support to work)
- insecure and low-quality work (many people are stuck in insecure, poor-quality and low paying jobs, affecting their health and wellbeing)
- challenges for women (women who care for their families face challenges in staying in and progressing in work)
- employer vacancies (employers struggle to fill vacancies due to labour and skills shortages, impacting economic growth and living standards)
- disparities in labour market outcomes (between different places and groups of people)

Further development of this plan, and the actions identified, will be undertaken to more fully address these challenges and by extension the health, wellbeing and life prospects of Suffolk residents.

In particular, we will consider how we connect Get Suffolk Working and the work being taken forward through the Suffolk Economy Strategy to significantly boost average wages in alignment with the Get Britain Working outcome to increase real earnings amongst non-retired households (all ages). Approximately 40% of those on UC in Suffolk are in employment⁶⁸ indicating the need to address in-work poverty and ensure people continue to develop and progress within work.

Further engagement to strengthen the plan will also be undertaken with other organisations relevant to these additional challenges (e.g. Leisure Operators and Trade Unions). Additional development of the plan will also involve monitoring and looking to learn from best practice and progress made by other areas.

Examples of interest include the establishing of Live Well centres proposed by the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership and the introduction of a ‘system steward’, proposed by the South Yorkshire MCA, to provide oversight, for the first time, of the myriad of different initiatives to help people back into employment.

⁶⁸ Suffolk Office of Data Analytics, 2025

We will also continue to identify further actions to fully maximise the benefits of new sources of employment and investment in the county (such as Sizewell C and Gateway 14) for our priority groups.

Review Cycle

This initial plan will be developed, and progress monitored through a regular review cycle to be undertaken the Get Suffolk Working Delivery Group and overseen by the Get Suffolk Working Partnership Board.

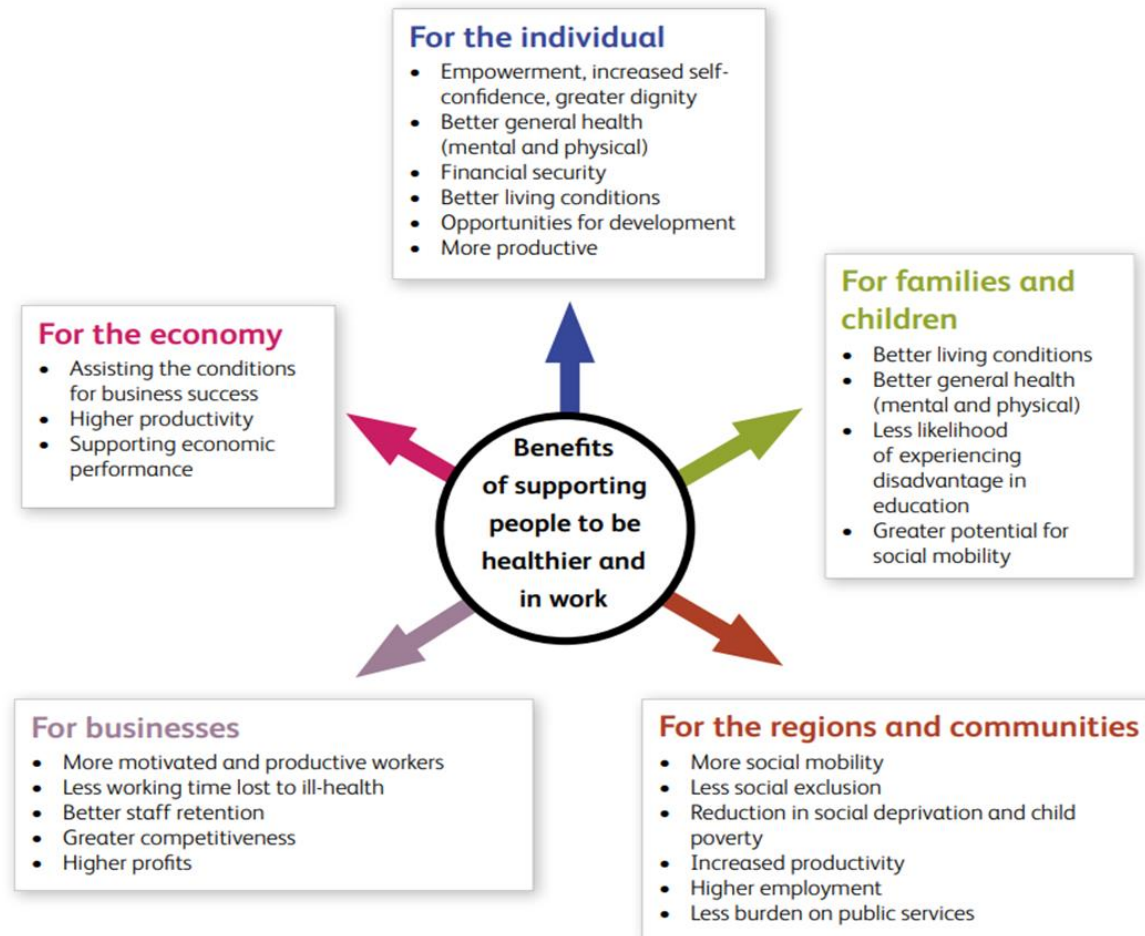
Sources

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- Make it Local, Local Government Association
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- NEET and Participation or Participation in Education, Employment and Training age 16-18, Suffolk County Council
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- Suffolk Office of Data and Analytics
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- The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Fingertips, Department of Health and Social Care
- The Youth Opportunity Index (2025), Learning and Work Institute
- Transport Related Social Exclusion, Transport East
- Turning the Tide 2024, NHS England and Suffolk & North East Essex ICB

Get Suffolk Working Local Plan Annexes

Annex A – Summary of Benefits of Supporting People to be Healthier and in Work⁶⁹



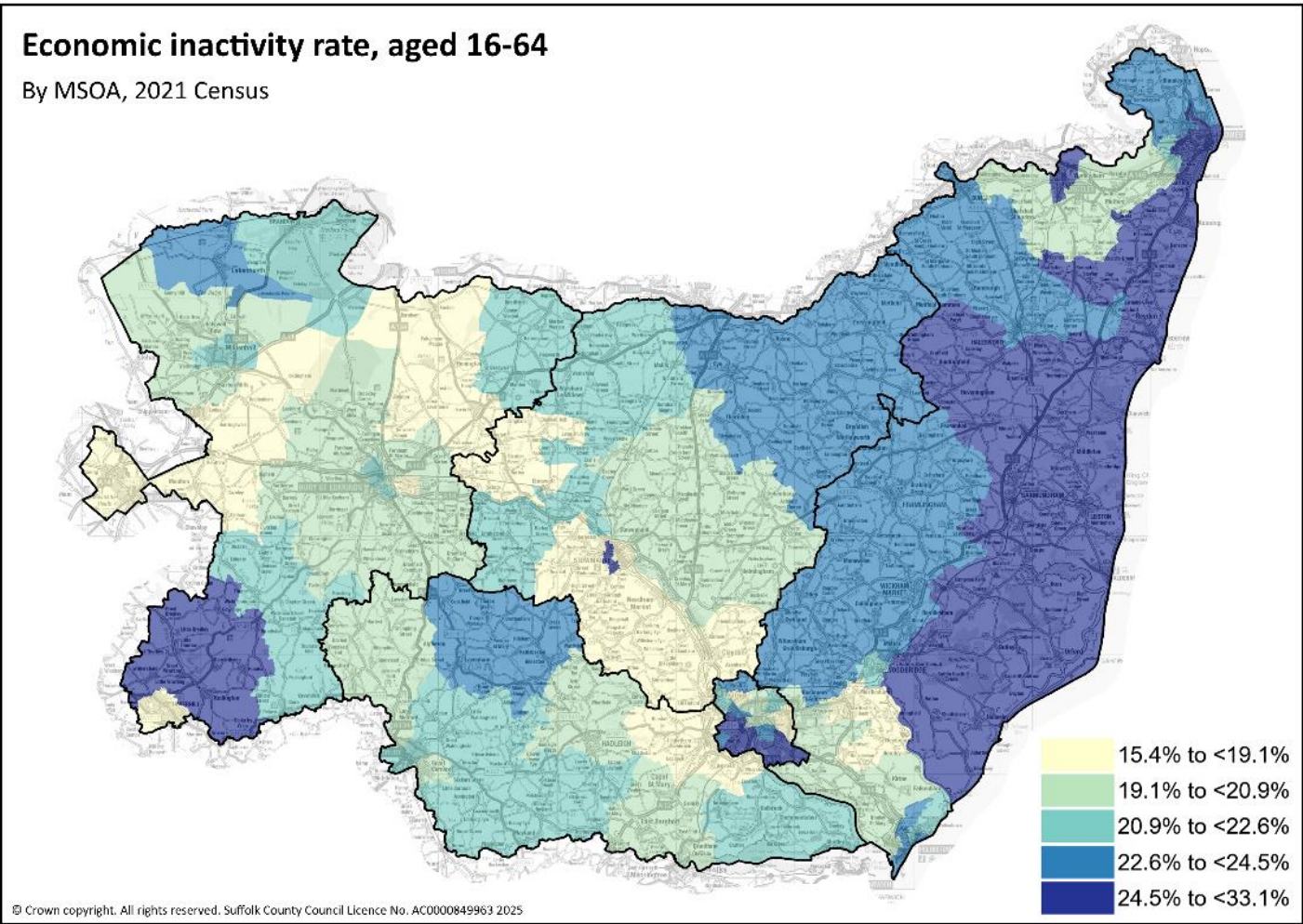
⁶⁹ “Improving health and work: changing lives, 2008, UK Government”

Annex B – Stakeholder Organisations engaged as part of Get Suffolk Working

We are grateful for the time, involvement, input and contributions of the following organisations in the development of the Get Suffolk Working plan:

- Access Community Trust
- Babergh District Council
- Citizens Advice East Suffolk
- Community Action Suffolk
- Dutch Quarter Consultants
- Eastern Education Group (including West Suffolk College)
- Emmaus Suffolk
- Flagship Housing
- Greenlight Trust
- Healthwatch
- Ipswich Borough Council
- Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality
- Lofty Heights
- Mid-Suffolk District Council
- Norfolk Chambers of Commerce (LSIP)
- Orwell Housing
- Seetec
- Skills for Care
- Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
- Suffolk County Council
- Suffolk Law Centre
- Suffolk New College
- The Mason Trust
- West Suffolk Council
- Anglia Care Trust
- Care Development East
- Citizens West Suffolk
- Department for Work and Pensions / Jobcentre Plus (Eastern England Group)
- East Coast College
- East Suffolk Council
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Fresh Start Charity
- Groundwork
- Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG
- Inspire Suffolk
- Lapwing Education
- Menta
- Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (N&W ICB)
- OPR Consulting Ltd.
- Road to Logistics
- Sizewell C
- Suffolk Care Association
- Suffolk Community Foundation
- Suffolk & North East Essex Integrated Care Board (SNEE)
- Suffolk MIND
- Suffolk Refugee Support
- University of Suffolk
- WS Training

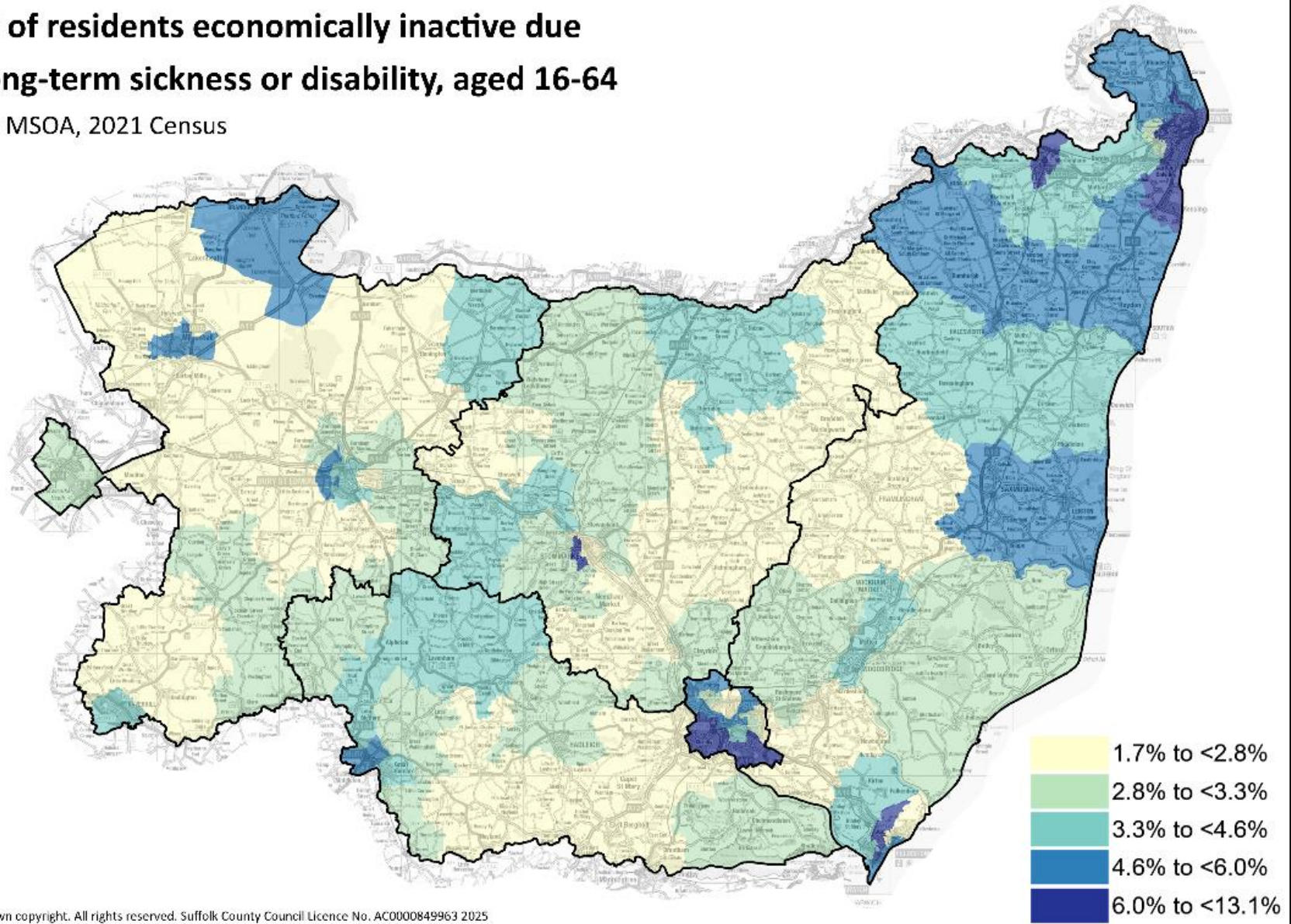
Annex C – Economic Inactivity Data by Geography⁷⁰



⁷⁰ 2021 Census, Office for National Statistics, Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics and Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions

% of residents economically inactive due long-term sickness or disability, aged 16-64

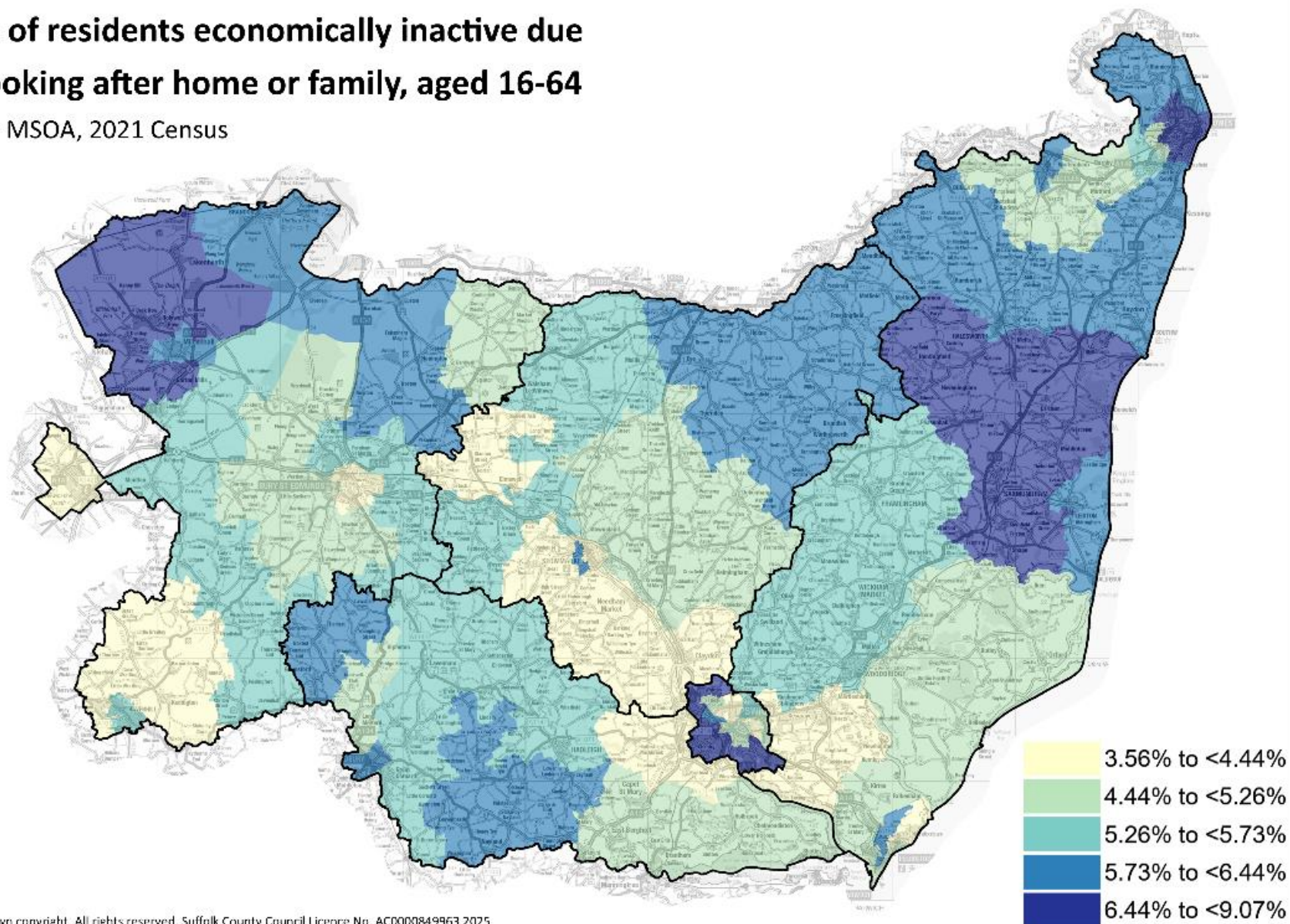
By MSOA, 2021 Census



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% of residents economically inactive due looking after home or family, aged 16-64

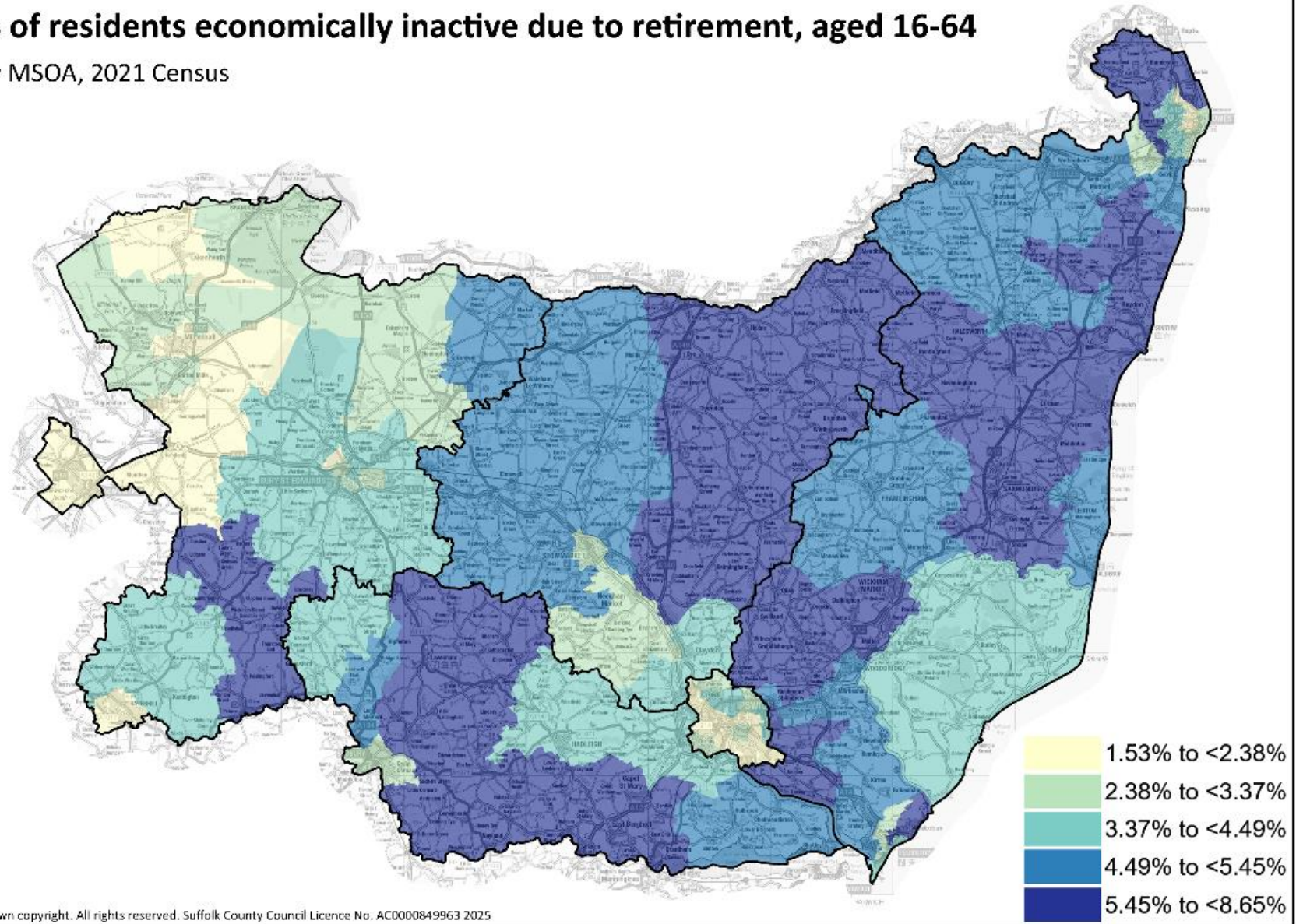
By MSOA, 2021 Census



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% of residents economically inactive due to retirement, aged 16-64

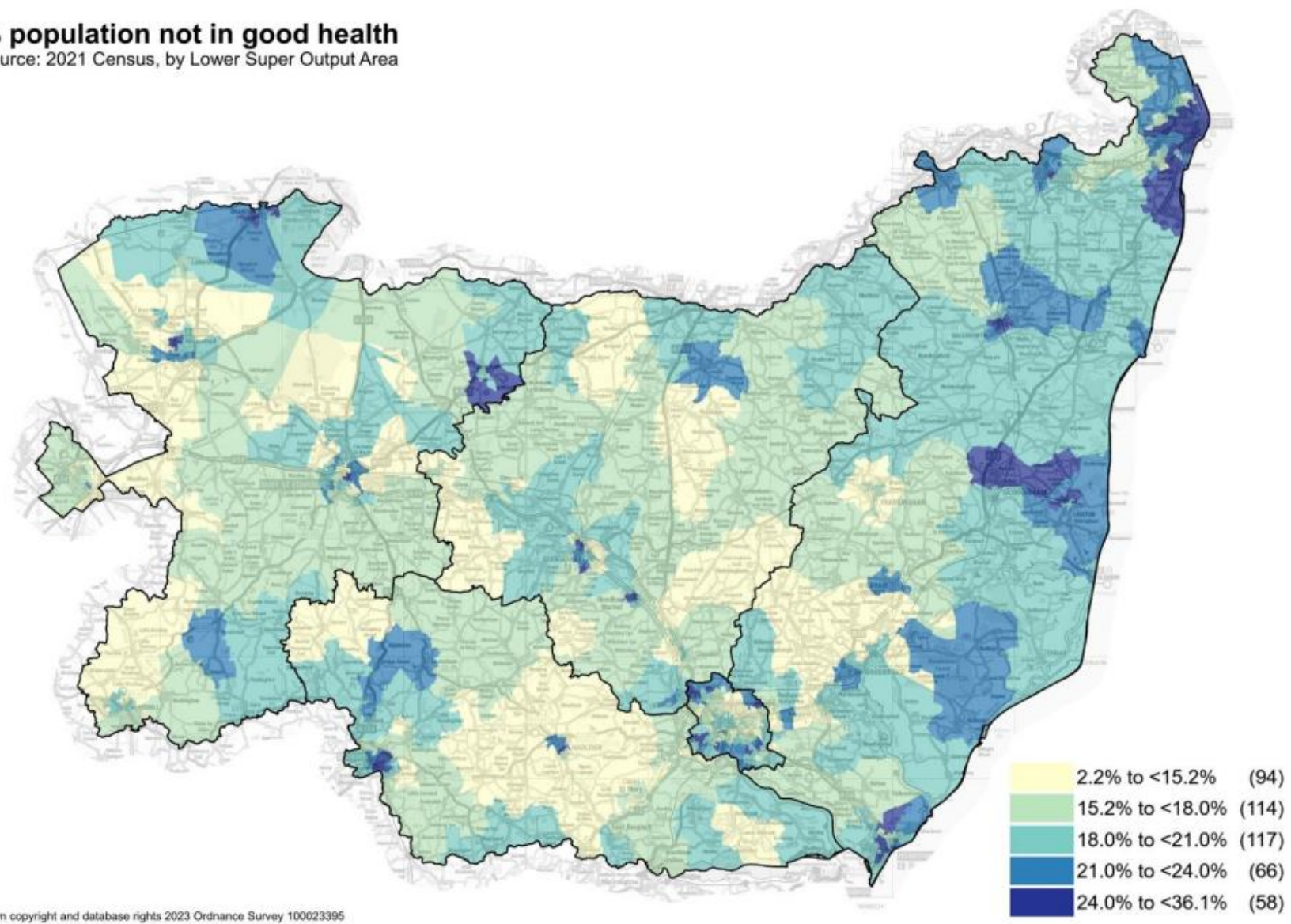
By MSOA, 2021 Census



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% population not in good health

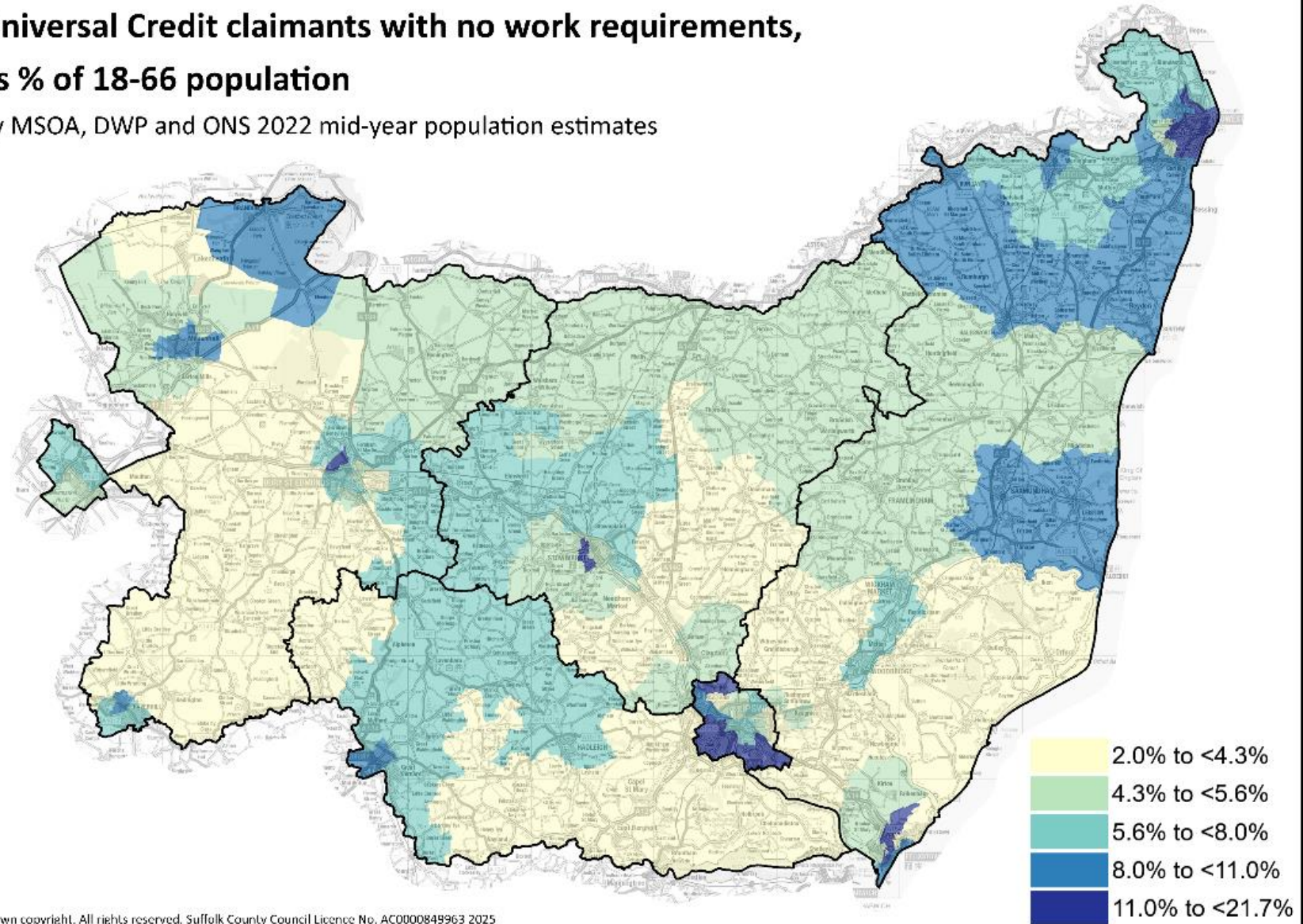
Source: 2021 Census, by Lower Super Output Area



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Universal Credit claimants with no work requirements, as % of 18-66 population

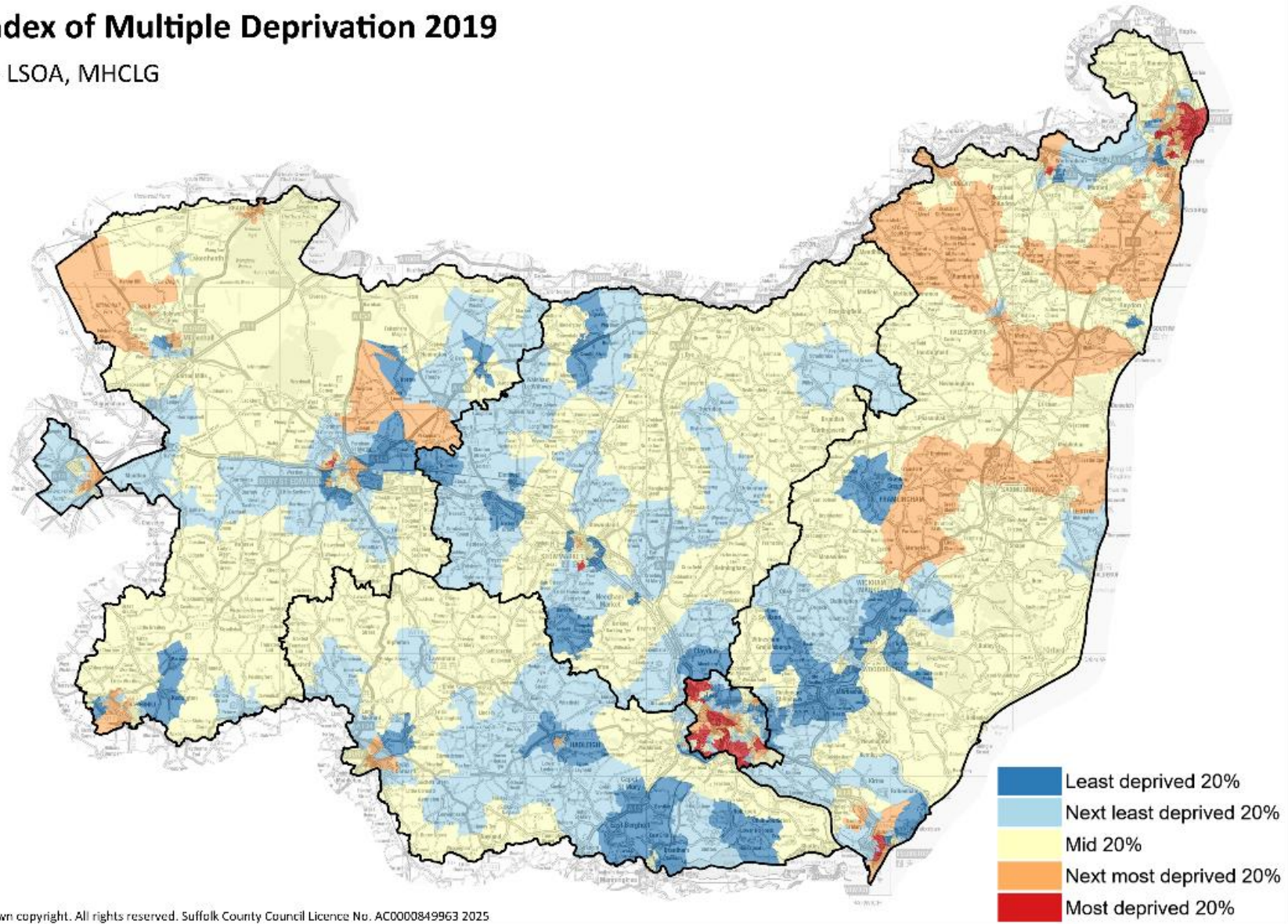
By MSOA, DWP and ONS 2022 mid-year population estimates



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Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

By LSOA, MHCLG



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Economic Activity by District⁷¹

Please note, as we delve into more granular geographic levels, the reliability of the data decreases due to smaller sample sizes. It's important to keep this limitation in mind when interpreting the findings at this level. Additionally, trends at this scale are more likely to fluctuate year on year, further reflecting the less stable nature of the data.

	Economic activity rate - aged 16-64	% who are economically inactive - aged 16-64	% of economically inactive who want a job	% of economically inactive who do not want a job
England	78.7	21.3	18.6	81.4
Suffolk	80.5	19.5	13.5	86.5
Babergh	76.9	23.1	!	95.5
East Suffolk	79.1	20.9	10.8	89.2
Ipswich	85.3	14.7	24.5	75.5
Mid Suffolk	74.6	25.4	!	85.0
West Suffolk	83.5	16.5	14.5	85.5

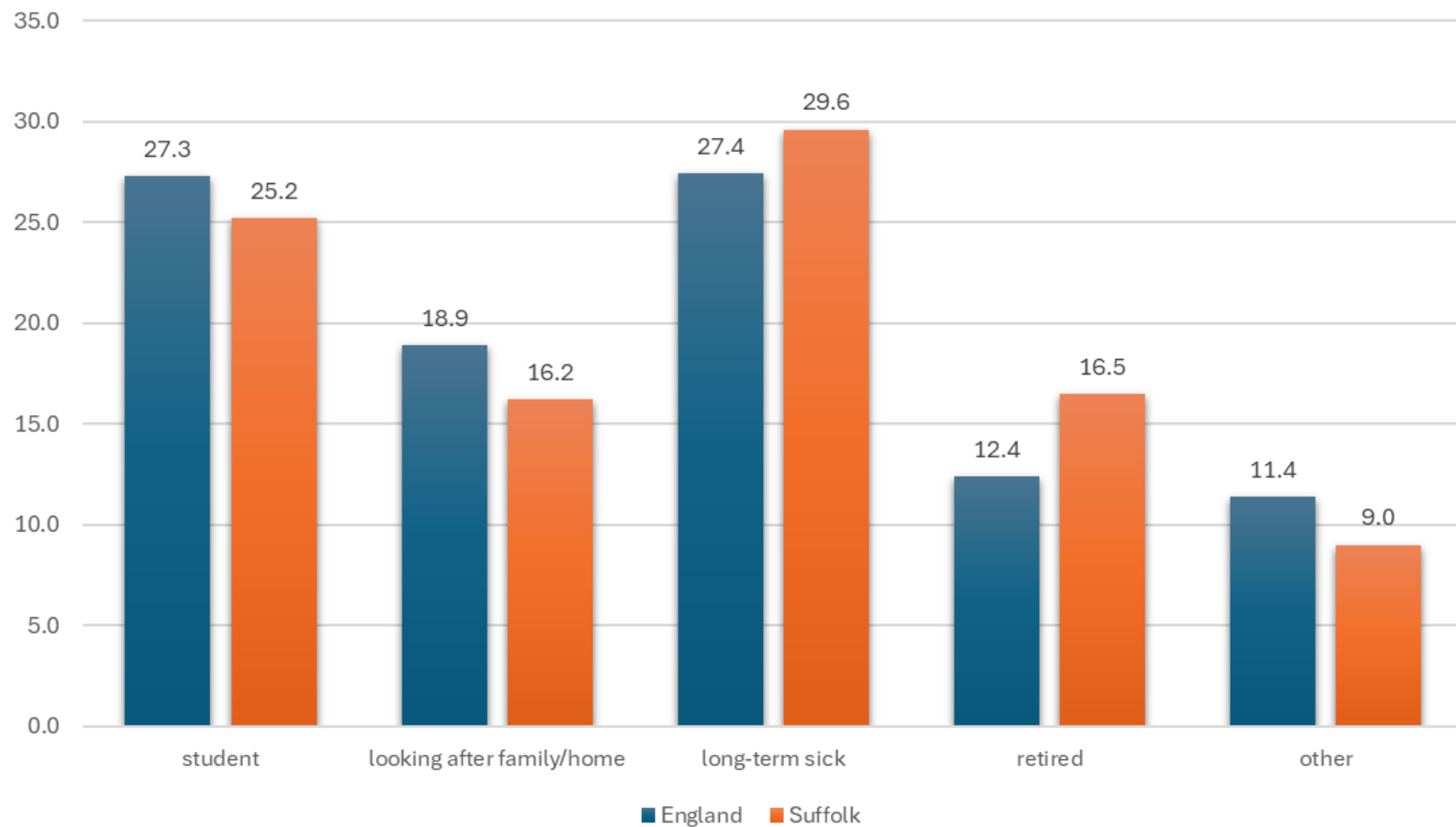
! Estimate and confidence interval not available since the group sample size is zero or disclosive (0-2).

* Estimate and confidence interval unreliable since the group sample size is small (3-9).

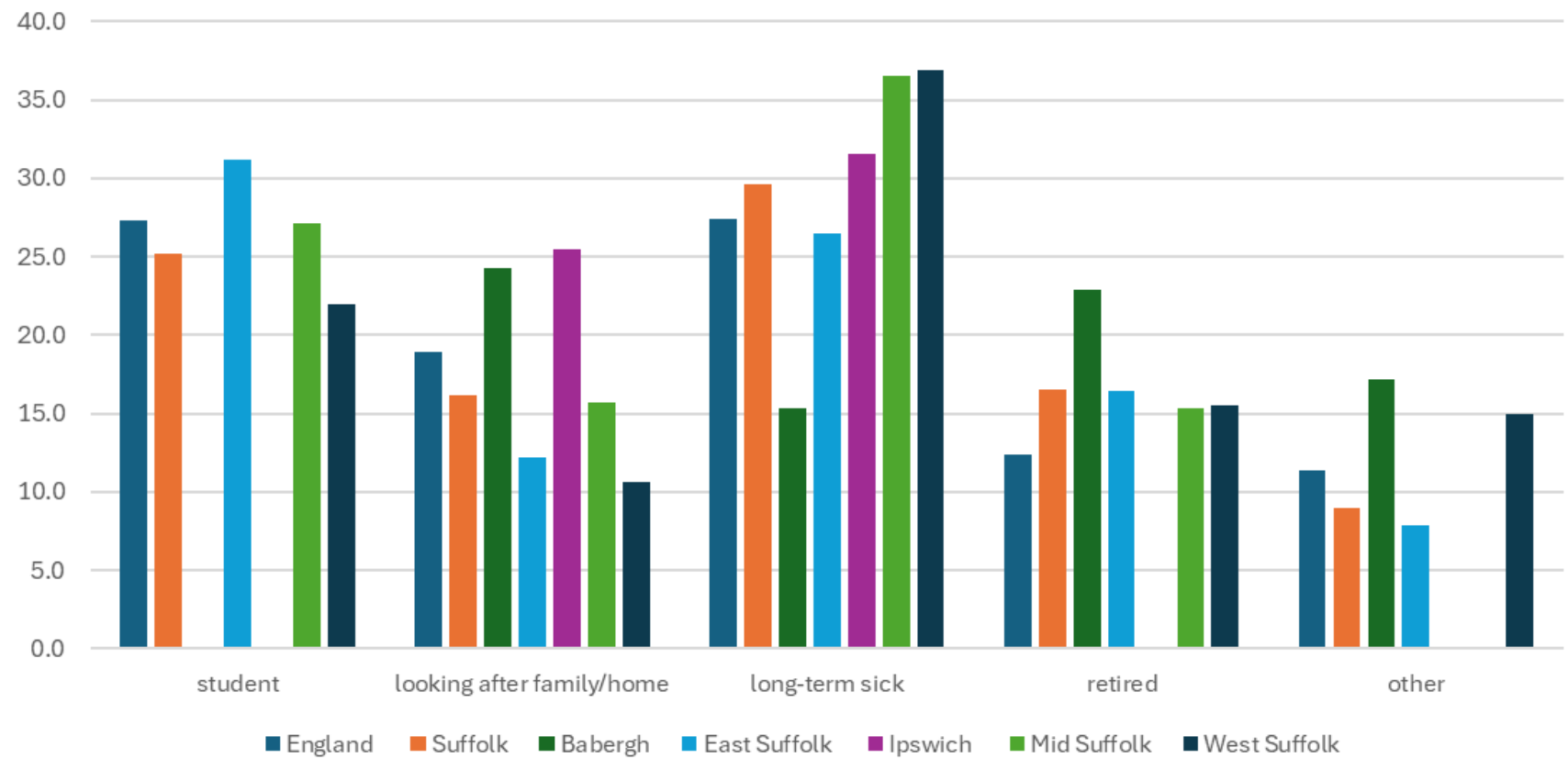
⁷¹ Annual Population Survey, NOMIS

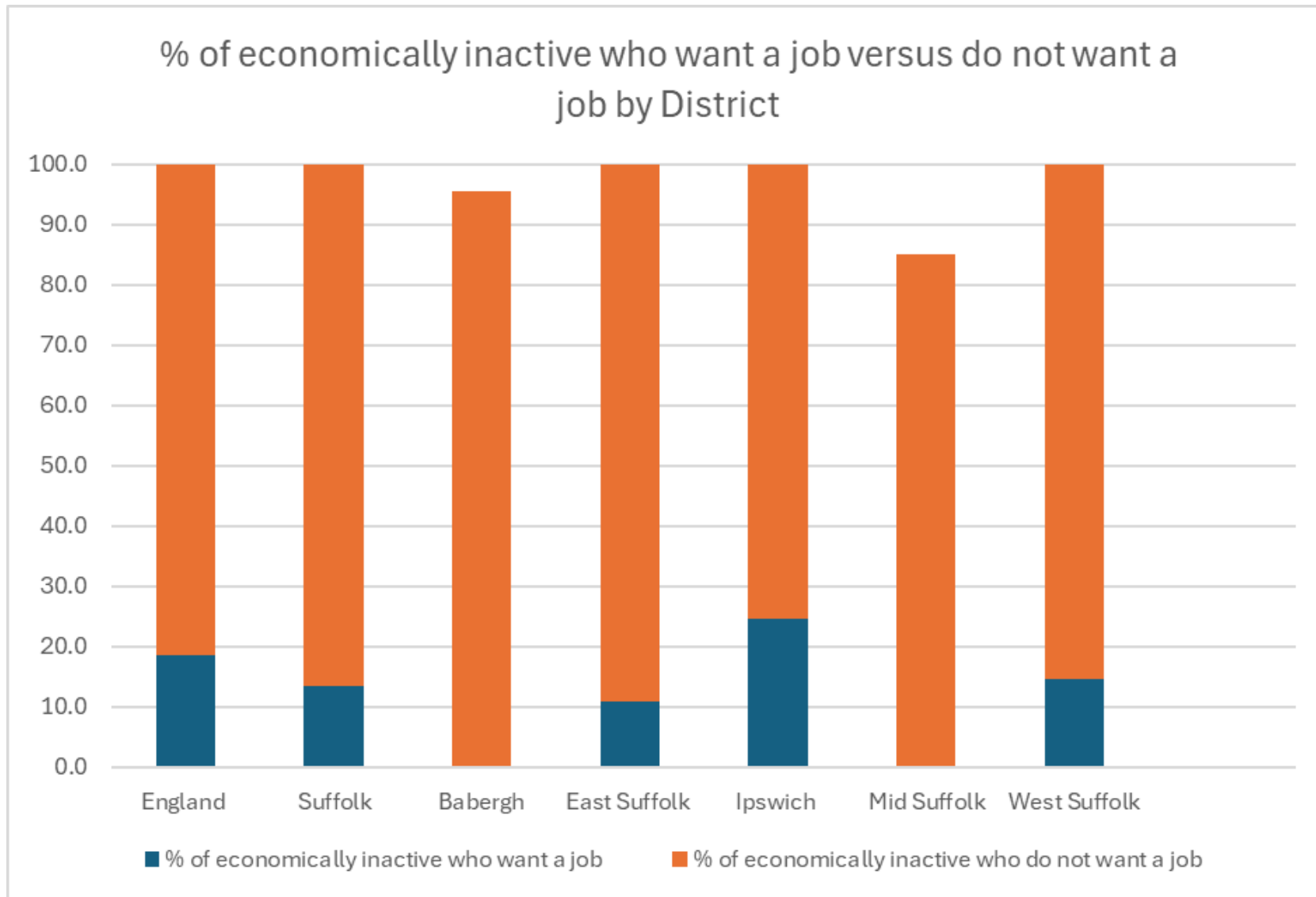
	Babergh	
	percent	confidence
% of economically inactive student	!	!
% of economically inactive looking after family/home	24.3	*
% of economically inactive temporary sick	!	!
% of economically inactive long-term sick	15.3	*
% of economically inactive discouraged	!	!
% of economically inactive retired	22.9	*
% of economically inactive other	17.2	*
	East Suffolk	
	percent	confidence
% of economically inactive student	31.2	*
% of economically inactive looking after family/home	12.2	*
% of economically inactive temporary sick	!	!
% of economically inactive long-term sick	26.5	*
% of economically inactive discouraged	!	!
% of economically inactive retired	16.4	*
% of economically inactive other	7.9	*
	Ipswich	
	percent	confidence
% of economically inactive student	!	!
% of economically inactive looking after family/home	25.5	*
% of economically inactive temporary sick	!	!
% of economically inactive long-term sick	31.6	*
% of economically inactive discouraged	!	!
% of economically inactive retired	!	!
% of economically inactive other	!	!
	Mid Suffolk	
	percent	confidence
% of economically inactive student	27.1	*
% of economically inactive looking after family/home	15.7	*
% of economically inactive temporary sick	!	!
% of economically inactive long-term sick	36.5	*
% of economically inactive discouraged	!	!
% of economically inactive retired	15.3	*
% of economically inactive other	!	!
	West Suffolk	
	percent	confidence
% of economically inactive student	22.0	*
% of economically inactive looking after family/home	10.6	*
% of economically inactive temporary sick	!	!
% of economically inactive long-term sick	36.9	18.2
% of economically inactive discouraged	!	!
% of economically inactive retired	15.5	*
% of economically inactive other	15.0	*

Reasons for Economic Inactivity



Reason for Economic Inactivity by District





Long-term sickness

West Suffolk (36.9%), Mid Suffolk (36.5%) and Ipswich (31.6%) all surpass the Suffolk and National average proportion of individuals economically inactive due to long term sickness (29.6% and 27.4% respectively). We see the lower proportions in East Suffolk (26.5%) and significantly lower proportions in Babergh (15.3%).

Looking after family/home

Ipswich has the highest proportion of economically inactive individuals looking after family/home (25.5%), followed by Babergh (24.3%), both higher proportionally than the Suffolk and National average (16.2% and 18.9% respectively).

Retired

Babergh has a significantly greater proportion of economically inactive individuals retired (22.9%) compared to the Suffolk and National average (16.5% and 12.4% respectively).

Students

Due to small samples, we do not have a reliable proportion for each district. However, using what is available, East Suffolk has the highest proportion of economically inactive students (32.2%) and West Suffolk has the lowest proportion of economically inactive students (22.0%).

Proportion of economically inactive individuals who want a job versus do not want a job

Due to small samples, we do not have a proportion for each district. However, using what is available, Ipswich has the highest proportion of economically inactive individuals who want a job (24.5%) which is higher than the Suffolk and national average (13.5% and 18.6% respectively).

Net Migration⁷²

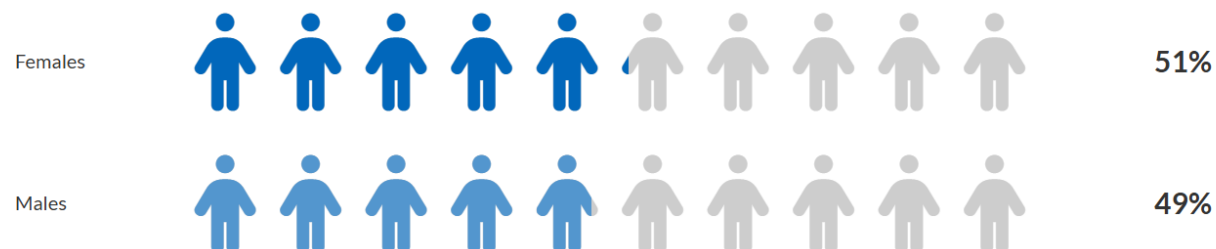
Table IM2024-T1: 2023 LA boundaries				
Internal migration by local authorities in England and Wales, year ending June 2024				
LA code	LA name	Inflow	Outflow	Net
E07000200	Babergh	6,308	4,966	1,342
E07000202	Ipswich	7,654	8,463	-809
E07000203	Mid Suffolk	7,968	5,164	2,804
E07000244	East Suffolk	12,389	10,414	1,975
E07000245	West Suffolk	10,116	8,512	1,604

⁷² Internal migration: by local authority and region, five-year age group and sex, Office for National statistics

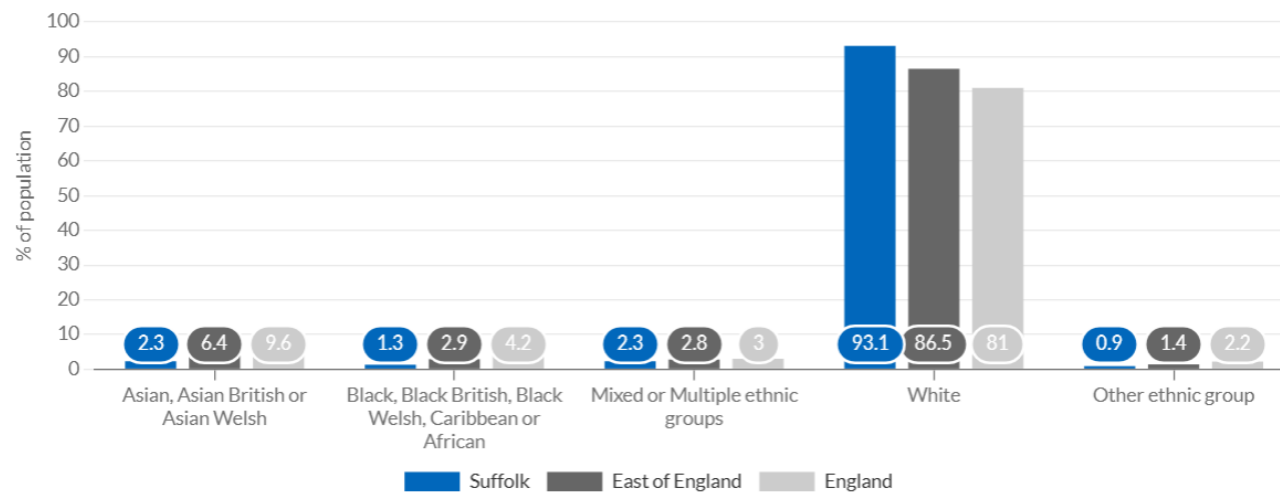
		District				
		Babergh	East Suffolk	Ipswich	Mid Suffolk	West Suffolk
Age Bracket	0-4	186	102	-6	162	27
	5-9	69	142	-7	164	8
	10-14	83	160	-86	133	35
	15-19	-297	-615	-273	-233	-384
	20-24	156	198	161	352	454
	25-29	42	63	53	287	429
	30-34	284	89	-71	299	236
	35-39	153	223	-58	304	232
	40-44	82	183	-98	235	144
	45-49	74	133	-63	184	44
	50-54	136	138	-69	177	32
	55-59	119	280	-98	230	107
	60-64	81	376	-67	221	50
	65-69	59	203	-83	152	27
	70-74	36	175	-15	51	44
	75-79	12	67	-26	64	0
	80-84	33	-5	1	39	30
	85-89	23	24	-3	-6	49
	90+	11	39	-1	-11	40

Demographic of population⁷³

Population by sex for Suffolk (2023)



Broad ethnic groups (2021)



⁷³ Population Estimates, Office for National Statistics

Name	Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	White	Other ethnic group
Suffolk	2.3	1.3	2.3	93.1	0.9
East of England	6.4	2.9	2.8	86.5	1.4
England	9.6	4.2	3	81	2.2

Not in Education, Employment or Training Figures⁷⁴

Locality	MI Month/Year	In Learning	NEET + Unknown		
		Total	Total	NEET	Unknown
Bury St Edmunds	Mar-23	93.87%	2.94%	2.42%	0.52%
	Mar-24	92.39%	3.20%	2.85%	0.35%
	Mar-25	91.01%	3.61%	3.19%	0.42%
Central	Mar-23	91.32%	4.05%	3.74%	0.31%
	Mar-24	91.35%	3.49%	3.36%	0.13%
	Mar-25	91.19%	3.88%	3.51%	0.38%
Coastal North	Mar-23	90.94%	3.99%	3.74%	0.25%
	Mar-24	90.28%	4.13%	3.96%	0.17%
	Mar-25	90.65%	4.67%	3.26%	1.41%
Coastal South	Mar-23	91.21%	3.75%	3.43%	0.32%
	Mar-24	92.10%	4.08%	3.99%	0.08%
	Mar-25	91.89%	4.01%	3.77%	0.25%
Forest Heath	Mar-23	89.67%	4.51%	3.94%	0.56%
	Mar-24	87.53%	4.56%	4.56%	-
	Mar-25	86.78%	6.00%	5.13%	0.87%
Haverhill	Mar-23	90.79%	4.72%	4.49%	0.22%
	Mar-24	91.29%	4.30%	4.08%	0.22%
	Mar-25	90.07%	5.48%	4.96%	0.52%

⁷⁴ NEET and Participation or Participation in Education, Employment and Training age 16-18, Suffolk County Council

Ipswich North & East	Mar-23	91.17%	5.32%	4.68%	0.64%
	Mar-24	91.88%	4.45%	4.25%	0.21%
	Mar-25	91.42%	5.60%	5.29%	0.31%
Ipswich South	Mar-23	82.74%	9.47%	8.57%	0.89%
	Mar-24	84.28%	8.29%	7.86%	0.43%
	Mar-25	86.43%	8.43%	7.61%	0.82%
Ipswich West	Mar-23	88.56%	7.10%	6.64%	0.46%
	Mar-24	87.32%	7.32%	7.14%	0.18%
	Mar-25	87.50%	7.14%	6.46%	0.68%
North Lowestoft	Mar-23	87.68%	6.61%	6.49%	0.11%
	Mar-24	86.95%	8.37%	7.87%	0.50%
	Mar-25	87.81%	8.98%	8.22%	0.76%
South Lowestoft	Mar-23	87.38%	7.12%	6.96%	0.16%
	Mar-24	88.70%	6.91%	6.28%	0.63%
	Mar-25	87.84%	7.90%	7.14%	0.76%
South Suffolk	Mar-23	90.53%	4.39%	4.04%	0.35%
	Mar-24	89.47%	5.15%	4.92%	0.23%
	Mar-25	88.37%	5.31%	4.81%	0.50%
Waveney & Blyth	Mar-23	89.07%	4.70%	4.37%	0.33%
	Mar-24	88.96%	5.68%	5.15%	0.53%
	Mar-25	90.67%	4.77%	4.26%	0.51%

Health Challenges⁷⁵

Deprivation- 44 (10%) of Suffolk's Lower Super Output Areas are within the 20% most deprived under the 'Health Deprivation and Disability Domain'

Obesity- 67.2% of adults (aged 18+) are classified as overweight or obese in Suffolk compared to 64.5% nationally.

Depression- In 2021–22, 13.2% of adults in Suffolk had a recorded diagnosis of depression—the highest prevalence in the East of England, and statistically higher than the national average of 12.7%

Musculoskeletal- MSK conditions are a leading cause of disability and work absence in Suffolk, particularly among people aged 40–65. These include back pain, arthritis, and joint disorders.

⁷⁵ Suffolk Observatory and Healthy Suffolk

Employment and Support Allowance⁷⁶

Almost 13,000 people are claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in Suffolk in November 2024.

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) by ICD code in Suffolk (Nov 24)

In total, **12,874** ESA claims were made in Suffolk during November 2024

Top three ICD codes used in ESA Claims for Suffolk



1

Mental and behavioural disorders accounted for **48% (6,211)** of all claims



2

Musculoskeletal disease accounted for **12.1% (1,558)** of all claims



3

Nervous System disease accounted for **10.7% (1,378)** of all claims

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

⁷⁶ Stat-Xplore, Department for Work and Pensions

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) by ICD code in Suffolk Districts (Nov 24)

	Total number of ESA claims	Most used ICD code		2nd most used ICD code		3rd most used ICD code	
Babergh	1,262	Mental and Behavioural disorders	44.5%	Disease of the Musculoskeletal System and Connective Tissue	12.4%	Diseases of the Nervous System	11.7%
East Suffolk	4,355	Mental and Behavioural disorders	48.7%	Disease of the Musculoskeletal System and Connective Tissue	12.1%	Diseases of the Nervous System	11.4%
Ipswich	3,153	Mental and Behavioural disorders	52.7%	Disease of the Musculoskeletal System and Connective Tissue	11.3%	Diseases of the Nervous System	10.1%
Mid Suffolk	1,470	Mental and Behavioural disorders	44.6%	Disease of the Musculoskeletal System and Connective Tissue	12.8%	Diseases of the Nervous System	12.8%
West Suffolk	2,634	Mental and Behavioural disorders	47.9%	Disease of the Musculoskeletal System and Connective Tissue	12.9%	Symptoms, signs and abnormal Clinical and Laboratory findings, not elsewhere classified	9.3%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

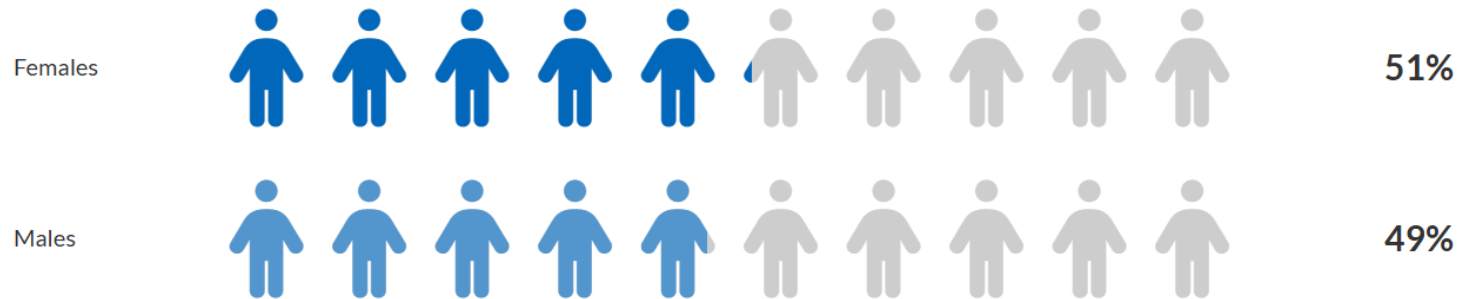


Public Health
& Communities

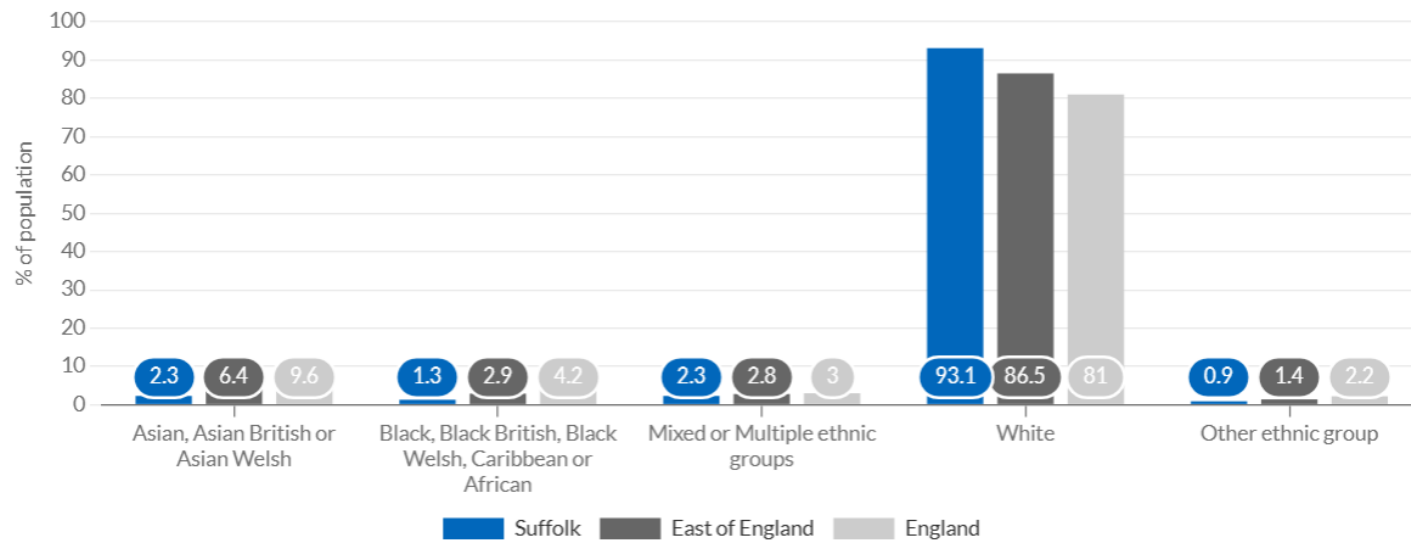
Annex D – Additional Equality and Inclusion Information

Demographic of population

Population by sex for Suffolk (2023)



Broad ethnic groups (2021)



Name	Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	White	Other ethnic group
Suffolk	2.3	1.3	2.3	93.1	0.9
East of England	6.4	2.9	2.8	86.5	1.4
England	9.6	4.2	3	81	2.2

Not in Education, Employment or Training Figures

Suffolk:

MI Month/Year		Mar-23	Mar-24	Mar-25
Group	Sub-Group	Cohort %	Cohort %	Cohort %
In Learning	Total	89.98%	89.73%	89.58%
	In Education	81.75%	81.79%	81.69%
	In Work Based Learning	1.51%	1.56%	2.09%
	Work with Study	6.71%	6.38%	5.80%
NEET + Unknown	Total	5.09%	5.14%	5.60%
	NEET	4.63%	4.86%	4.97%
	Unknown	0.46%	0.28%	0.62%
Work no Training	Total	4.93%	5.13%	4.82%

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) by ICD code in Suffolk (Nov 24)

In total, **12,874** ESA claims were made in Suffolk during November 2024

Top three ICD codes used in ESA Claims for Suffolk



1

Mental and behavioural disorders accounted for **48% (6,211)** of all claims



2

Musculoskeletal disease accounted for **12.1% (1,558)** of all claims



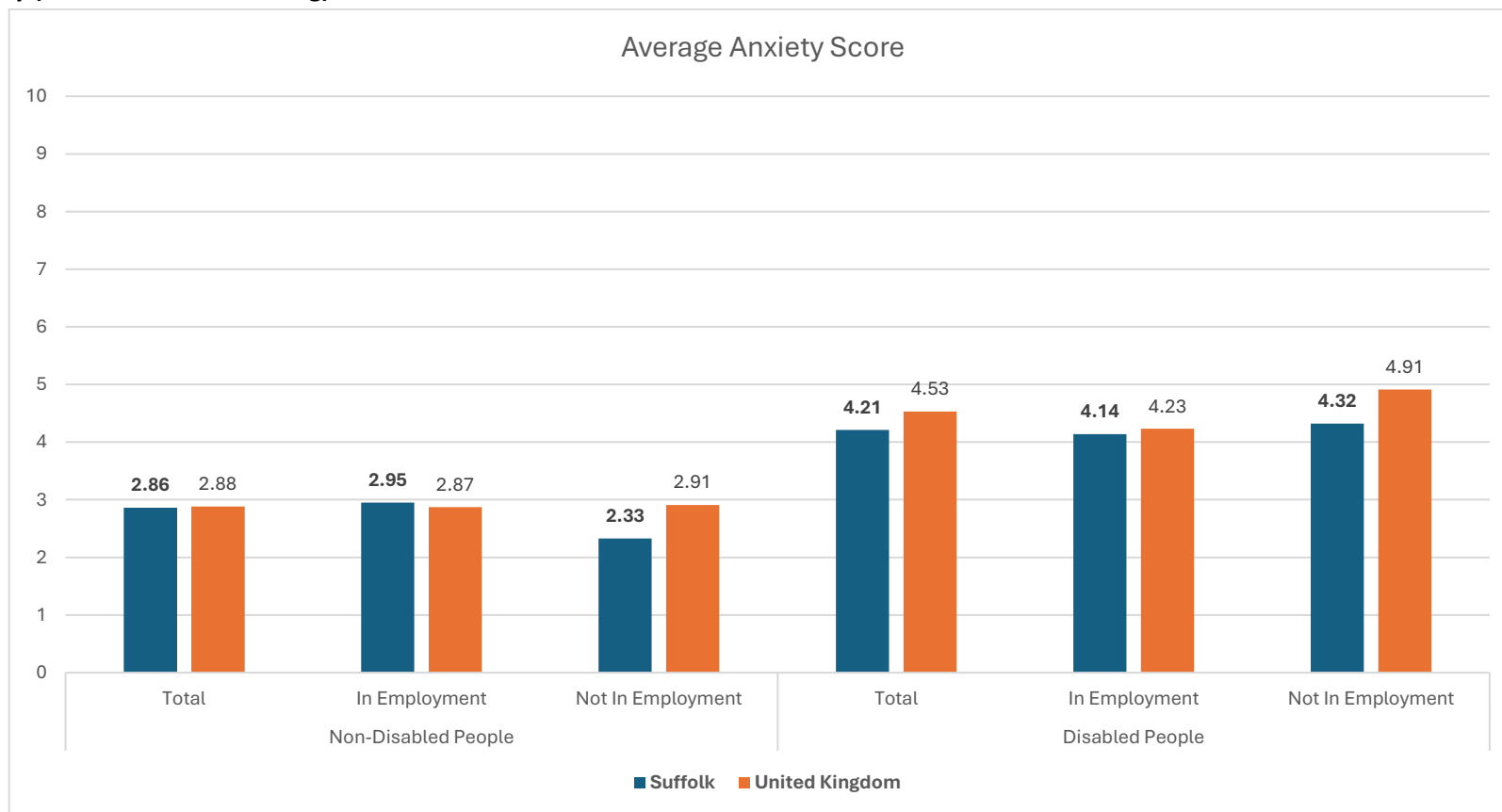
3

Nervous System disease accounted for **10.7% (1,378)** of all claims

Source: DWP Stat Xplore

Wellbeing Scores⁷⁷

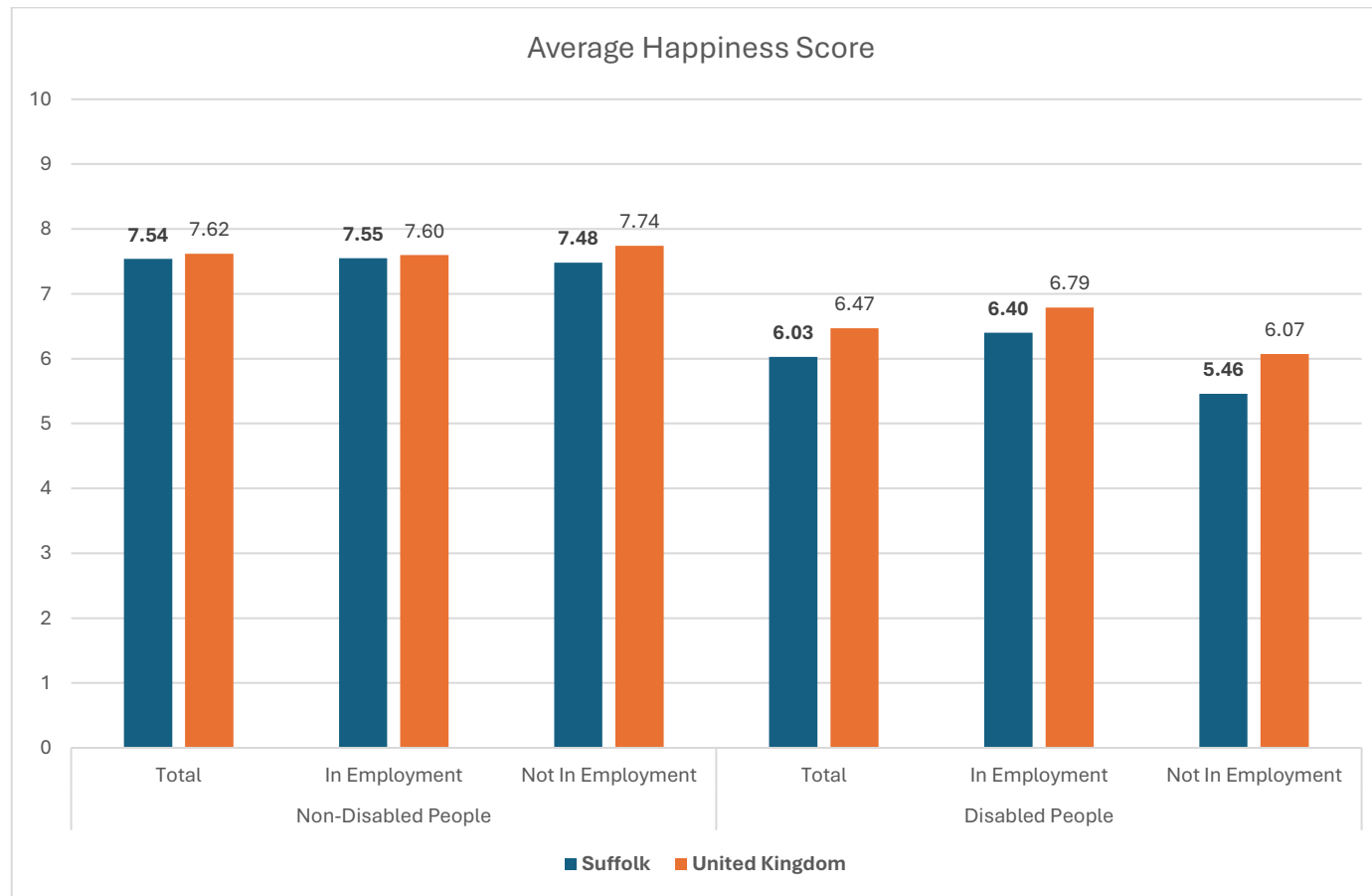
1. Anxiety (lower = better wellbeing)



- People without disabilities in Suffolk have very similar anxiety scores to the UK average (2.86 vs. 2.88).
- People with disabilities in Suffolk report slightly lower anxiety than the UK average (4.21 vs. 4.53).
- Both those with and without disabilities but '**not in employment**' in Suffolk report *much lower anxiety* than the UK average.

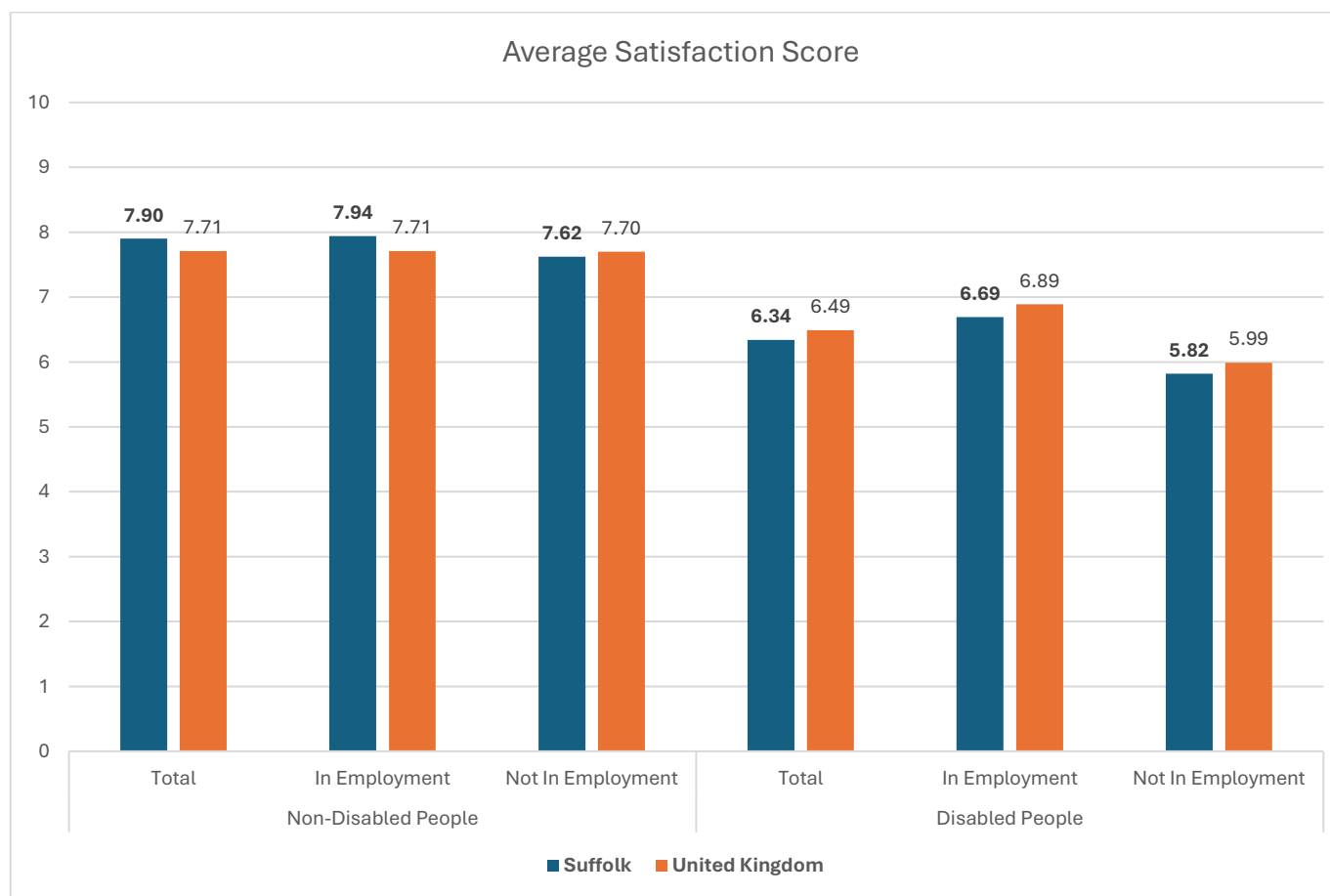
⁷⁷ Dept for Work and Pensions

2. Happiness (higher = better wellbeing)



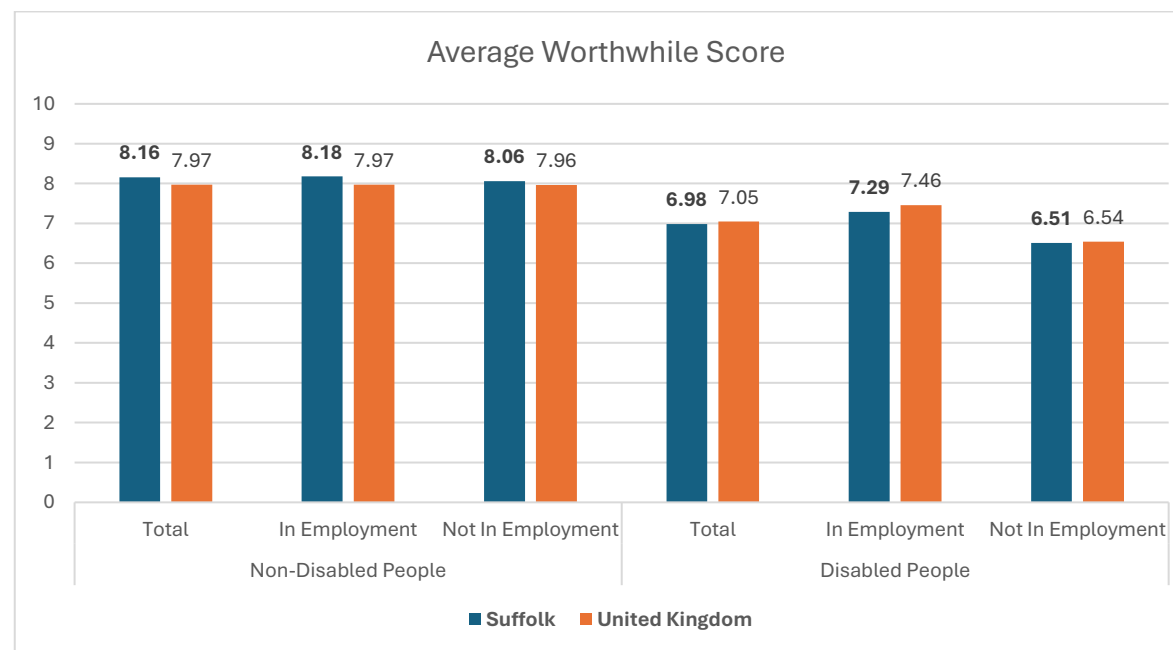
- People without disabilities in Suffolk are marginally less happy than the UK average (7.54 vs. 7.62).
- People with disabilities in Suffolk report lower happiness than the UK average (6.03 vs. 6.47), with the gap being largest for those not in employment (Suffolk: 5.46 vs. UK: 6.07).

3. Life Satisfaction (higher = better wellbeing)



- People without disabilities in Suffolk are more satisfied with life than the UK average (7.90 vs. 7.71).
- People with disabilities in Suffolk report slightly lower satisfaction than the UK average (6.34 vs. 6.49).
- Again, the lowest scores are among disabled people not in employment (5.82 in Suffolk vs. 5.99 UK).

4. Worthwhile (higher = better wellbeing)

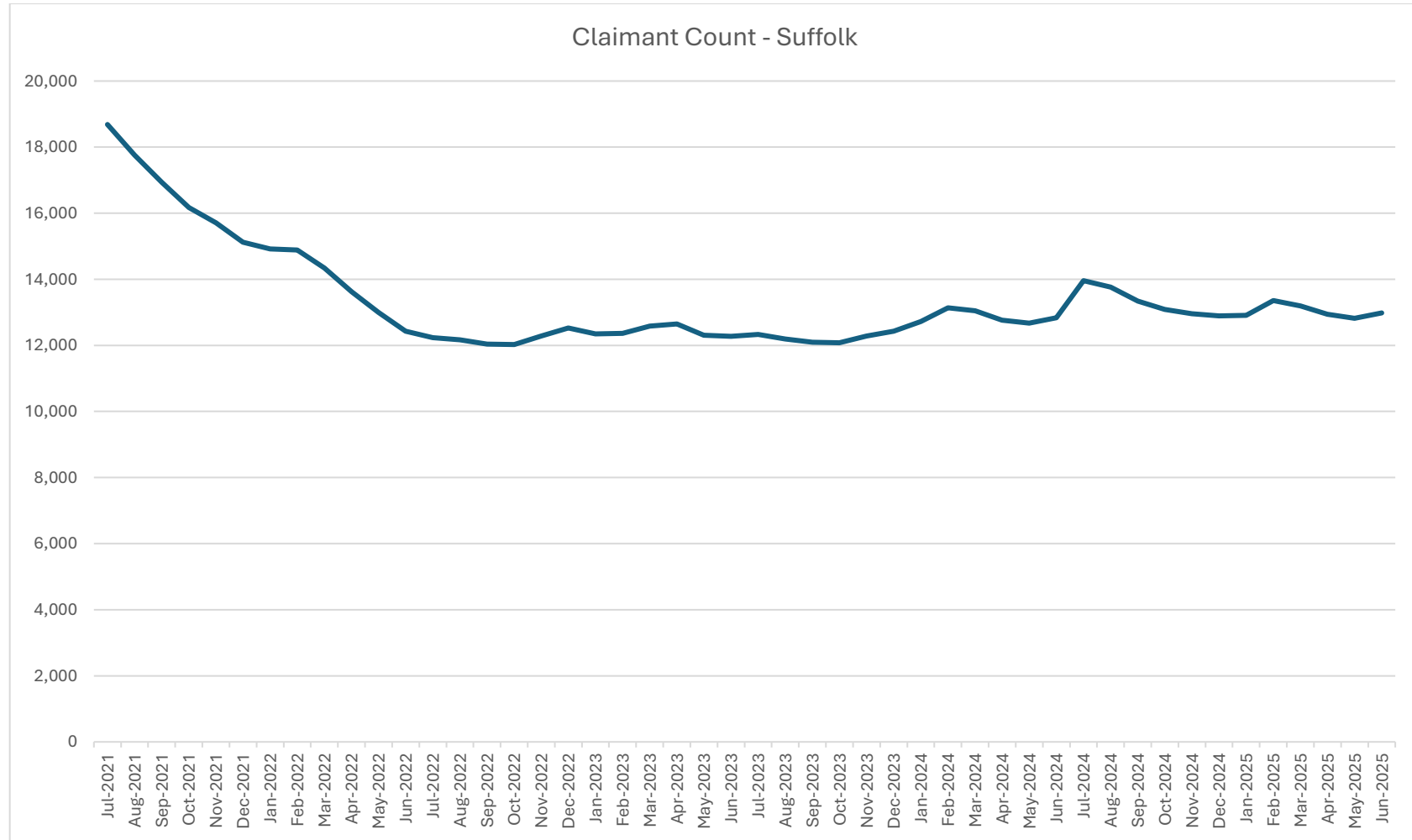


- People without disabilities in Suffolk report higher worthwhile scores than the UK (8.16 vs. 7.97).
- People with disabilities in Suffolk report slightly lower scores than the UK (6.98 vs. 7.05), but the gap is narrow.
- People with disabilities in employment report notably higher worthwhile scores in Suffolk compared with those not in employment (7.29 vs. 6.51).

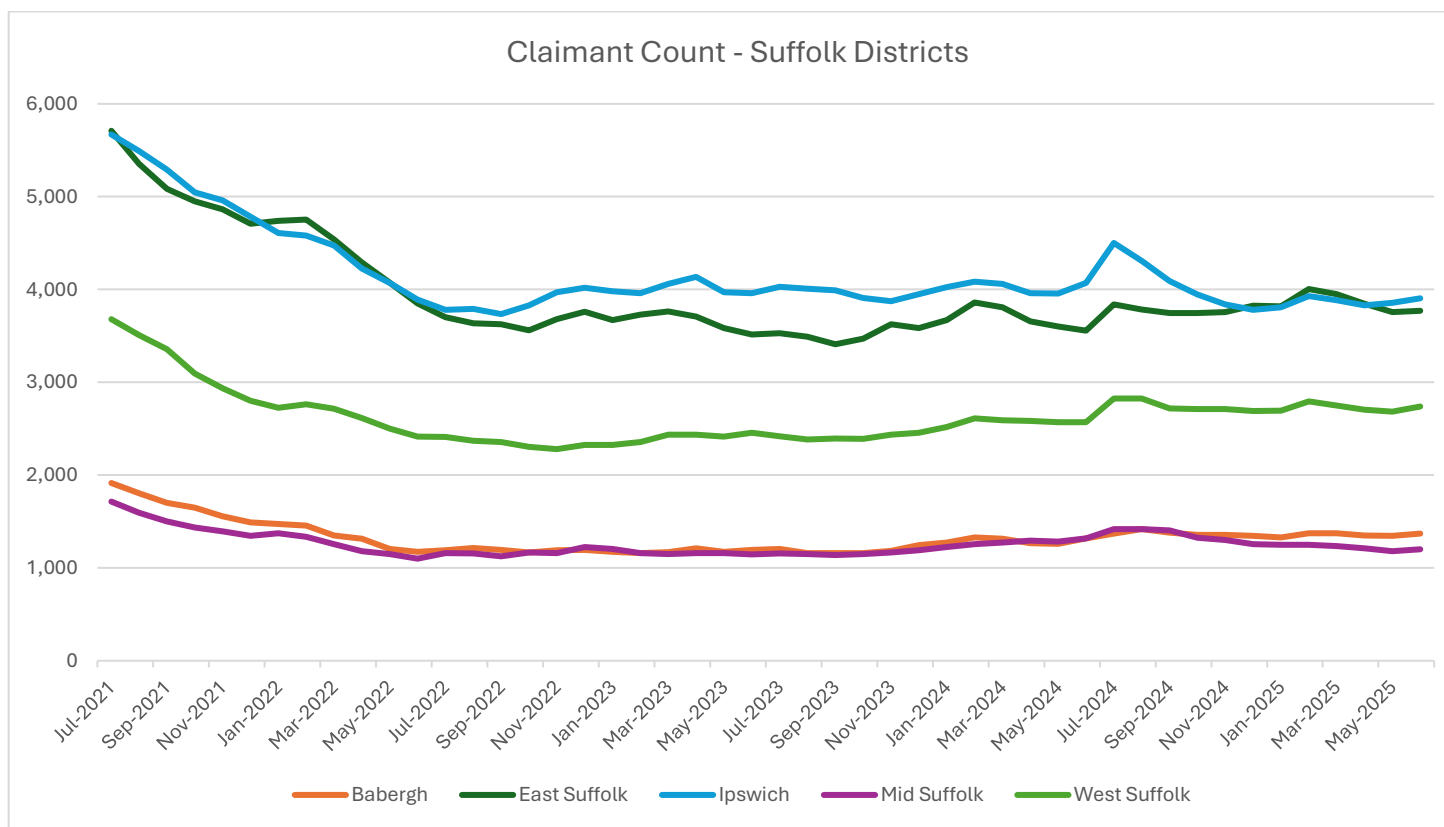
Summary

- **People without disabilities in Suffolk** report higher satisfaction and worthwhile scores compared with the UK average, though slightly lower happiness.
- **People with disabilities in Suffolk** report marginally lower happiness, satisfaction, and worthwhile scores than the UK average — but also lower anxiety.
- **Employment status** strongly affects wellbeing, with People with disabilities ‘not in work’ showing the lowest scores across all positive wellbeing measures.

Claimant Count⁷⁸



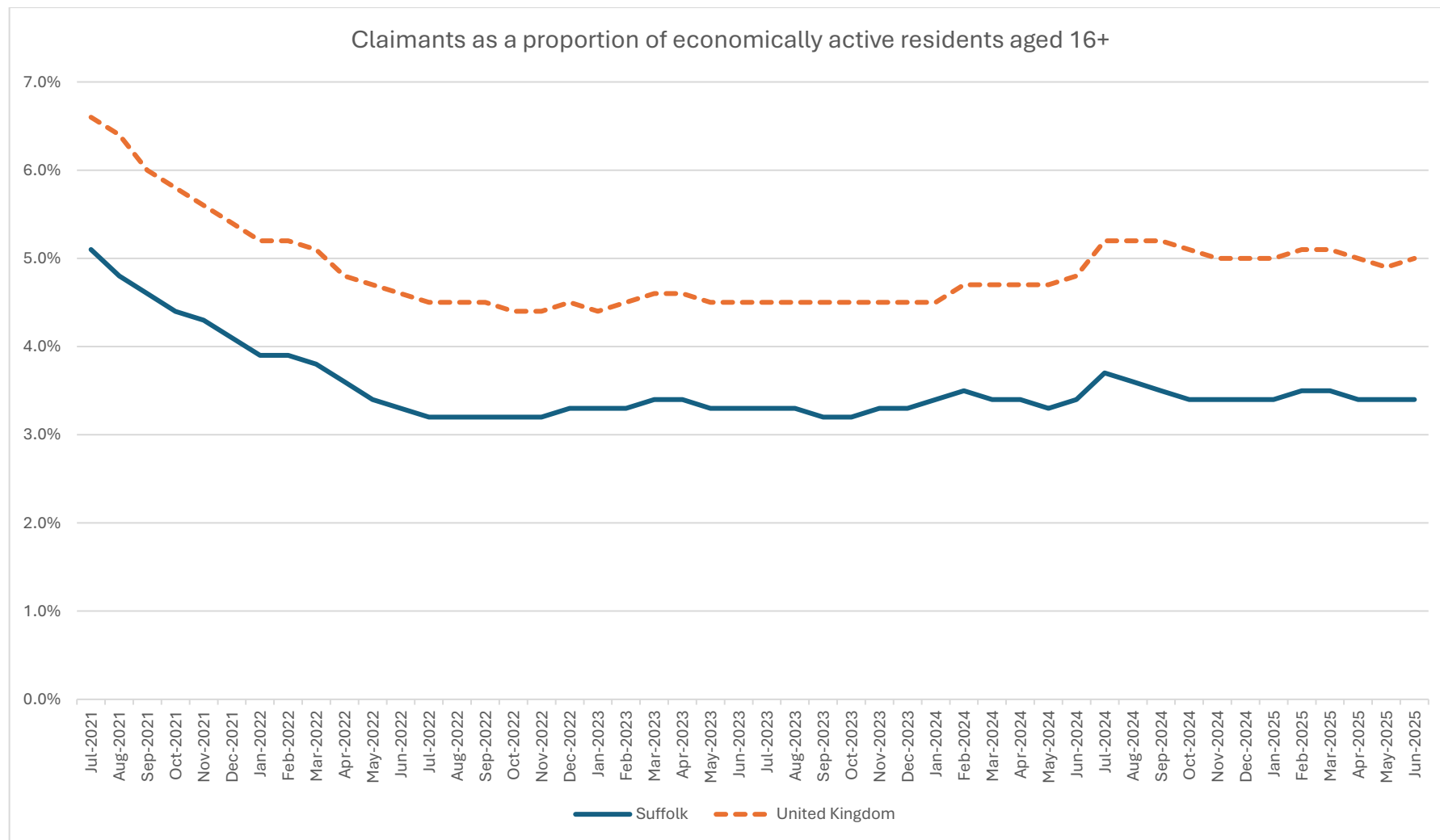
⁷⁸ Nomis



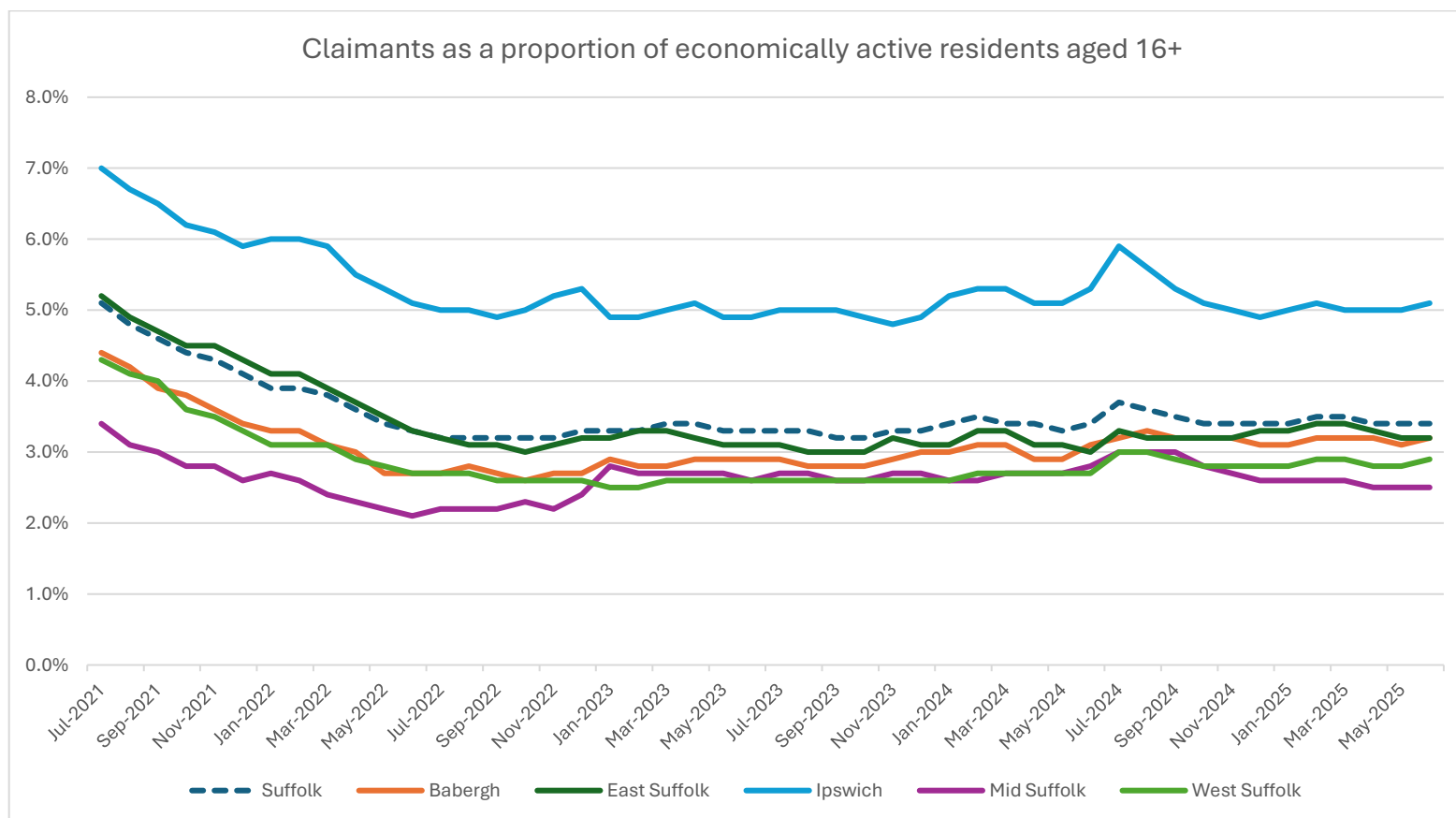
The number of people aged 16+ claiming unemployment-related benefits in Suffolk has fallen substantially since mid-2021, when levels peaked at nearly **18,700 claimants** (Jul-2021). By late 2022 the count had stabilised at around **12,000-12,500**, and has since remained broadly steady, fluctuating within a range of **12,000-13,500**. A seasonal high was recorded in **July 2024** (almost **14,000 claimants**), before easing back towards **13,000** in mid-2025.

Within Suffolk, **Ipswich** and **East Suffolk** consistently account for the largest shares of claimants, together making up more than half of the total. **West Suffolk** contributes a further fifth, while **Babergh** and **Mid Suffolk** record the lowest counts. Overall, the trend since 2021 highlights a significant reduction in claimant levels from their pandemic-era peak, with claimant numbers stabilising in recent years at a lower baseline.

Claimants as a proportion of economically active residents aged 16 or over⁷⁹



⁷⁹ Nomis



In July 2021, **5.1%** of Suffolk’s economically active residents were claiming unemployment-related benefits, compared with **6.6% nationally**. Rates in Suffolk steadily declined through 2021 and 2022, falling to around **3.2% by late 2022**, well below the UK average.

Since 2023, claimant proportions have stabilised within a narrower band of **3.2-3.5%**, showing relative consistency. Ipswich continues to record the highest rates (around **5.0-5.3%** in 2023–2025), above both the Suffolk and UK averages. In contrast, **Mid Suffolk** consistently has the lowest levels, averaging **2.5-2.8%**, while **Babergh, East Suffolk, and West Suffolk** remain closer to the county average. Overall, Suffolk has maintained a **lower claimant rate than the UK** since mid-2021, highlighting the county’s labour market resilience.

Annex E – Department for Work and Pensions Employer Offer

Jobcentre Plus – Tailored Recruitment Service



[How Jobcentre Plus can help you recruit - YouTube](#)

National Employer Services Line

This national team helps direct employer enquiries. Complete an online enquiry form or call 0800 169 0178.

[Jobcentre Plus help for recruiters: Recruitment advice and support - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Find A Job

Maximise vacancy promotion at no cost via [Find A Job](#)

Strategic Relationship Team

Larger employers with specific recruitment and retention needs may benefit from the additional service of the Strategic Relationship Team offering:

- Recruitment and Employment Sales Managers who work with national employers, trade bodies and partners to provide advice and solutions
- a single national point of contact with the DWP and local Jobcentres
- cross sector networking and events with key stakeholders and industry influencers
- promotion of vacancies nationally
- links with local **Employer Adviser Teams**

Local Employer Adviser Teams in Jobcentres

Allocated Employer Advisers offer a tailored recruitment and advice service supporting employers to grow and develop their business as a result of recruiting Jobcentre candidates. They offer the range of support summarized below and work with employers to tailor solutions at pace. To find out more email ipswich.eainbox@dwp.gov.uk

Recruitment Service

- Local labour market knowledge with advice, insight and information about funding, local services, initiatives and recruitment events.
- Help with job descriptions so they are competitive in the local labour market.
- Advice on designing recruitment processes that get the right candidates into work quickly.
- Help with pre-screening or sifting and access to a desk or room in a local office to meet and interview candidates.
- Invites to local recruitment and community events to promote vacancies and meet local jobseekers.

Advice service – Skills and Development

- Employer Advisers help in planning and delivery of training programmes such as Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) that give candidates the right skills for work in return for a guaranteed interview.
- Guidance on the Disability Confident Scheme which supports the recruitment, retention and development of people with health conditions and those who are neurodivergent.
- Advise on creating opportunities to support local people to into work, such as Work Experience.

Sector-based Work Academy Programme

A tried and tested DWP recruitment tool, tailored to your requirements, a SWAP seeks to reduce the costs and risks associated with recruitment, ensuring employers hire the right people at the right time:

- helps people who are ready to start a job but need support to learn the skills and behaviours that employers are looking for
- allows employers and the participants to explore potential
- develops existing management and mentoring skills within businesses
- participants remain on working age benefits until they start work with no need for employers, for example, to fund travel expenses or childcare
- depending on employer skills need, can last a few days to six weeks

SWAPs are built around genuine current vacancies and consist of three elements:

1. pre-employment training
2. work experience placement
3. guaranteed job interview

[Sector-based work academy programme: employer guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sector-based-work-academy-programme-employer-guide)

Work Experience

- helps jobseekers build their skills and confidence
- placements between 2 and 8 weeks
- you select participants with help from Employer Advisers
- complements existing recruitment

[Work experience: employer guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/work-experience-employer-guide)

Work Trial

A short unpaid period of work following a job interview with no direct cost to the employer, a Work Trial allows employers and the applicant to see if:

- the job is appropriate
- decide if they're right for the role

[Jobcentre Plus help for recruiters: Work trials - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/jobcentre-plus/help-for-recruiters/work-trials)

Apprenticeships

Apprentices earn a wage while learning job-specific skills and are for people of all ages – new and current employees. They are available to employers of all sizes.

Employers could receive 95% funding towards apprenticeship training if the paybill is below £3m [How to register and use the apprenticeship service as an employer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/how-to-register-and-use-the-apprenticeship-service-as-an-employer) [Home - Apprenticeships Suffolk](#)

Skills Bootcamps

Employer Advisers work to support people onto Skills Boot Camps – these are Department for Education funded and offer free, flexible training courses, from 60 hours up to 16 weeks, designed to equip individuals with in-demand skills for various sectors. These bootcamps are part of the government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee and aim to help people progress in their current roles, change careers, or become self-employed by providing sector-specific skills and job opportunities [Skills Bootcamps | Skills for Careers](#)

How benefits (Universal Credit) support employers through recruitment, retention and redundancies



[Universal Credit and Employers – Making work better for all \(youtube.com\)](#)

[Universal Credit and Employers – More flexibility for employers and claimants \(youtube.com\)](#)

Childcare Costs

Parents receiving Universal Credit receive help with their childcare costs:

- up to 85% of childcare costs can be met
- upfront financial help when starting work or increasing hours
- 15 to 30 hours childcare support

[Homepage | Best Start in Life](#)

Supporting Armed Forces and Reservists

Reservists, veterans and their families bring a range of skills and qualities to the workplace. Jobcentre Armed Forces Champions support veterans into work while employers can sign the covenant and pledge their support by offering opportunities to veterans [Businesses - Armed Forces Covenant](#)

Unlocking Potential and Recruiting a Diverse Workforce

Many people of working age in Suffolk are disabled or have a health condition. There's a gap between the proportion of disabled people employed compared with non-disabled people. Attracting and retaining disabled applicants means discovering talented people.

There is lots of practical help and support available to help employers recruit people with health conditions and disabilities [Disability and employment - guide for managers](#) Employer Advisers are ready to help employers navigate this space.

Disability Confident Scheme

The Disability Confident Scheme provides employers with the knowledge, skills and confidence to attract, recruit, retain and develop disabled people, challenging perceptions and increasing understanding of disability [Disability Confident employer scheme - GOV.UK](#)

Health Adjustment Passport

Employer Advisers find use of [health-adjustment-passport.pdf](#) is a great tool for supporting recruitment and retention.

Access to Work

Access to Work supports employment of disabled people with the skills employers need and helps retain staff who develop a disability or health condition by providing help with costs such as:

- workplace aids and equipment
- adapting equipment
- a wide variety of support workers
- mental health support
- communication support

[Access to Work guide for employers - GOV.UK](#)

Response to Redundancy

Employer Advisers offer:

- a confidential response to employer notification
- advice, information and support to employees at risk
- online webinars and in-person sessions for jobseekers
- partnership with local authorities and organisations offering a support network
- information about training, benefits and sources of help

[Making staff redundant: Getting help - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Mentoring Circles

Employers can make a huge impact on young jobseekers through mentoring circles. These small group discussions offer an opportunity to inspire. To find out more email ipswich.eainbox@dwp.gov.uk

Annex F – Detailed Description of the Current Work, Health and Skills Offer

Local Authorities

Local authorities in Suffolk, those at both a County and District or Borough level, have a major role to play in addressing economic inactivity, both as strategic coordinators and direct deliverers of related research, services and activity.

Previous research commissioned by the Local Government Association identified a patchwork of 51 national programmes, services or initiatives operational in England, which to some extent, can support specific or particular issues that economically inactive people may need to overcome in being able to find or be ready to work⁸⁰. Whilst not all of these programmes will be operational in Suffolk, this is indicative of the wide range and number of programmes being delivered within the county at any one time.

Local Authorities in Suffolk have an ongoing role to play in helping to coordinate nationally funded activity and maximising impact on a place-based basis as well as an associated role in developing locally designed and delivered programmes which meet an otherwise unmet need.

Suffolk County Council's Adult Social Care (ASC) directorate works directly with a growing number of adults who are eligible for support through the Care Act 2014. Primarily this means working with people who are 18+ and includes those with a physical or learning disability, mental health need, autism, sensory impairment along with adults struggling with alcohol or drug dependency and at risk of abuse or neglect. ASC services are delivered and commissioned across three tiers of support including help to help yourself (Tier 1), short-term support/re-enablement (Tier 2) and on-going long-term support (Tier 3); prevent, reduce and delay are the golden threads across all three.

Support for working age adults has become the largest area of spend in ASC, with a greater proportion of people receiving high cost and high support level packages. Although not all of these individuals will be able to move into the labour market, the service sees employment as a key gateway to independence and wellbeing and would like to improve access to employment. Suffolk has one of the lowest employment rates regionally, with a particular pressure around adults with a learning disability and/ or autism in employment. For those people with a very low level of need and for those with physical disabilities, there is a need to remove barriers related to employment, volunteering and the wider use of public services. We need to ensure that the employment offer is clear, accessible and provides people with all the support needed to secure and sustain employment or self-employment. We have an aspiration to link employment to Day Opportunities, through targeted activities that help people develop the skills to enter the world of work.

⁸⁰ 'Make it Local: Local Government's vital role in addressing economic activity (16th October 2023)

The recently published County Councils Network (CCN) report on social care (The forgotten story of social care) identified a number of key findings. This highlighted that many individuals in the care system do not achieve independence, employment or social inclusion with the system often focusing on maintenance rather than progression and a fragmented system, lack of data and inconsistent commissioning practices hindering effective support. The report called for better integration with health, housing and employment services. As a result SCC ASC are looking to enhance their delivery model so that it is more strengths based and maximises the role of education and employment partners to support better employment outcomes.

Another area identified for improvement is the transition of young people from SCC's Children to Adult Services. The rate of young people transitioning from children's services to adults' service, if unmitigated, will rise by 29% by 2030. Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) provision has increased 140% since 2015, whilst pupil numbers have only increased by 7%. The 2023 CQC assessment resulted in an overall rating of "Good" for the Local Authority in meeting its duties under the Care Act, however it was noted that feedback from both staff and those using services highlighted that improvements to the transition between services was needed in order to enhance the pathway and preparedness for young people to independent living, and potentially employment. Although many of these young people will not meet eligibility for ongoing adult social care support, they may require other support including help into employment.

To address the challenge, CYPS and ASC are working closely together to improve the Transition into ASC offer which will mean working with young adults from the age of 14 or Year 9 in school. This work will feed into a new Preparing for Adulthood 0-25 model where routes into employment will be key. Further information regarding this work was recently published as part of a SCC Scrutiny Committee item^[1].

Suffolk County Council's Adult Learning Service receives an annual contract from the Department for Education to provide Adult Learning Programmes across Suffolk. Suffolk County Council provides the leadership, central management and the strategic direction. All learning is subcontracted and delivered through a network of local organisations and in academic year 25/26, this will also include the three Further Education Colleges in Suffolk.

^[1] Suffolk County Council Scrutiny Committee, 'Transitions from Children to Adult Services', 9 July 2025

The intent of the service is to provide high quality learning opportunities for those adults in Suffolk who face the greatest barriers to securing employment or playing a full part in society, so that they can make progress in securing a better future for themselves, their families and communities with a target of at least 60% of learners being either unemployed and/or economically inactive.

The Service was recognised by OFSTED in 2024 as being a “good” service and has ambitions to be outstanding. Actions being taken to achieve this will help enhance pathways into employment for those that may be economically inactive. The Service is currently enhancing its management and delivery of effective careers, education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) and additionally has added an integrated 1-2-1 coaching service (Suffolk Bright Futures) to its curriculum offer for academic year 25/26, to enhance work, health and life prospects for inactive adults in Suffolk.

The Service aims to deliver in excess of 4000 learning aims each academic year for over 2000 learners, and through its subcontractors delivers a broad and balanced programme of accredited and non-accredited learning opportunities across the County.

All learning is focused on the delivery of the following three curriculum priorities:

1. Prioritise the breaking down of barriers to health, life and work for individuals and families
2. Improve essential skills for individuals and families. (Mathematics, English, Digital Skills and ESOL)
3. Develop employability, vocational skills, and work readiness.

Suffolk County Council also provides youth support services for those who are not accessing education, employment or training. They work collaboratively with schools and other key partners to identify young people who may need extra support to successfully transition at year 11 and decide who is best placed to offer this, including exploring options for in-school and local community support. The children who are most likely to become NEET are our most vulnerable i.e. children in need, children in care, young carers, and children with mental health conditions and/or SEND. The earlier a child is identified the greater the opportunity to influence outcomes and prevent them from disengaging from school and then becoming NEET. The number of those that are NEET in Suffolk is increasing and the impact on the young person’s life chances, and likelihood of future economic inactivity, are significant. There is a recognition that all services, despite limited resources, collectively need to be working with those at ‘most risk’ as early as possible in their school life in order to make an impact on outcomes as they head towards adulthood.

The SCC **Virtual School**, hosts a number of mechanisms to support the Leaving Care Service in addressing unemployment inequalities in Suffolk's care leaver cohort. Through The **Family Business** initiative, we're forging employment pathways that empower care leavers. The Family Business helps to create ringfenced apprenticeships and paid work placements in the local authority and support through a dedicated coordinator, tasked with upholding a level of support akin to a real family business. Anchoring this work, the Skills Academy programme equips NEET care leavers with the confidence, credentials, and networks to thrive. In addition, the Virtual School continues to facilitate a regular panel which brings together key professionals to troubleshoot and coordinate tailored support for care leavers.

The **Public Health and Communities (PH&C)** directorate within SCC aims to reduce economic inactivity by improving population health, tackling health inequalities, and enabling people to enter, remain in, or return to work.

Key Outcomes for PH&C include:

- Reduced long-term sickness and disability-related inactivity
- Improved mental and physical health among working-age adults
- Increased participation in education, training, volunteering, and employment
- Enhanced workplace wellbeing and retention
- Lower health-related benefit dependency

PH&C aims to achieve these outcomes through:

1. Health Improvement & Prevention Activity
2. System Leadership & Collaboration – including the Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board is good work and health.
3. Workplace Health Promotion
4. Data & Intelligence

Specific PH&C services and programmes of work that support those who are economically inactive or at risk include:

- **Good Health @ Work Programme** - providing Suffolk businesses with access to support, guidance and services that impact positively on the health and well-being of their employees, including a specific financial wellbeing element.
- **The Feel Good Suffolk Service** – supporting residents to make positive changes to their health, by helping them to stop smoking, be more active, manage a healthy weight, and eat well.
- **NHS Health Checks Programme** - early identification of conditions that may impact employability.

- **Drug and Alcohol Service** - an integrated treatment and recovery service for drug and alcohol misuse for adults and young people, including a Drug & Alcohol Individual Placement & Support (IPS) service which works directly with service users to support them into employment
- **Creative Health Initiatives** – funding for arts and culture-based programmes that build confidence, reduce isolation and improve employability.
- **Suffolk Library Service** - community hubs offering a wide range of services that support learning, wellbeing, creativity, and connection across the county.
- **12th Man Campaign** - supporting Men's mental health in the construction sector.

Public Health also delivers criminal exploitation training to DWP around seeking to prevent vulnerable young people being drawn into criminality. It also has a range of accommodation options in the county for high risk victims fleeing domestic abuse who, as part of holistic support, are (at the right time) supported into work.

District and Borough Councils play a crucial role in addressing economic inactivity in Suffolk. While they don't lead on skills and employment policy, they deliver a range of local services and interventions that help people move towards and into work. This includes housing and homeless support. Stable housing is a key foundation from which an individual can build towards employment. Our local authorities in Suffolk provide temporary accommodation and work closely with other organisations including housing associations and charitable organisations like Shelter and Emmaus to respond to and prevent homelessness in their areas. Other key services that contribute to supporting the economically inactive includes local welfare and financial support, practical help to access essentials like food and warmth, community development and outreach, working to create job growth and availability and collaborating with or commissioning charities and social enterprises to deliver various schemes such as employment readiness programmes and mental and physical health and wellbeing support, including through Feel Good Suffolk.

District and borough councils play an important role in supporting locally led skills initiatives that are designed to reflect specific local needs. These may include tailored training and upskilling opportunities that complement national provision but respond more directly to gaps and demands identified within local labour markets. They have also been instrumental in backing youth employment schemes, such as the Suffolk wide scheme Thrive and the YES provision in East Suffolk.

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) is a government agency, funded by the **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)** that provides the core support on offer in England to help individuals of working age who are on welfare or unemployed to find work including the provision of several related benefits including Jobseeker's Allowance, Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments and the Disability Living Allowance.

There is a wide range of support offered by JCP offices and officers across Suffolk to help individuals—especially those on working-age benefits—overcome barriers and move into work. This includes:

- **Flexible Support Fund (FSF):** Covers immediate costs like travel, clothing, or training to remove barriers to employment. It also funds tailored provision where local services are lacking.
- **Restart Scheme:** A mandatory programme for long-term unemployed Universal Credit claimants, delivered locally in Suffolk by Seetec Plus, offering intensive support and employer engagement.
- **Work Coaches & Specialist Roles:** Jobcentres deploy targeted support through Youth Coaches, 50Plus Coaches, Armed Forces Champions, Disability Employment Advisers, and Pathways Work Coaches (for those with limited capability for work and related activity).
- **Prison Work Coaches:** Support individuals transitioning from custody to community, helping with benefit claims and employment access to reduce reoffending.

DWP also offers a comprehensive employer offer, including:

- **Recruitment Support:** Help with job matching, advertising, and pre-employment training.
- **Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs):** Tailored training and work experience aligned to employer needs in key sectors like construction, health and social care, hospitality, and green energy.
- **Work Experience & Work Trials:** Opportunities for employers to trial candidates before hiring, reducing recruitment risk.
- **Redundancy Support:** Guidance and services for employers managing workforce changes.
- **Disability Confident Scheme:** Encourages inclusive recruitment and retention practices.

Support specifically targeted to help individuals with disabilities or health conditions enter and stay in work is also available including:

- **Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs):** Offer specialist advice and connect individuals to appropriate support.

- **Access to Work:** Provides funding for workplace adjustments, equipment, and support workers.
- **Health Adjustment Passports:** Help individuals communicate their support needs to employers.
- **Pathways Work Coaches:** Engage with those in the 'limited capability for work-related activity (LCWRA) group to bridge health, benefits, and employment support.
- **Online Tools:** Such as the "Support with employee health and disability" service on GOV.UK

The JCP offer and the benefits that can be accessed by individuals is currently undergoing significant reform following the welfare reform enacted through the Universal Credit Act. The changes are intended to help reduce economic inactivity and better support people into work. This will see changes to Universal Credit allowances, assessment requirements and ways of delivering support.

The roll out of the **Jobs & Careers Service** across Jobcentre Plus is intended to further enhance reforms. Aligned with the National Careers Service to enable access to good work, remain and progress in work with a focus on careers and skills, the Service will be underpinned by five pillars:

1. A new enhanced relationship with and service for employers.
2. A revised focus on supporting progression and good work through aligning employment support and having it work better with skills and careers advice.
3. A locally responsive, embedded and engaged organisation.
4. A digital, universal and fully inclusive service.
5. A provider of high-quality personalised support to help people into work, support training, and get on in work.

Embedding this new service in Suffolk will require collective working through the Get Suffolk Working partnership, adjunct Connect to Work, to develop a holistic employment offer that limits duplication while appropriate and responsive to place. The DWP is committed to learning from and working with local areas to develop a new service that is locally tailored and embedded, designed to meet the different needs of local labour markets, local people and local employers.

Autumn 2025 is expected to see the release of the Universal Insurance white paper which proposes to cover new claims for heritage benefits, Employment Support Allowance and Jobseekers Allowance.

Suffolk & North East Essex (SNEE) and Norfolk & Waveney (N&W) ICB's have a responsibility to support the health and work agenda through four pillars of:

1. Improving outcomes in population health and health care through strategic commissioning
2. supporting the social and economic development of Suffolk
3. tackling inequalities in outcomes, experience, and access
4. enhancing productivity and value for money

In addition, the ICB is a large-scale employer and contractor. SNEE and N&W have a current clustering arrangement which provides an opportunity to unify the existing momentum around the agenda to collaboratively implement an *ICB Health and Work Strategy* which is currently in development.

Neither the ICBs or the wider health sector, can achieve this in isolation– it is their responsibility to collectively articulate the socio-economic drivers of health, identifying the relationship between work and health and how they relate to our system partners and respective priorities and strategic planning. THE ICBs work closely with NHS Anchor organisations to support them to maximise their impact, whilst recognising the potential of the wider Place 'Anchor' networks and how we collectively address the root causes of economic inactivity as well as providing opportunities for citizens to move into and/or remain in employment. If we are to best support our underserved communities and wider target cohorts (e.g. young people, carers, those with long term health conditions or a disability) to access employment, we must review our system processes and pathways to address equity of access and reduction of health inequalities. We need to integrate with system partners to provide family centred, wrap around services within local communities; to strengthen prevention strategies and offer targeted interventions.

Furthermore, in line with ambitions set out in the NHS 10 Year Plan and Devolution, we have the opportunity to explore the integration of the health and work agenda with Neighbourhood Health, maximising opportunities to test and learn with our communities, VCSE sector, and fellow statutory system partners to provide personalised and local support programmes.

All of our **Further Education and Higher Education** institutes in Suffolk provide education, training, guidance and outreach that supports local people to overcome barriers to gaining and sustaining employment. Not only do they equip both young people and adults with the skills, qualifications and competencies required in our local workforce but can also provide the inclusive environments and wraparound support that many of our residents (e.g. care leavers) need to fulfil their potential.

We are fortunate in Suffolk to have a strong further and higher education offer with all three Further Education Colleges recently rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' and a University which has been recognised as the University of the Year for 2025 at the WhatUni Student Choice Awards.

In addition to their core qualification-based offers, these civic institutions are well positioned, with an extensive reach out into their communities, to provide flexible, non-accredited programmes, funded by alternative streams (previously including the European Regional Programmes), that have a major role in supporting those with disadvantages or specific needs to progress, often in collaboration with local VCSFE partners and each other.

Suffolk New College, East Coast College and West Suffolk Colleges (all rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted) are all partners in the Thrive programme funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Employers play a central role in addressing economic inactivity by ensuring an availability of, and access to, employment opportunities for all that the support from the wider work, health and skills system can move residents towards. Collectively this can then create a more inclusive and resilient workforce for Suffolk.

Local employers in Suffolk are already contributing to our Get Suffolk Working ambitions through a wide range of commitments, projects and actions. This ranges from instilling inclusive recruitment practices to creating healthy and inclusive workplaces, from engaging with Jobcentre Plus offices to create clear pathways for those that are unemployed to offering earn and learn opportunities providing entry points for those at an early point in their careers, and from ensuring they make the reasonable adjustments to get the most out of their employees to investing in upskilling and reskilling to play their part in the development of a skilled, adaptable workforce.

To maximise the involvement of employers and the prevalence of such practices, strong employer engagement is required with a key role for our employer representative bodies and business associations. These bodies are well placed to help promote the benefits of health in the workplace, resulting in more productive employees, greater retention and reduced costs as well as help demonstrate the return on investment of inclusive recruitment practices.

The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce is already firmly embedded within the work, health and skills system. It engages employers from across the county on matters related to Get Suffolk Working, supporting work such as the Good Health at Work Programme, through various means including the Chamber's People and Skills group and the wealth of events arranged as part of the Chamber's delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

It then ensures that Suffolk business view is heard and understood across the system, through representation on the Suffolk Business Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Skills, Employment and Lifelong Development board.

Many other business bodies have key roles to play in linking employers to the Get Suffolk Working agenda including, but not limited to the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), the Institute of Directors (IoD) and sector-specific bodies such as the East of England Energy Group (EEEGR).

Independent Training Providers (ITPs) can also provide support to employers to access a broader range of talent by engaging with individuals and offering targeted training programmes that upskill these individuals for specific roles. Some of the skills bootcamp programmes delivered by ITPs in Norfolk and Suffolk focus on supporting the unemployed and the launch of 'Connect to Work' will increase their involvement in supporting those economically inactive in Suffolk.

The voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector (VCFSE) in Suffolk plays a significant role in both preventing and addressing economic inactivity. The sector works within local areas, often at neighbourhood level and are recognised as being able to reach those who are often hidden from more mainstream, statutory services. Organisations in the VCFSE sector often well positioned to provide wrap-around services that support the whole person and strengthen the link between good health, right skills, improved employability.

The sector plays a key role in preventing and addressing economic inactivity, through:

- engagement with health partners to promote good health and supporting individuals to be fit for work
- providing support to those who are economically inactive through delivery of support to enhance skills, confidence and access to employment opportunities.

The sector works closely with health partners to promote good health and support individuals to be fit for work. In Suffolk, the VCFSE sector is an equal partner in the Suffolk & North East Essex (SNEE) Integrated Care System (ICS) to plan strategies and deliver services at neighbourhood, alliance and board level.

The sector engages with SNEE through the ICS VCFSE Assembly, which was launched in March 2023. The Assembly has 145 VCFSE members and meets bi-monthly to collaborate on key issues, provide a platform for strategic ideas and learning and works to progress key workstreams.

The VCFSE sector works to address the main health improvement outcomes of overall health improvement across the population, tackling health inequalities and supporting people to join the workforce. This has included:

- Connect for Health Social Prescribing Programme: providing a link worker to support adults with non-medical needs that affect health and wellbeing
- Lifelink (West Suffolk): a free service for over 18s in West Suffolk connecting people to volunteer sector activities, including opportunities for volunteering and developing employability skills
- Equality in Mind projects: aimed at those with severe mental health impairments including psychosis, eating disorders, severe depression and those with complex emotional needs.
- Talking Therapies are universally available across SNEE. Many VCFSE partners provide support in this space, funded by charitable grants and donations.
- The Suffolk Law Centre's Digital Hub project supports the needs of neurodivergent people to join, stay and flourish in the workplace and has piloted an Autism Education Leavers Passport, helping those with autism to understand and assert their employment rights.

The sector is a key partner in delivering both commissioned programmes (from statutory partners) as well as the provision of direct support through voluntary funding to provide advice, guidance and programmes to support those who are economically inactive. This can include:

- Skills development and training: delivering commissioned programmes to support those not currently in employment to gain skills and qualifications to progress on their journey to work. Promotion of the importance of developing soft skills which are important for employability and progression through strategies such as the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).:
- Direct support for job seekers: advice and guidance through a number of individual organisations operating across Suffolk including **Lofty Heights** (14-24 year olds), **Greenlight Trust**, **Inside Connections** (ex-offenders).
- Support for entrepreneurs and those that want to start their own businesses Several charitable or non-for-profit organisations provide such support including **MENTA**.

The sector is characterised by a range of organisations that vary significantly in size, reach, cohorts supported, and services provided. At a national level there is a network of Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs), which work to bring coherence and cohesion to the sector and engagement with statutory partners.

At a county level, Suffolk County Council works closely with the Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO) which is **Community Action Suffolk (CAS)**. The function of LIOs is to facilitate:

1. leadership and advocacy of and with the VCFSE sector
2. partnerships and collaboration bringing together VCFSE organisations with each other and with statutory partners including local authorities and health systems

3. capacity building for the VCFSE sector
4. support for volunteering.

These four functions contribute to the support, facilitation and networking that the diverse VCFSE sector needs to thrive and work with statutory partners.

Community Action Suffolk (CAS) supports VCSEF organisations through guidance, funding and volunteering support. The organisation advocates for the sector and hosts conferences, workshops, events and specialist networks to identify issues and share best practice. CAS works across the “system” with a range of partners including Suffolk County Council, districts and borough, town and parish councils, health partners, the police, local businesses and is in the partner network for the Suffolk Business Board.

As well as representing the voice of the sector, CAS works to promote volunteering across the county and leads on the **Volunteering Strategy 2025-2028**. The Strategy has three objectives

- To raise the profile of volunteering by inspiring the next generation of volunteers
- To support people to volunteer, and be more engaged in their community to enhance wellbeing and actively encourage participation
- To promote the use of volunteering to employers and business leaders as a means to support and strengthen their local communities

Housing associations provide secure and affordable housing to those furthest from the labour market, are recognised as a community champion and can provide a convening, place-based function for the wider support on offer. As noted in recent research⁸¹, those in social housing face greater barriers to accessing and retaining work compared to the general population.

The social rented sector can

- Act as a community anchor to connect residents with a wider network of support and programmes
- Use their role as a large local employer and commissioner of services to address economic inactivity
- Provide generic employment support and career advice to their tenants and communities
- Deliver personalised support to tenants and families given their greater understanding of the multiplicity of needs facing them
- Work with the media and recruiters to tackle any stigma that may exist from having a social housing address

⁸¹ <https://www.housing.org.uk/globalassets/files/welfarereform/building-opportunity-summary.pdf>

There are a number of registered housing providers in Suffolk including:

- Flagship Housing Group (22,000 homes across East Anglia)
- Orwell Housing (c. 4,300 homes across the region / employ 800 staff)
- Broadland Housing Trust (5,000 homes across Norfolk and North Suffolk)
- Orbit (220 homes)
- Cotman Housing Association (c.3,300 across Suffolk, Essex, Norfolk and Cambs)
- Hastoe Housing Association (c.7,500 across South of England)
- Havebury Housing Partnership (c.7.500 across East of England)
- Clarion Housing Group (over 500 homes in Suffolk)
- Sanctuary (national figure 125,000 homes)

A selection of specific initiatives delivered in Suffolk by our Housing Associations include:

- Support fund to cover short term costs for those facing barriers to employment – e.g. childcare, transportation (not exclusively focused on inactive, supports anyone who wants to work) – Havebury
- Provision of tenancy sustainment officers who work with households to ensure they can sustain their tenancy – Orwell
- Welcome Workshops – sessions to advise tenants on the range of support and services on offer, including access to skills development and tackling inequalities – Orwell
- Guaranteed interviews to disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria for a job role (further detail available from Orwell, registered Disability Confident Employer) – Orwell
- Customer hub that supports those seeking employment or looking to progress. Includes advice on working part-time, flexibly, addressing health challenges, learning new skills and overcoming barriers such as childcare - Orbit

Annex G – Initial Get Suffolk Working Mapping Exercise

Service name	Website	Service description	Geographic coverage	Eligible / target cohort	Journey to work stages	Comments
Government grants and accreditations for those with disabilities seeking employment						
Access to work (Grants)	https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work	Funding and support to help you get a job / retain a job if you have a physical or mental health condition or disability	National scheme	16+, UK based, be in paid work (or returning in 12 weeks) and have physical or mental health condition / disability	1 and 4	
Disability confident	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disability-confident-campaign	The Disability Confident scheme aims to help employers make the most of the opportunities provided by employing disabled people. It is voluntary and has been developed by employers and disabled people's representatives.	National scheme (19,000+ employers have signed up / 175 with an IP postcode)	All employers can sign up	1,4,5 and 6	
Health Adjustment Passport	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-adjustment-passport	support you to identify what help and changes are available to help you move into work or stay in a job.	National scheme (voluntary)	Disability or health condition that impacts on securing or retaining a job	1 to 6	

Charitable organisations in Suffolk (serving Suffolk)						
Access Community Trust	https://accessct.org/		Suffolk and Norfolk	Homeless / social isolation	1	Thrive programme partner
Anglia Care Trust	https://www.angliacaretrust.org.uk/about	Support, advice and action across housing, community safety, financial inclusion, health and wellbeing, drug and alcohol recovery	Suffolk and Norfolk	18+	1, 2, 3	Thrive programme partner
Business in the Community	https://www.bitc.org.uk/what-we-do/	The King's responsible business network, charitable activities focused on supporting young people with a clear pathway to work, employers to invest in their employees and building communities	National	All	4,5,6	Support businesses
Care Development East	https://caredevelopmenteast.co.uk/	promoting excellence across the social care and health workforce in the east of England. We provide impartial advice, support, guidance and information to the sector	Suffolk and Norfolk	18+	4,5,6	Work with those in employment, employers and those seeking to enter the sector

Emmaus	https://emmaus.org.uk/suffolk/about-us/	works with vulnerable, socially isolated, and long-term unemployed individuals, as well as those at risk of homelessness. They provide support to help people re-enter the workforce and lead more fulfilling lives, using a national model that has proven successful. Emmaus Suffolk also offers volunteering opportunities.	International Suffolk (based Ipswich with shops in various locations)	Homeless / insecure housing / long term unemployed	1, 2, 4	
Future Female Society	https://www.futurefemalesociety.org/about-us	Aim to close the gap in inequality for girls and women in work - offer workshops, school, college visits, events	Suffolk (Ipswich based)	Women	1, 4,5,6	
Get Set UK	https://www.getsetuk.co.uk/	Work with individuals and businesses to access support and training, to find rewarding work and move their lives forward	National		1,2,3,4	Deliver Good Health at Work in Suffolk

Greenlight Trust	https://www.greenlighttrust.org/	Health and wellbeing charity that works with nature to transform lives. Programmes to support children and adults to thrive, supporting mental health, building skills, and improving the natural environment.	Suffolk and Norfolk		1,2	
Inside Connections	https://insideconnections.co.uk/about	Supports individuals with training opportunities that are labour market linked in order to provide a positive pathway into sustainable employment.	National	Experience of CJ system, serving in category D or released. YP who need a pro-active intervention	3	Run Building Lives Academy (construction focused job opps) and also a Broadband (fibre optics and cable laying)
Inspire Suffolk	https://inspirecharityuk.org/about-us/	Empowering u25s to achieve a better future - access to education, wellbeing, sports and career guidance	Suffolk	u25	2,3	Thrive programme partner
Leading Lives	https://leadinglives.org.uk/	Social care support for people with learning disabilities,	Suffolk	Learning disabilities	1,2	Focus is on complex needs, rather than economic inactive

		autism and complex needs				
Leonard Cheshire	https://www.leonardcheshire.org/	Support disabled people to live, learn and work as independently as they choose.	UK	Disabled people	1,2,3,4	
Lofty Heights	https://loftyheights.org/	Specialist support in the home (decluttering, DIY)	Suffolk (Ipswich based)	Those needing in home support / support those caring for others	1	Thrive programme partner
The Mason Trust	https://www.themasontrust.org/about/	Support young people to realise their potential (online and via school engagement)	Suffolk and Norfolk	Young people	2,3,4	
Mencap Employment Services	https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/employment	Advice and information to support people with learning difficulties to find work	National	16 - 25	1,2,3,4,5,6	
The Mix, Stowmarket	https://www.themixstowmarket.co.uk/who-we-are/our-vision	Youth charity based in Stowmarket supporting young people into employment, coaching programmes, develop social action pathways	Mid Suffolk and beyond	Young people	2,3	Recent NEET events held in Stowmarket, Sudbury, scheduled for Lowestoft. Focused on advice to 16 - 24s on jobs, work experience, wider support etc.
Papworth Trust	https://www.papworthtrust.org.uk/	Supporting disabled and	National, with Suffolk offices	Disabled / disadvantaged		Lots in Cambridge - what do they do in Suffolk?

		disadvantaged people				
Pathways Care Farm	https://www.pathwayscf.org/	13 acre farm in north Lowestoft that supports those with mental health issues, learning difficulties or in rehabilitation.	Lowestoft and surrounding area		2,3	
The Poppy Factory	https://www.poppofactory.org/are-you-looking-for-work/	Support for veterans who have left the service and are looking for work	Suffolk	Veterans	1,2,3,4,5,6	
Realise Futures	https://www.realisefutures.org/about-us/	Work placements, employment and training opportunities aimed at improving and promoting the economic and social wellbeing of those who are disadvantaged or disabled. Have in-house team of employment advisors and deliver commissioned programmes	Suffolk and Norfolk		2,3,4	

SEETEC	https://seetec.co.uk/	Employee-owned company that works to change lives and communities for the better	National	16+	1,2,3,4,5	Various programmes, often targeted to specific cohorts. Offer accom advice, ESOL, confidence building, apprenticeships etc.
Shaw Trust	https://shawtrust.org.uk/	Charity providing a multi-faceted approach including residential facilities, community wellbeing, rehabilitation centres. For employability - focus on helping people to overcome the barriers preventing them from finding meaningful work	National		1,2,3	
Smart Works	https://www.smartworks.org.uk/	UK-wide charity offering free career coaching, interview clothing and interview preparation support to all women who are unemployed or on	Based in Cambridge, women in Suffolk eligible	Women (transgender and non-binary people)	4	

		a zero-hours contract.				
Suffolk Mind	www.suffolkmind.org.uk	Services to support mental health alongside advice, information, signposting and support Offer various initiatives e.g. toolkits, counselling, EY programmes	Suffolk (excl. Waveney)	18+	1,2	Offer targeted programmes for various elements of mental health - e.g. Menopause & Me (women). Also offers an employer toolkit
Suffolk Positive Futures (Catch 22)	https://www.catch-22.org.uk/find-services/suffolk-positive-futures/	positive alternative to crime, provides role models and opportunities to gain qualifications and contribute to community	Suffolk	young people	2	activities offered in the local community (sports focused) aimed at breaking down barriers to participation. Offers access to Sports Leadership quals
Turning Point	https://www.turning-point.co.uk/services/suffolk-drug-and-alcohol-service	work with those affected by drugs or alcohol and want support to make a change	Suffolk	those affected by drugs or alcohol / youth programme for those up to 25	1	aim to help those affected get on the right path for them to recover and lead a healthier life
Workers Educational Association	https://www.wea.org.uk/	Deliver adult education via direct delivery or online. Courses include life skills, ESOL, work skills, arts	England and Scotland (various branches in Suffolk incl. Ipswich, Orford, Westleton)	All	3	

Central government services						
Adult Learning Service - SCC	https://learnsuffolk.org/	Range of programmes including numeracy, literacy, employability, family learning	Suffolk	18+		
Department of Work and Pensions	https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions	Tailored recruitment service for employers Advice Service (for those receiving benefits or requiring support)	National (Suffolk office)	16+	1,2,3,4,5,6	Number of programmes directly offered and signposting to additional support

SCC Initiatives						
The Family Business	https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/children-in-care-and-care-leavers/the-family-business	Designed to empower care leavers on their journey to success. It includes ring-fenced apprenticeships, employment opportunities with local businesses, and a bespoke training and support programme.	Suffolk	Care leavers	1,4	
icanbea	https://www.icanbea.org.uk/	Free to use web-based tool to support career inspiration.	Suffolk and Norfolk	YP 12 - 25	2,3	

Commissioned programmes						
Apollo	https://www.eastcoast.ac.uk/projects/the-apollo-project/	Two year workforce programme designed to address recruitment and retention challenges in the health and social care sector	Suffolk	16+	1,2,3,4,5,6	Delivered by SNC, ECC, WSC
Apprenticeships Suffolk (UKSPF)	https://apprenticeshipssuffolk.org/	Supports individuals to gain meaningful employment, provides 121 support, job coaching, searching and signposting	Suffolk	16+	4,5,6	
Connect to Work	https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers/support-finding-employment/connect-to-work	Focused on helping people find and maintain employment, particularly those with barriers. Funded by Government will be largely commissioned support (95%) in Suffolk, with direct delivery at 5%.	Suffolk	18+, not on another DWP programme	1,2,3,4,5	Currently assessing bids
Good Health at Work	https://goodhealthatwork.co.uk/	Delivered by Get Set UK, works with	Suffolk	SMEs	5,6	

		SMEs whose employees are at the highest risk of health inequalities				
Green Skills Project (BMSDC UKSPF money)	https://www.babergh.gov.uk/w/councils-to-plug-employment-skills-gap-for-local-businesses	4 bespoke programmes to address skills and employability issues in the BMSDC area.	BMS area	various criteria for different programmes	1,2,3,4,5,6	delivered in partnership with West Suffolk College
Minding the gap		Offered intensive support to 1000+ young people to gain employability skills and experience				CLOSED
Nucleus Employability Hub	https://www.eastcoast.ac.uk/nucleus-employability-hub/	Hub in partnership with Sizewell C to provide employment search assistance, application and interview support to those looking to secure employment in the region.	Suffolk	18+	3,4,5	Delivered by East Coast College
Power Up Programme	https://shawtrust.org.uk/power-up/	Supported by Shell UK - delivered by Shaw Trust to focus on getting 15,000 people into jobs re: energy transition by 2035.	FTF in Birmingham Online nationally	18+, unemployed	4,5,6	Also work directly with employers to fill vacancies

Project Search	https://www.dfnprojectsearch.org/	National charity that supports young adults who have a learning disability or autism spectrum condition to secure meaningful employment. Commissioned in Suffolk via East Coast College	Great Yarmouth / James Paget Hospital	16-24 SEND	2,3,4	Delivered via East Coast College
Restart Scheme	https://www.realisefutures.org/employment/	comprehensive support service for jobseekers with referrals being made by Work Coaches at Jobcentre Plus.	Ipswich and Mid Suffolk (Realise Futures)	JCP Referral	1,2,3,4,5,6	
Skills Bootcamps	https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/business/supporting-employers-training-your-workforce/skills-bootcamps	Sector specific training funded by Government. Driven by employer needs in the region, offer Level 2-5 quals to help people gain employment, progress or expand (if self-employed)	Suffolk and Norfolk	19+ some soon to be released prisoners	2,3,4	Supports employers as well Guaranteed interview at end of programme
Suffolk Work Well		13 week programme that supports individuals retain, regain or gain	Suffolk	18+, looking for or in employment	2,3,4	Delivery partners include: Suffolk Mind, Access Community Trust,

		employment, education or volunteering				
Thrive	https://www.suffolk.ac.uk/about/projects-innovation/thrive/	Provides tailored support and skills to gain employment, education or training	Suffolk	16 - 24 25+	2,3,4	Delivered by Suffolk New College with a number of partners
Visitor Economy Network Initiative (VENI)	https://veni.org.uk/	Various programmes and interventions aimed at upskilling those working in / seeking work in the visitor economy	Suffolk and Norfolk	16+	2,3,4	Also works with employers
Wellbeing Suffolk	https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/suffolk/ https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/suffolk/get-support/employment-support/	Range of support for people with common mental health and emotional issues. Offer 121, online workshops, self-help, business focused, peer support, employment support	Suffolk	16+	1,2	Offer employment advisor service Offer wellbeing in the workplace for employers
Work and Health Programme - Pioneer	https://infolink.suffolk.gov.uk/kb5/suffolk/infolink/service.page?id=Y4tbxWqPy4s&adultchannel=0	The programme provides economically inactive participants with up to 15 months of support,		Health conditions / disabilities / unemployed for 2+ years.	1,2,3,4,5,6	Delivered by partners, including Realise Futures, Shaw Trust

		developing aspirations and moving them into work quickly. It matches individuals to vacancies and delivers effective training and development pre- and post-employment.				
Youth Employment Service (YES)		focused on youth support	West Suffolk	young people	2,3,4	Part of Thrive programme

Annex H – Table of Aims and Ambitions aligned to ‘Get Suffolk Working’

Aligned Aims and Ambitions

Reduce economic inactivity by targeting support to underrepresented groups	Suffolk Economic Strategy (2024)
Promote access to employment in rural and coastal communities	
Align skills provision with employer needs	
Support lifelong learning and upskilling for those out of work	
Recognise the role of health in enabling economic provision	
Add £14bn to the economy outpacing the England Average Growth Rate by 2045	
Have 40,000 more people in higher qualified roles by 2045	
Expand our talent pool by growing our economically active population by 35,000 by 2045	
45,000 more people qualified to Level 3+	
Significantly boosted average wages for all	
Supporting economically inactive individuals through targeted training and employer engagement.	LSIP (2024)
Promote flexible and modular learning to support returners to the workforce	
Tackle skills mismatches in key sectors like health, construction, digital and green energy	
Collaborate with local authorities to support people with long-term health conditions into employment.	SNEE ICB
Address social determinants of health including poverty and unemployment	
Use NHS employment and procurement power to support local economic inclusion	
Support people into sustainable employment	Suffolk Tackling Poverty Strategy (2022)
Improve access to skills and training, especially for those furthest from the labour market	
Early intervention to prevent long-term economic inactivity	
Work with employers to promote inclusive hiring practices	
Address barriers such as mental health, transport, and digital exclusion	
Involve people with lived experience in shaping services	
Make sure people can live as healthy a life as possible	N&W Integrated Care Strategy
Prevent avoidable illness and tackle the root causes of poor health	
Make Norfolk and Waveney the best place to work in health and care	
Driving integration - Collaborating in the delivery of people-centred care to make sure services are joined-up, consistent and make sense to those who use them	
Supporting people to be healthy, independent, and resilient throughout life. Offering our help early to prevent and reduce demand for specialist services.	

Addressing inequalities. Providing support for those who are most vulnerable using resources and assets to address wider factors that impact on health and wellbeing

Enabling resilient communities. Supporting people to remain independent whenever possible, through promotion of self-care, early prevention, and digital technology where appropriate.

More people in Suffolk will have good mental wellbeing

More people in Suffolk will have access to good quality jobs and fair work

All our children and young people should be able to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives in communities where they feel safe.

Residents and communities will become more involved in decisions that affect their lives, health and wellbeing

Preparing for Adulthood

To support people to volunteer and be more engaged in their community to enhance wellbeing and actively encourage participation.

To promote the use of volunteering to employers and business leaders as a means to support and strengthen their local communities

Provide new, additional employment opportunities for all, but especially those who are currently unemployed or underemployed, thereby reducing in-work poverty and inequality.

Increase skills attainment levels for school leavers and those in work through using Freeport as a catalyst to motivate the workforce to seek, and take advantage of, opportunities for professional development

Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the businesses within the Freeport East geography

Promote apprenticeship opportunities to underrepresented groups, aiming to improve gender balance and support diversity in the workforce.

Maximise long-term socio-economic benefits for Suffolk and the wider East of England.

Broaden existing talent pools to create a robust pipeline and availability of foundational skills that facilitate progression into more specialised roles.

1,500 apprenticeships, 540 apprentices from Suffolk

Increase the pool of 'work ready' individuals within the region's talent pool,

Lifelong learning is highly valued and empowers our residents to have more fulfilling lives, take a greater part in society and develop the skills they need to secure sustainable and productive employment.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 'Preparing for the Future' (2022-2027)

SEND strategy 2024-2029

Volunteer Strategy for Suffolk (2025-2028)

Freeport East Skills Strategy

Sizewell C Employment, Skills and Education Strategy / Annual Skills Implementation Plan

Suffolk Adult Learning Service Strategy

Annex I - Get Suffolk Working Delivery Principles

Inclusive

Economic inactivity can impact anyone, but certain groups can be more at risk and disproportionately represented in economic inactivity data. Delivery will take an intersectional approach, recognising how factors (especially protected characteristics) like ethnicity, gender, disability, geography, and socio-economic background interconnect creating unique barriers. An inclusive approach means recognising these overlapping disadvantages and actively designing interventions that are accessible and responsive to diverse needs.

Measurable

Like our plan, our delivery will be guided by local data and intelligence. We will use evidence to inform decisions, monitor progress, and evaluate impact. This approach ensures that interventions are well-targeted. By tracking outcomes and adapting based on what the data tells us, we can make sure that resources are used efficiently and that our efforts lead to meaningful, measurable change.

Prevention-focused

Whilst our delivery must address and support individuals who are currently economically inactive, our plan also highlights how certain groups or barriers increase the risk of economic inactivity. Therefore, we aim to address the root causes of economic inactivity. This includes early preventative intervention in education, health, and wellbeing, to effectively support individuals before they disengage from the labour market.

Agile and adaptive

Needs and contexts change; therefore, our delivery will be flexible and responsive to emerging challenges or opportunities. At the time of writing the Get Suffolk Working plan we are undergoing a significant period of change, including local government reforms, devolution and Integrated Care Board structural changes, all reshaping how services are designed, funded, and delivered. Our delivery model must evolve and adapt alongside the systems and structures around it.

Collaborative

Tackling economic inactivity requires a whole-system approach. Key stakeholders include, but are not limited to, regional Jobcentre Plus, Integrated Care Boards and multiple local authority departments (i.e. public health, economic development, skills, education and adult social care). Delivery will supplement not duplicate, we aim to align efforts, share learning, and co-design solutions ensuring we maximise the impact of limited resources.

Transparent

We will operate with openness and integrity, ensuring that roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes are clear. This means clearly communicating our goals, delivery plans, and progress, and being honest about challenges and areas for improvement. We will ensure that roles and responsibilities are well-defined, and that governance structures support accountability at every level.

Future-proof

It is vital delivery is approached with long-term sustainability and longevity in mind. Reducing economic inactivity requires more than a short-term fix, our delivery must withstand future economic, social and technological changes. This includes preparing for shifts in labour market trends, demographic changes and evolving complex health needs.

User-centred

Experiences of economic inactivity are unique, deeply personal and often shaped by complex, individual circumstances. A user-centred approach means placing the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of individuals at the heart of our delivery. Co-production will be an important aspect of our delivery. As we listen to voices and understand journeys, we recognise the emotional and psychological barriers people may face and will ensure that support is not only practical but also compassionate.

Localised

Suffolk's diverse mix of rural, coastal, and urban communities presents varying social and economic challenges, meaning economic inactivity is not experienced uniformly across the county. Delivery will be tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of Suffolk's communities. Embedding interventions directly within communities and building on local assets is more impactful and effective than applying a one-size-fits-all approach.



Get Suffolk Working

OPR CONSULTING

AUGUST 2025

SUPPORTING DATA

Get Britain Working

The 6 challenges to be addressed

Too many people excluded from the labour market

Too many young people leave school without essential skills or access to the right opportunities so they can thrive at the start of their career

Too many people are in insecure, poor quality and often low paying work

Too many women who care for families experience challenges staying in and progressing in work

Too many employers cannot fill their vacancies

Too great a disparity in outcomes for different places and groups of people

	National Government 5 Missions Get Britain Working Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) NHS Reforms Connect to Work <i>New policies and structures, greater collaboration between gov't departments and agencies</i>					
	Norfolk and Suffolk Mayoral Authority <i>(proposed to be established May 2026 with governance arrangements to follow)</i>					
Existing governance for skills, health & employment initiatives in Suffolk	Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board		Suffolk Business Board		SC Council and Statutory Committees	
Existing plans and performance metrics to be reflected in GSW	Get Suffolk Working Plan Action Plan to reflect current activity and funding, new activity and funding, integrated delivery and performance measures <i>Suffolk County Council as accountable body leading improved coordination and delivery, common agenda across employment, skills, health plans and opportunities</i>					
	Integrated Care Strategies (SNEE and N&W) Also developing Integrated Work & Health Plans		Local Growth Plan		Local Skills Improvement Plan	
	<i>Hyperlocal data to understand need, collecting views of beneficiaries (current and new), prevention focus to support people before they "fall" out of work, targeted one to one support</i>					
Delivery partners in GSW (often with a supporting organisation role)	Community based health and employment programmes		Jobcentres Plus	Employers	Local authorities	Business representative groups
Add'l supporting organisations to identify potential beneficiaries	Primary & community health care providers		Voluntary sector		Prisons	Housing Ass'ns

OPR Approach

The initial approach to considering the issues to be addressed in Get Suffolk Working plan

Considerations in developing the local plan - the plan must be:

Agile – quickly respond to national and regional policy drivers while reflecting the needs of Suffolk’s people & places

Demand led – over a quarter of all economically inactive people have health condition (LGA), Suffolk figures are 28.6%. Data sharing is key!

Future-proof – part of the N & S devolution agenda, local government reform, ICBs structural changes, welfare payment reforms

Locally delivered – reflecting local need, taking the support to those who need it and tackling transport and digital accessibility issues

Manageable – build on existing partnerships, services and measures then expand as needed

Monitored – tracking what works? What doesn’t work? And reporting this to those who can make changes

Prevention focused – what are the mechanisms needed to support people before they fall out of work?

System based - bring together the health sector with welfare, skills and employment support **and** employers
Beneficiaries have “no wrong door” and organisations can maximise the impact of limited resources

Work undertaken

- Desktop review of national plans, strategies and research
- Review of client led research and engagement undertaken prior to commission and during May and June (e.g. workshop notes, draft strategies)
- Analysis of data prepared by Suffolk Public Health, the client team and DWP
- Mapping of existing services
- Stakeholder engagement
 - Survey of DWP Partnership Managers (separate report available)
 - Workshops with DWP customers (separate report available)
 - Questionnaire to stakeholders (questionnaire available)
 - One to one interviews with stakeholders
- Client engagement
 - Weekly update meetings with Skills team
 - Three weekly meetings with wider project delivery team (Skills, ICBs, DWP)
 - Update to SSELDA Board

Data and data sources

The data presented in this slide deck has been drawn from data sets prepared by SODA (Suffolk Office of Data Analytics), Suffolk Public Health, Suffolk and North East Essex ICB and DWP sources.

Section 1 – Labour market overview

Labour market - summary

- Overall participation in the labour market in Suffolk is marginally above the national average (81% active in the labour market compared to 78.9% at UK level)
- The county is forecast to experience population growth in the next 15 years, but all this growth will occur in the 67+ age group. The absolute number of those in working age population (18-66) will decline
- Men are more likely to be economically active in Suffolk than women, but the gap is narrowing. Further research to monitor this gap should be undertaken to determine if men are at greater risk of economic inactivity due to specific health conditions (e.g. MSK and mental health) as they age and if this impacts on their ability to work.
- The structure of Suffolk's economy presents challenges in terms of:
 - Small number of large employers who can lead by example in providing employment opportunities to those furthest from the labour market, but large public sector anchor institutions could do more
 - Two of Suffolk's key sectors, agri-food and construction, can experience significant volatility given the seasonal nature of some work and a reliance on external project funding – e.g. infrastructure projects
 - Supporting employment routes into both the health and social care and visitor economy sectors, the two largest volume employers, will be key to delivering more job opportunities for all
- Suffolk's largely rural nature and long coastline presents significant challenges to accessing employment opportunities

Labour market – summary (con't)

- While some sectors and employers in Suffolk are committed to supporting those with disabilities into employment, more can be done across the board
- Access to public transport is a key challenge in Suffolk highlighted in recent studies and by all stakeholders and participants engaged with during this research (see later sections for further commentary). SCC Scrutiny Committee considered bus transport in April 2025 and noted actions for the relevant Cabinet Member to write to the Department of Transport regarding the removal of D1 classifications from driving licences which could disproportionately impact rural areas in terms of volunteer minibus drivers
- Key groups that are disproportionately impacted in terms of entering and progressing into the labour market are:
 - Young people – noted as having particular issues in accessing transport, a low skills base and high levels of long-term Universal Credit take-up
 - Those in coastal communities – noted as having particular issues in accessing opportunities (180 degree job market)
 - Disabled people – often barriers to recruitment, e.g. non accessible interviews and perceptions around costs and capabilities of employing someone with a disability

Labour market – summary (con't)

Key challenges from recent strategies / research



Suffolk Economic Strategy

- Suffolk's agri-food & drink sector has 54% more jobs in Suffolk than the national average and construction 41% more, driven by large scale infrastructure projects
- In volume terms the health and social care sector and visitor economy account for c.90,000 jobs between them, the two largest sectors in the county.



Transport East – Young People research June 2025

- Identified the three key challenges for young people in the region as:
- Long distance and travel times: young people in rural towns and fringes travel 30% more than those in urban conurbations. More than 70% of survey respondents indicated that transport made it difficult to arrive on time.
- High cost of transport: Transport costs limit the mobility for one in five young people, with apprentices particularly affected.
- Availability of transport options: the lack of reliable public transport options forces many rural students to attend only nearby schools/colleges, limiting their options for further education and employment.



Coastal Navigators – Interim report Dec 2024

- Coastal areas experience significant employment challenges including:
- Half compass effect: a 180 degree recruitment radius, rather than 360 degrees in non coastal areas
- Higher numbers of retirees
- 44.6% economically inactive rate (54 most deprived coastal towns) relative to c.20% for England as a whole
- In the Felixstowe pilot area the long-term economic inactivity rate is noted at 46.7%



Understanding the challenges of disabled jobseekers

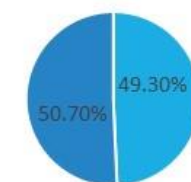
- Research by Scope – a leading disability equality charity showed:
- Disabled people almost 2x likely to be unemployed than non disabled
- Some employers have negative attitudes or biases about employing disabled (too risky, more expensive, not as capable)
- Job adverts are often not compatible with assistive technology
- Physical and other accessibility concerns not addressed at interview

Suffolk population

Forecast population growth

	2030	% change 2025 to 2030	2035	% change 2025 to 2035	2040	% change 2025 to 2040	2043	% change 2025 to 2043
0-17	149,085	-3.2%	145,962	-5.3%	147,313	-4.4%	149,328	-3.1%
18-66	449,198	0.0%	444,536	-1.0%	441,007	-1.8%	442,864	-1.4%
67+	196,565	9.9%	216,494	21.1%	230,868	29.1%	234,290	31.0%
All Ages	794,839	1.6%	806,986	3.2%	819,173	4.7%	826,481	5.7%

Gender split (working age population)



■ Males ■ Female

Total resident population of Suffolk = 763,349

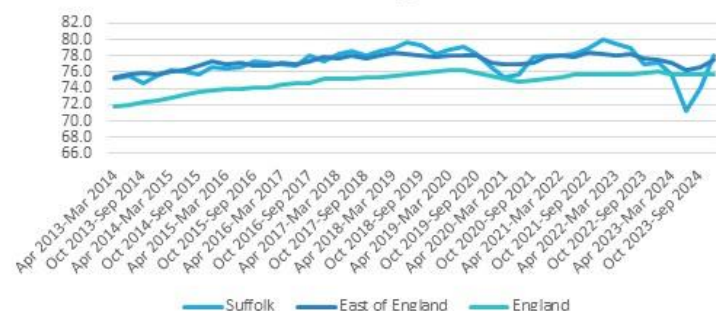
- Over the past 10 years, the Suffolk population has increased by 4.9%.
- The 0-17 population has remained almost unchanged, increasing by just 0.4%.
- The working age population (18-66) has increased by 2.2%.
- The majority of the population increase has been in the 67 and over age group, which has grown by almost 26,000 people (18.2%).
- Population growth is forecast at an overall level of 5.7% to 2043, with all growth taking place in 67+ age groups. Both the u17 age group and working age group (18-66) are forecast to decline.
- The working age population (16-64) is 452,700, split 49.9% male and 50.1% female. Overall, in Suffolk some 59.3% of the population is working age, slightly lower than both the East region (61.6%) and GB as a whole (62.9%).

ONS population estimates – local authority based by five year age band (Nomis - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1941962836/report.aspx>)

Data for Suffolk geography

Employment rate

Employment rate 16-64 (ONS Annual Population Survey)



Employment rate females - aged 16-64, Suffolk (ONS Annual Population Survey)

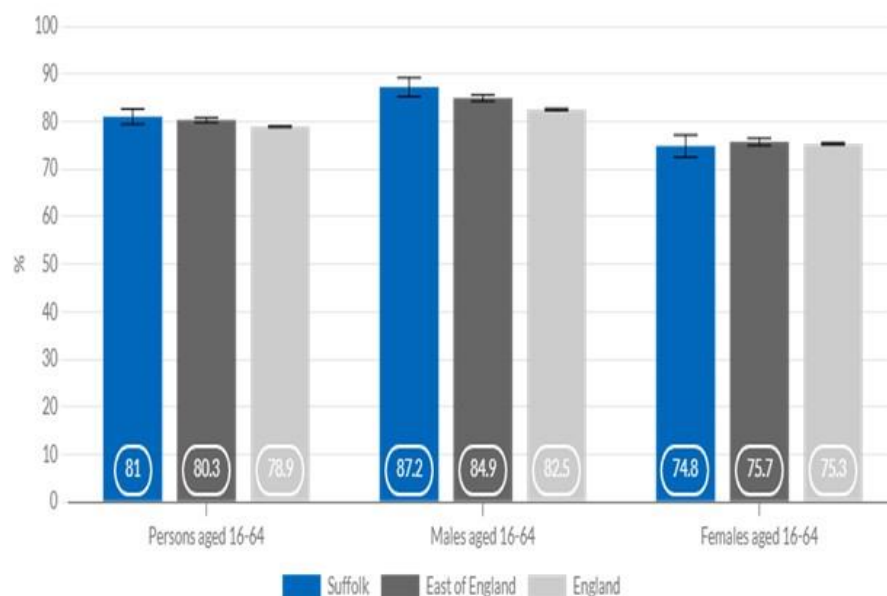


- At national level DWP will report on the employment rate to assess the impact of Local Get Britain Working plans
- Employment rate: those 16-64 in paid work as a percentage of the total population in that age group
- With the exception of April 2023 – April 2024, Suffolk's employment rate is above that for England as a whole
- This dip was as a result of a drop in the female employment rate which has now recovered

Source: ONS APS via Suffolk Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography

Economically active



- Economic activity is a key measure of labour market performance. It includes those who are employment (the employment rate) and those who are unemployment but actively looking for work.
- Suffolk has a slightly higher rate of EA working age adults than the East of England as a whole (81%) compared to 78.9%
- Males in Suffolk are more likely to be economically active than females, and the rate of male economic activity is nearly 5% higher in Suffolk than in England as a whole
- The rate of female economic activity is marginally below the rate for the East of England as a whole

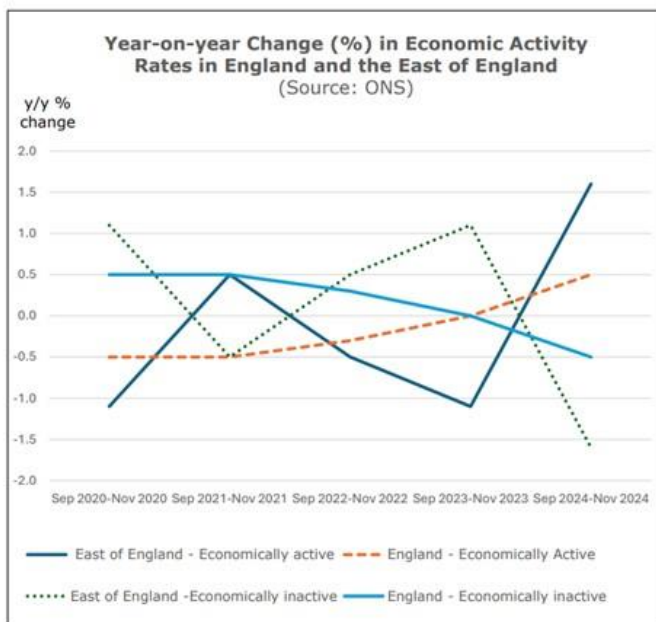
Exploring the data further shows (data not shown in graph, available on Nomis)

- For males, economic activity data shows a higher percentage of men in employment (with a marked difference of those being self-employed, 15% in Suffolk relative to only 12.1% in GB), but also a higher rate of unemployed males, at 5.2% in Suffolk relative to GB as a whole (4%).
- When looking at females there is also a mixed picture for the economically active. Here the data show a lower level of economic activity overall (74.8% in Suffolk relative to 75.7% East, 75% GB) for women, but a higher percentage of women are employed (73.6%) rather than unemployed, when compared to men.
- Fewer older residents (aged 65 and over) in Suffolk were economically active compared to the England average. Some 10.2% of Suffolk residents aged 65 and over were economically active, compared to 11.5% nationally.

Source: Suffolk Observatory

Data for Suffolk geography, compared to East region and England

Economic activity – change over time

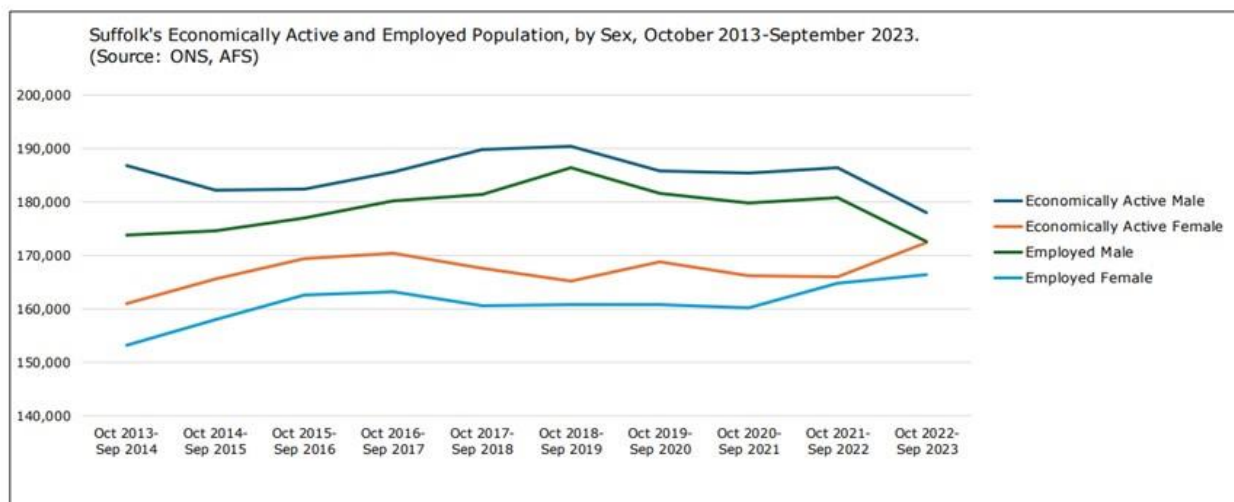


- Since September 2020 England has seen a steady year on year increase in the rate of economic activity
- The East of England region saw growth post covid, then a decline and more recently has seen a faster growth than England as a whole

Source: ONS APS via Suffolk Public Health

Data for East region and England

Change over time – economic activity by gender



At the Suffolk level:

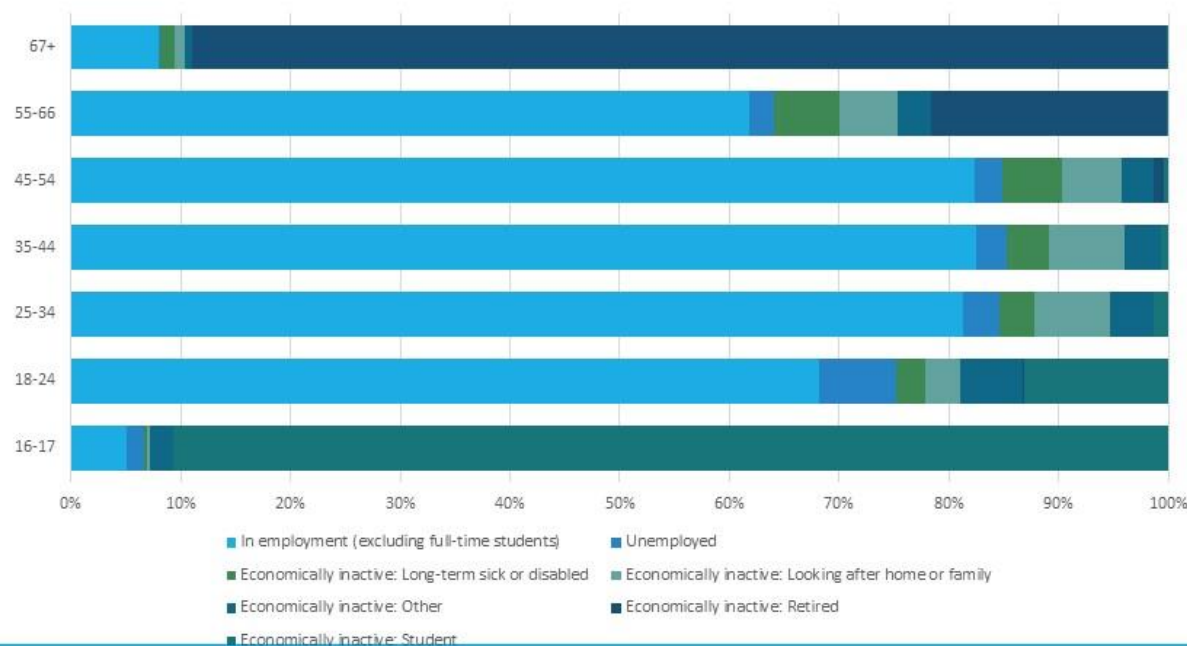
- There has not been a significant change over time in the overall rate of economic activity
- While men are more likely to be economically active than women, the number of EA men is falling.
- Over the past 10 years the number of EA females has been increasing. Given the slightly higher proportion of females to males in the working age population in Suffolk, it is important that the gender split is monitored going forward.

Source: <https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Suffolk-Economy-Employment-Update-February-2024.pdf>

Data for Suffolk geography

Economic activity by age Suffolk

Economic activity by age group, Suffolk (2021 Census, excluding full-time students)

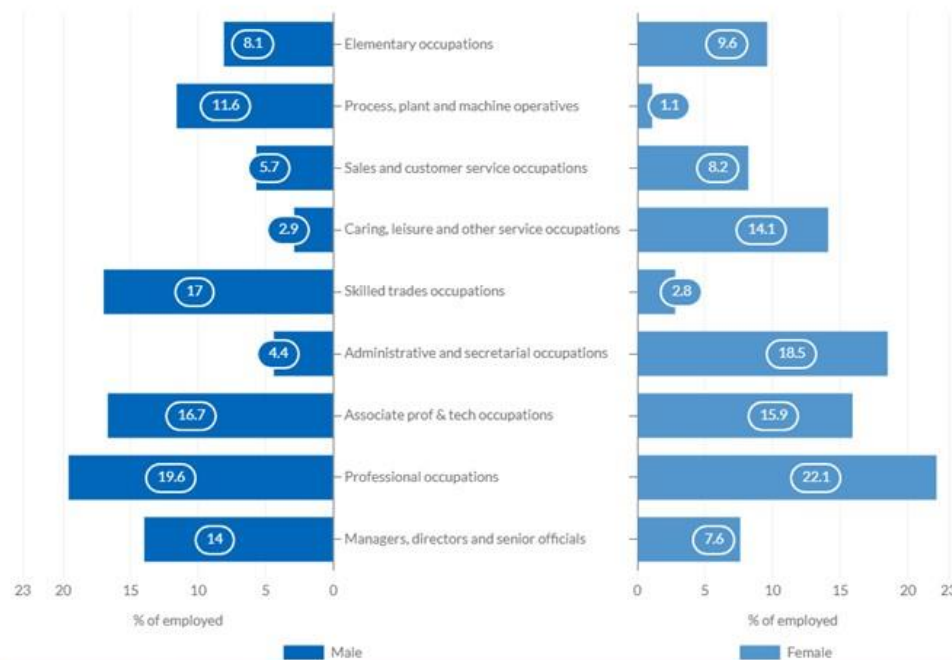


- Economic activity is highest in the 25 – 54 age groups
- Unemployment is highest in the 18 – 24 age group
- Suffolk has a high percentage of 55 – 66 year olds who are economically inactive due to early retirement

Source: 2021 Census via Suffolk Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography

Employment by major employment group and gender – Suffolk Dec 2024



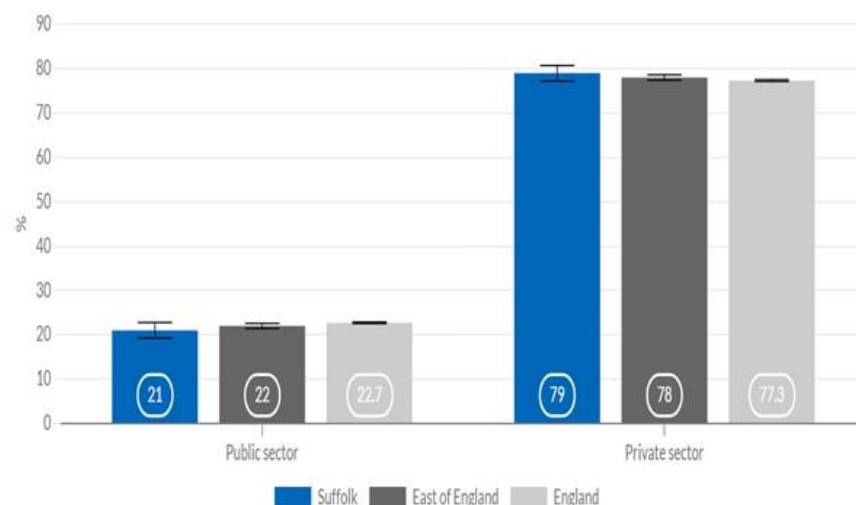
- Professional occupations is the largest employment group in Suffolk, employing 19.6% of all males and 22.1% of all females
- 17% of all males are employed in skilled trades occupations
- 14.1% of all females are employed in caring, leisure and other service occupations, which can often be lower paid, seasonal jobs with little job security

Source: Suffolk Observatory

Data for Suffolk geography

Structure of Suffolk's employers

Public and private sector employment (2024 Dec)



In line with national trends, Suffolk's businesses are predominately micro businesses (less than 9 employers), with only 115 organisations employing 250+

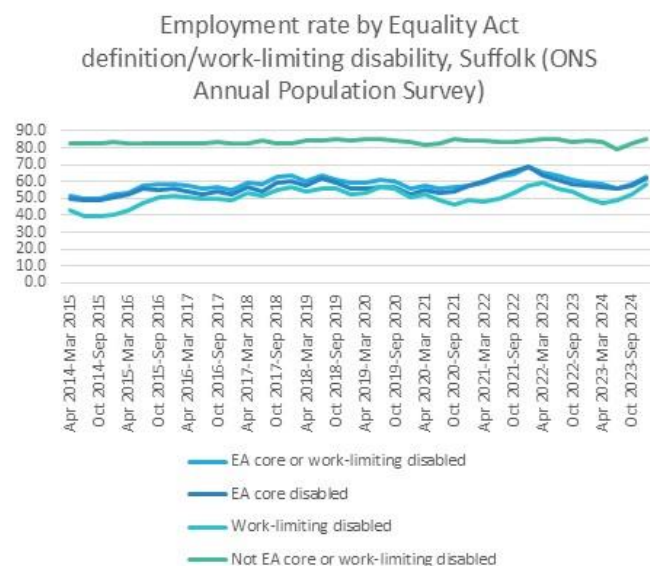
Employment size band	Number of enterprises
Micro (0-9)	27,430
Small (10 – 49)	2,895
Medium (50-249)	505
Large (250+)	115

The largest employers account for nearly 60% of all jobs, demonstrating the importance of engagement with these organisations (including those public sector anchor institutions) to improve employment prospects for all.

Source: Suffolk Observatory / SODA Power BI dashboard
Employment bands: ONS 2024 Business Count

Data for Suffolk geography

Disability employment rate gap



- Approximately 71,000 Suffolk residents are disabled under the equality act (2021 Census) with 45% classed as economically inactive.
- About half of those (18,000) cite long term sickness and/or disability.
- This highlights that disabled people of working age in Suffolk are as likely to be economically inactive as they are to be in employment.

DWP State of the Group Report (June 2025)

- DWP East Anglia region has seen a marked increase in those who are disabled being in-work
- However, there has also been a marked increase in the number of working age individuals classified as disabled, so the actual working age disabled employment rate has declined from 60% in 2019 to 58.7% in 2024.
- There has been a mixed picture across the DWP region, e.g. an increase from 54.4% to 62% in Staffordshire and Derbyshire. *Consider further work to investigate the reasons behind this increase and learn lessons from this region.*

Source: ONS APS via Suffolk Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography and DWP findings for East Anglia region

Disability confident employers in Suffolk

Looking at one of the key employment sectors in Suffolk – human health and social work – this accounts for 15.7% of employment in the county

Of those employed in this sector some 12.1% are disabled, under the Equality Act. This is nearly 1% higher than the overall rate in England.

		Disabled under the Equality Act		Not disabled under the Equality Act		Total
Employed in "human health & social work activities"	Suffolk	6,001	12.1%	43,643	87.9%	49,644
	England	444,049	11.3%	3,483,207	88.7%	3,927,256
All employment	Suffolk	70,945	15.7%	380,226	84.3%	451,171
	England	5,819,840	15.5%	31,683,165	84.5%	37,503,005

National Government's Disability Confident Scheme for employers

[Disability Confident employer scheme - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/disability-confident-employer-scheme)

Programme for employers to take action on recruitment, retention and development of disabled people in the workplace

19,000+ employers who have signed up

c.219 companies with a Suffolk postcode
(based on total % of coys in each IP, NR, CB, CO postcode who have registered)

Source: Suffolk Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography and national findings

Do employers employ those from disadvantaged groups?

At a national level DWP undertake a regular survey of employers which includes questions on employment of those who are disadvantaged.

The 2024 Employer Survey reported:

Only 18% of respondents stated they employed people from specific disadvantaged groups (groups identified for the purposes of the survey)

- Homelessness
- Prison leavers
- Care leavers
- People with drug or alcohol dependency
- Ex-armed forces

Just over 1/5 of employers (22%) would consider employing from these groups if there was a financial incentive offered

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-employer-survey-2024>

Results based on national survey

Section 2 – Drivers and challenges of economic inactivity

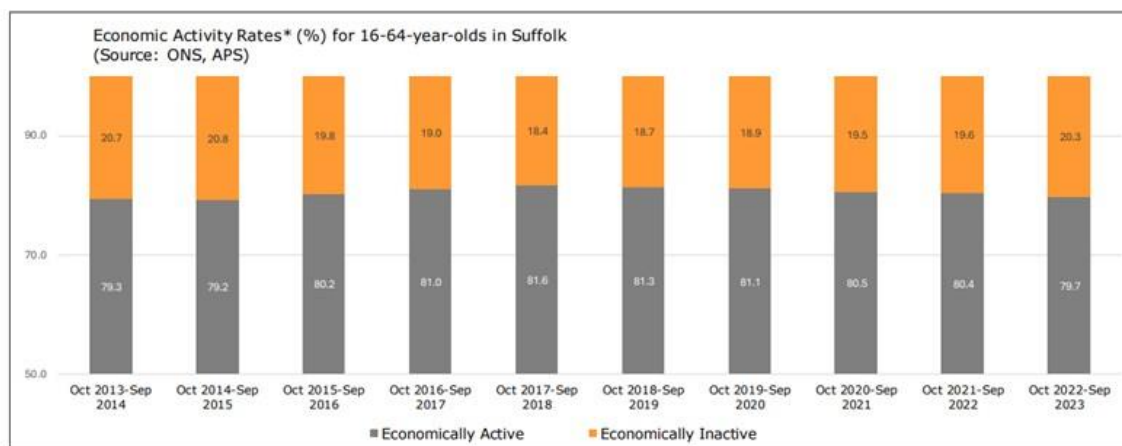
Drivers and challenges - summary

- While the rate of economic inactivity has remained relatively constant over the past 10 years in Suffolk, the reasons that people are economically inactive have changed
- National data does not allow for multiple reasons for economic inactivity making it difficult to address both causes for not working and barriers to securing employment
- The top reason for economic inactivity in Suffolk in 2024 is a long-term health condition (28.2% of all economically inactive). This is down from a high of 30% during the pandemic, and while the rate is falling it is still above that for the region and England as a whole
 - The top three reasons health reasons impacting a person's ability to work are mental health, muscular-skeletal and neurological (based on fit-notes and PIP claim data)
 - Mental health is a growing concern for those in the younger age cohort – for example, recent research by the British Chambers of Commerce found that one in four young people who are NEET (not in education, training or employment) are unable to work due to their mental health
 - Employers recognise this issue and from the 2024 DWP Survey of Employers found 65% of employers think the workplace should provide mental health support for employees, but this is down from 73% in 2022.
 - DWP risk analysis identifies health reasons as the biggest risk factor for economic inactivity, with 2+ health conditions significantly impacting a young person's chances, more so than education
- Some 17% of those who are economically inactive are looking after home and family (caring). There is no breakdown of care reason given (e.g. personal choice, a disabled family member, terminal illness). More research is needed to better understand caring responsibilities and the limitations these place on a person's ability or aspiration to work. For example, could more be done to offer part-time, flexible or home-based roles and would this have an impact? – see also Mapping Section for support for those with caring responsibilities
- Those who are economically inactive are significantly more likely to have no qualifications than the working age population as a whole. From our workshops DWP customers, skills and qualifications were noted as the second most common barrier to employment (after transport).

Drivers and challenges – summary (con't)

- With the proposed devolution agenda for Suffolk, the Mayor will have responsibility for strategic transport, with additional funding available to support investment in public transport, particularly bus routes (see later slides on system changes)
- Work aspiration among the economically inactive is low, only 13% of those who are EI want a job
 - The LGA report - Make It Local notes not all the economically inactive cohorts can be seen as 'addressable' - some working age groups will be very difficult to bring back into the labour market or have made conscious decisions to leave it.
 - Based on local survey work, DWP Work Coaches stated a lack of financial incentives to work as one of the top three reasons for economic inactivity
 - This finding is backed up by the recent House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee (economic inactivity and welfare) finding: *People without work have incentives to claim health-related benefits; and once in receipt of them they have neither the incentive nor support to find and accept a job – work doesn't pay. Instead, those who receive health-related benefits should be proactively helped to overcome obstacles rather than remain on benefits and out of work indefinitely.*
 - In Suffolk, while more is needed to raise aspirations and remove barriers for those who state they do not want a job, the immediate focus should be on supporting the 10,900 who want to work – transport was noted as the key barrier from those attending our Participant workshops
- There are variations in the rate of economic inactivity at district level, but given the small sample sizes used to gather the data it is challenging to draw definitive conclusions
 - Looking at DWP claimant data by office, there have been minor fluctuations in month on month claim numbers over the past 2 years, but no detectable pattern over a sustained period of time
 - While unemployment data fluctuates by age group in different geographies (data available at parliamentary constituency level), more analysis is needed to plot this over time to determine if there is a discernible trend emerging
 - Geographic analysis undertaken by Suffolk Public Health (2021 Census data) shows significantly higher concentrations of economic inactivity (long term sick) in Suffolk's urban areas (Ipswich, Lowestoft, Felixstowe) and in pockets of rural and coastal areas (Leiston, Stanton and Mildenhall) – *please note the raw data for this geographic analysis is not included in this slide deck but is available from SCC Skills.*
 - Economic inactivity (due to caring) is also concentrated in urban areas, but rural hotspots are Stanton, Mildenhall, Rendlesham and Reydon
 - It is recommended that a full dashboard of risks, by cohort and place, is developed to identify those areas and people most likely to require support (see Section 6 – recommended actions)

Economic inactivity - change over time in Suffolk Oct 2013 – Sep 2023



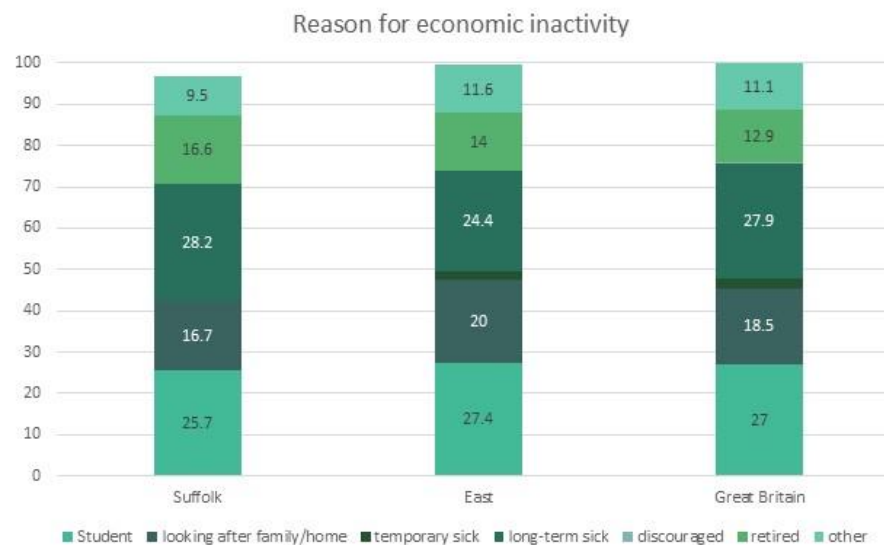
- Current percentage of the workforce in Suffolk that is economically inactive is 19.9% (Jan-Dec 2024)
- The percentage of economically inactive has remained relatively constant over the past 10 years

ONS defines economic inactivity as referring to people aged 16 – 64 who are not in employment, who have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next two weeks.

Source: ONS APS via Suffolk Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography

Reasons for economic inactivity

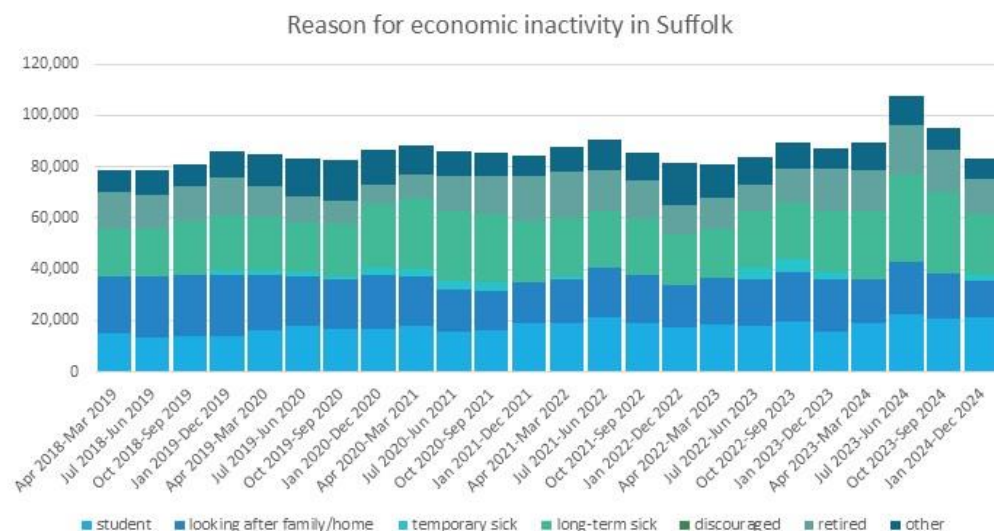


- The top reason for economic inactivity in Suffolk is long term sick (28.2%) followed by being a student (25.7%).
- This differs from the East as a whole, where student is the top reason, but mirrors GB data. However, the difference in long-term sick and student is greater in Suffolk.
- At a national level it is worth noting that:
Health-related inactivity has become much more common among low-to-middle income families, with people in low-to-middle income families more than five times more likely than those in higher-income families to be not participating in the labour market because of ill health by 2022-23 (around 1-in-8 of those on low-to-middle income families were in that position). (Unsung Britain)

Source: Suffolk Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography compared to region and national

Economic inactivity in Suffolk by reason



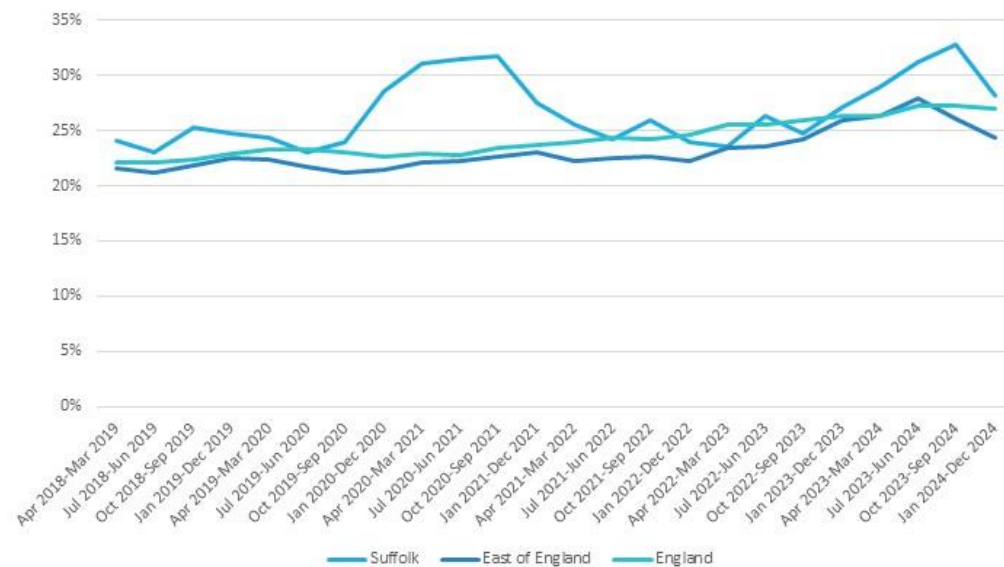
- Over the past 6 years long term sick has increased as a reason for economic inactivity
- Currently the data only allow for one reason for economic inactivity
- It is unclear what the “other” category includes, a proportion of this cohort may simply have not ticked a primary reason

Source: Annual Population Survey via Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography

Change over time – long term sickness

Economic inactivity due to long-term sickness, ONS Annual Population Survey

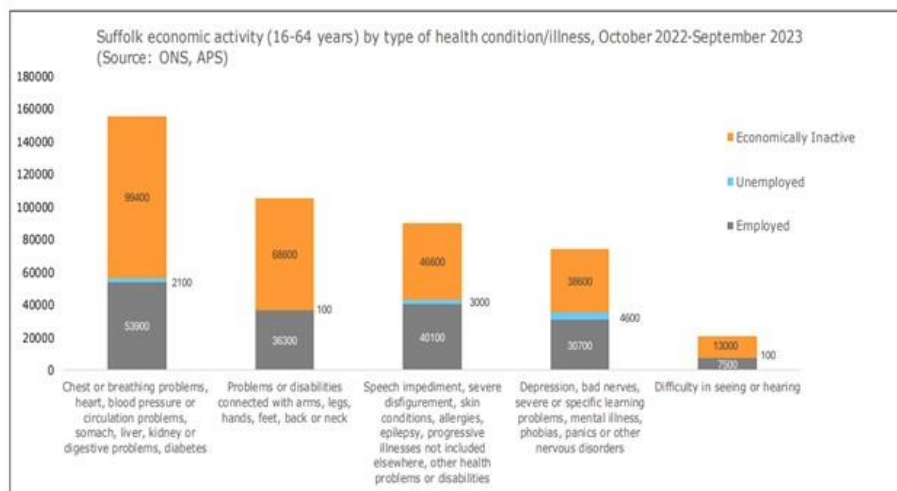


- Relative to East of England and England, Suffolk's economically inactive are more likely to be long term sick
- Is now coming down from a peak of over 30% in 2023 – 24

Source: Annual Population Survey via Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography compared to region and national

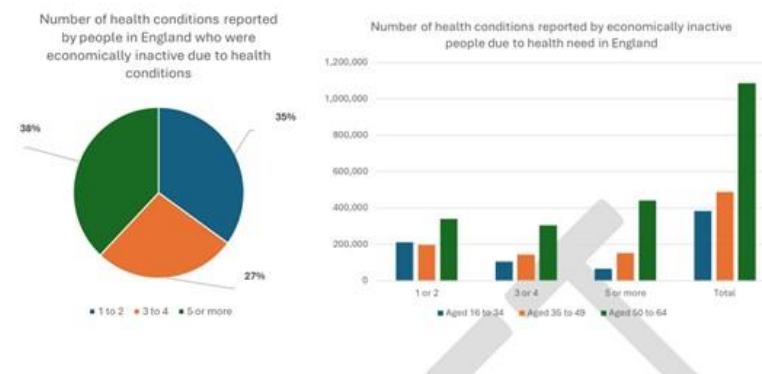
Type of health issue



- The graph above shows the health conditions of all those resident in Suffolk over a 12 month period, broken down into economically inactive, unemployed and employed.
- Any one individual can have more than one health condition

At an England level, the number of economically inactive individuals with multiple health conditions is shown in the 2 charts below.

- 35% of all economically inactive due to a health condition, have 5 or more health conditions
- Perhaps not surprisingly, those who are over 50 are more likely to have 5+ conditions



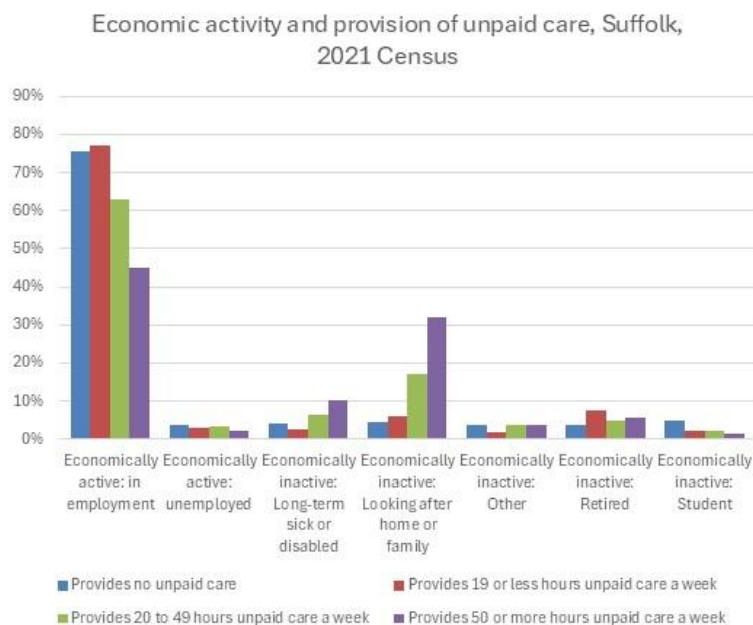
<https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Suffolk-Economy-Employment-Update-February-2024.pdf>
Data drawn from SNEE Draft Strategy, based on ONS data

Data for Suffolk geography and national

View from the coalface – parent carers

- Focus group held with parent carers of young people with health needs / disabilities looking to move into training or employment (June 2025)
- Lack of information on post 16 education options for young people with health needs
- Falls to education institutions, but are they the right / only ones to provide this guidance?
- Perception that SEND means low attainment or learning disability. Feeling that at college EHCPs are scrutinised to provide a reduced level of support
- Transport provision is not known until mid-August (too late to prepare given the significance of transition)
- Apprenticeships are always FT which can be challenging for a YP with SEND
- Very limited options or guidance on self-employed / entrepreneurship for those with health needs / disabilities
- Need to educate the educators on what can be achieved and then do job profiling and pathways

Caring provision

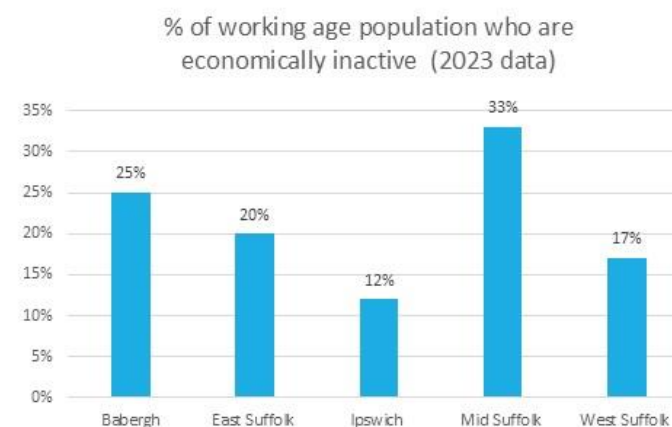
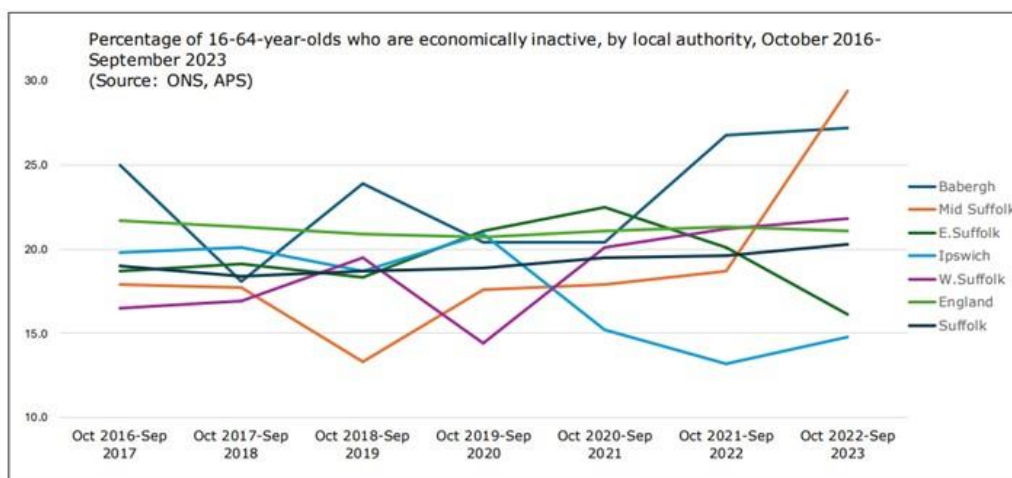


- 17% of Suffolk's economically inactive cohort are looking after home and family.
- No differentiation between types of care, for example childcare, looking after elderly family, caring for a disabled person or supporting someone with a terminal illness.
- Only 45% of 16-64-year-olds who provide 50 or more hours of unpaid care in Suffolk are in employment.
- This contrasts with 75% of the working age population who are in employment and provide less than 19 hours / no unpaid care.

Source: 2021 Census via Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography

Economic inactivity in Suffolk



- Greater variation at sub-Suffolk level
- In 2023, Mid Suffolk highest rate at 33%
- But looking at change over time there is no clear pattern
- Reflects issue with APS data, and small sample size at very local level

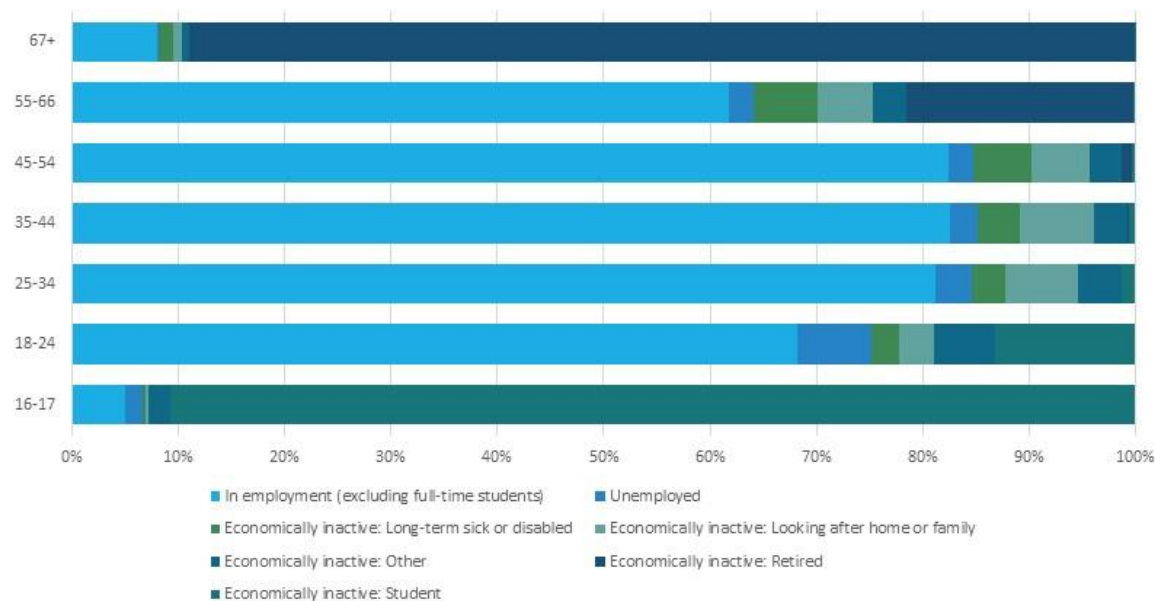
Source: Economic inactivity rates for 16-64 year olds (ONS, APS data via SODA April 2024 update)

<https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Suffolk-Economy-Employment-Update-February-2024.pdf>

Data for Suffolk geography

Economic activity by age Suffolk

Economic activity by age group, Suffolk (2021 Census, excluding full-time students)



- Economic activity is highest in the 25 – 54 age groups
- Unemployment is highest in the 18 – 24 age group
- Suffolk has a high percentage of 55 – 66 year olds who are economically inactive due to early retirement

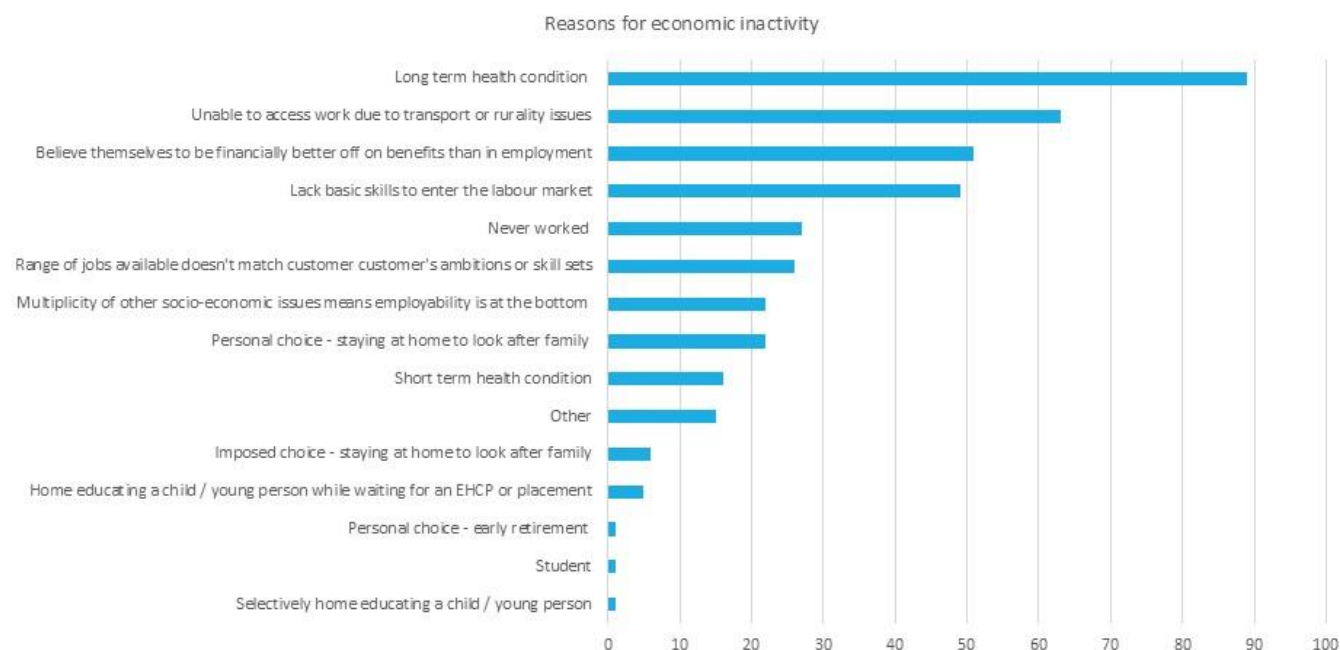
Source: 2021 Census via Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography

Suffolk based DWP Work Coaches – reasons for economic inactivity

Survey conducted June 2025 – 136 respondents

Question: What are the top 3 reasons for economic inactivity



- Long term health condition was noted as the main reason for economic inactivity
- This was closely followed by accessibility issues (both transport and rural) and perception that they are financially better off on benefit
- This last finding is backed up by the recent House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee (economic inactivity and welfare) finding: *People without work have incentives to claim health-related benefits; and once in receipt of them they have neither the incentive nor support to find and accept a job – work doesn't pay. Instead, those who receive health-related benefits should be proactively helped to overcome obstacles rather than remain on benefits and out of work indefinitely.*

Data for Suffolk geography

Those most at risk of becoming economically inactive – and return to work from long term sickness

DWP have analysed the risk factors for becoming economically inactive due to health needs and have established the following risk levels:

Likelihood of inactive – sick compared to all age groups:

≥5.0x
≥3.0–4.9x
≥2.0–2.9x
≥1.5–1.9x

Characteristic type	Characteristic	Young workers (16–34 years old)	Middle-aged workers (35–49 years old)	Older workers (50–64 years old)
Health	Has a mental health condition	4.7x	4.2x	3.2x
	Has a physical condition	1.5x	2.1x	1.6x
	Has 2 or more health conditions	5.3x	4.7x	2.8x
	Has a disability	4.4x	4.2x	2.9x
Education	Highest qualification is GCSE or lower	1.9x	2.6x	1.6x
Employment	Last left job 2 or more years ago	6.5x	7.8x	3.7x

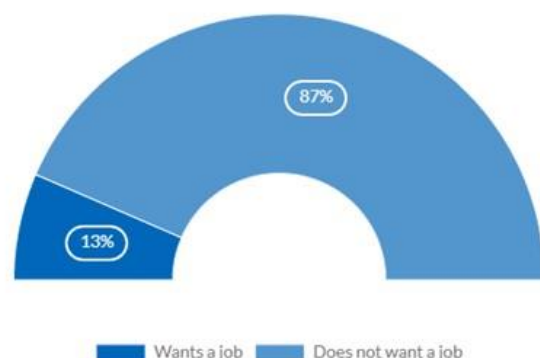
Initial work undertaken for SNEE Work and Health Strategy reflects on the DWP risk factors for economic inactivity

- from the table the amount of time out of work is a key risk factor (boxes shaded brown)
- younger workers with multiple health needs 2+) are more likely to be or become economically inactive than older workers
- mental health conditions are more significant than physical health conditions in terms of risk factor
- while education is a factor, it is a lesser risk than health or time out of work

Source: Draft SNEE Work & Health Strategy – not for sharing

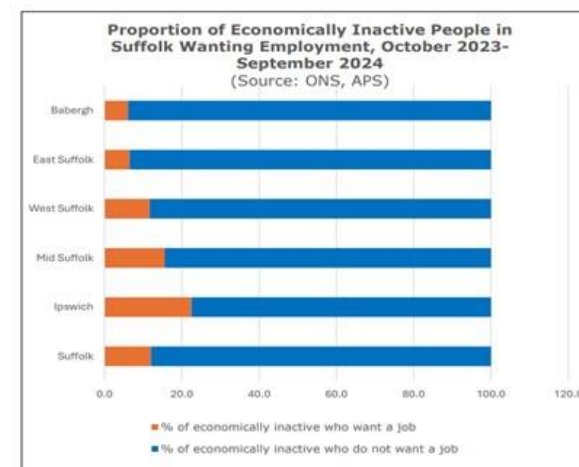
Data for national geography

Economic inactivity – work aspiration



Key points

- 13% of those who are economically inactive want a job (equates to c.10,900 individuals)
- 87% of those who are economically inactive do not want a job
- Varies significantly by district, from a high of 35% in Babergh who want to work to a low of 19% in East Suffolk (note Ipswich figures excluded due to small sample size)



Source: Suffolk Observatory

Data for Suffolk geography

Barriers to finding work



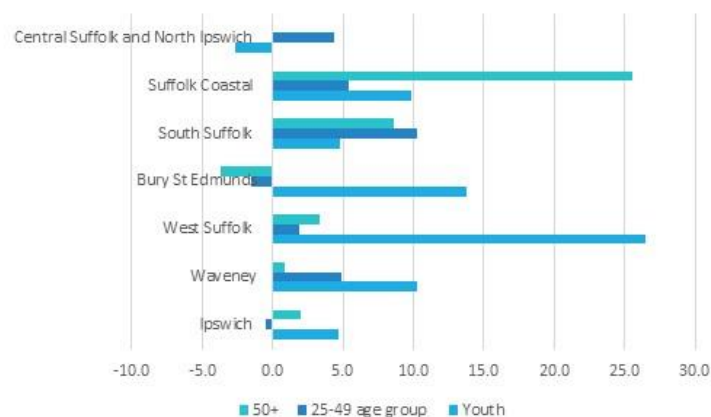
- Work aspiration, as shown on the previous slide is low among those who are economically inactive in Suffolk
- We held a series of workshops with DWP customers to identify the barriers they face in securing employment
- Participants were largely drawn from those who want to work
- The main barrier in finding employment was noted as transport, with a need for further skills and training rated second
- Opportunity (lack of) was ranked more highly as a barrier in Lowestoft than either Haverhill or Sudbury, potentially reflecting coastal issues but sample sizes are very small so concrete conclusions cannot be drawn

Source: OPR Consulting Ltd.

Data for Suffolk geography

Unemployment in Suffolk

Unemployment hotspots - Suffolk parliamentary constituency areas
(based on claimant count registers graph shows % change between May 24 and May 25)

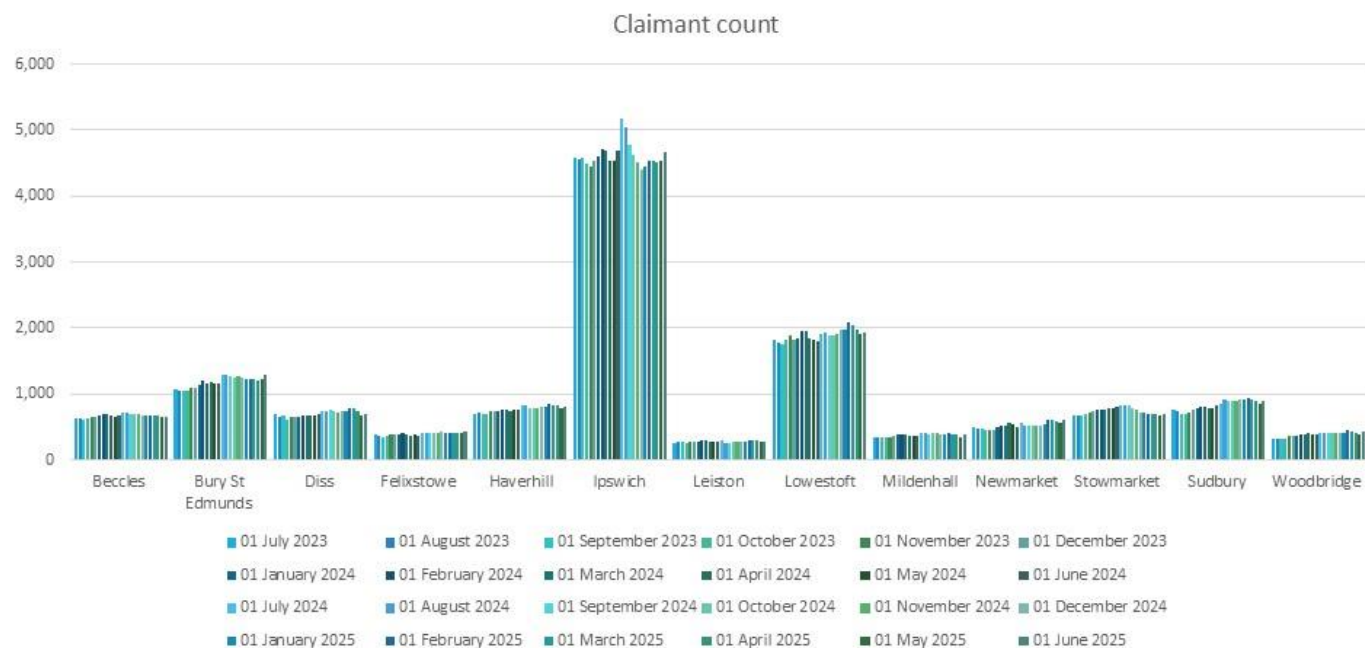


- Looking at more detail of unemployment by parliamentary constituency shows there are differences in the ages of those who are unemployed across Suffolk
- Youth unemployment has increased significantly in West Suffolk over the period May 24 – May 25
- 50+ unemployment has seen a similar increase in Suffolk Coastal over the same period

Source: DWP State of the Region report

Data for Suffolk parliamentary const.

Claimant count by DWP office (July 2023 – June 2025)



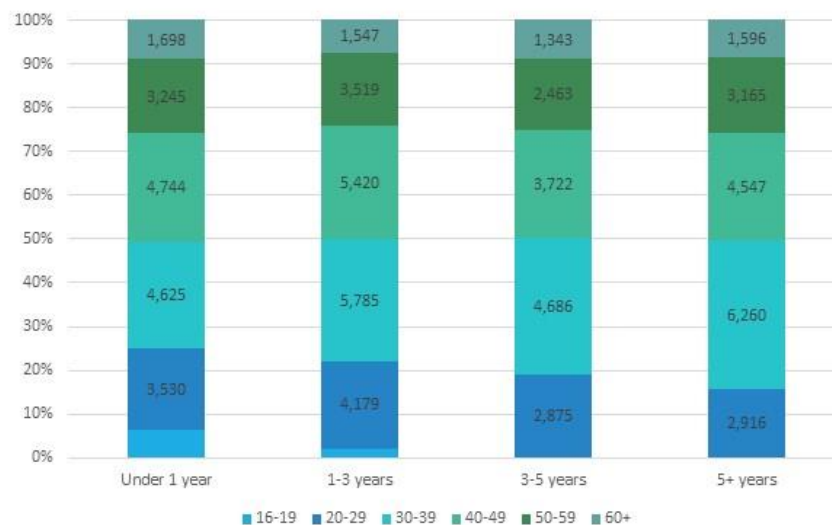
- This chart shows month on month claimant count by DWP office
- While there is month on month fluctuation, apart from Ipswich in summer 2024, levels have remained relatively constant over the period

Source: DWP EA Labour market report (sourced via SCC)

Data for Suffolk geography + Diss

Universal credit claimants

UC claimants by age and duration in Suffolk, March 2025
provisional data



- As of March 2025, there are 73,576 UC claimants in Suffolk
- 25% have been claiming UC for 5 years or more
- Of this 25% cohort
 - Just over 1/3 are aged 30-39
 - 25% aged 40-49
 - 16% aged 20-29
- Meaning a significant number and proportion of longer-term UC claimants are in the younger age bands – building up a long term cost if not addressed now

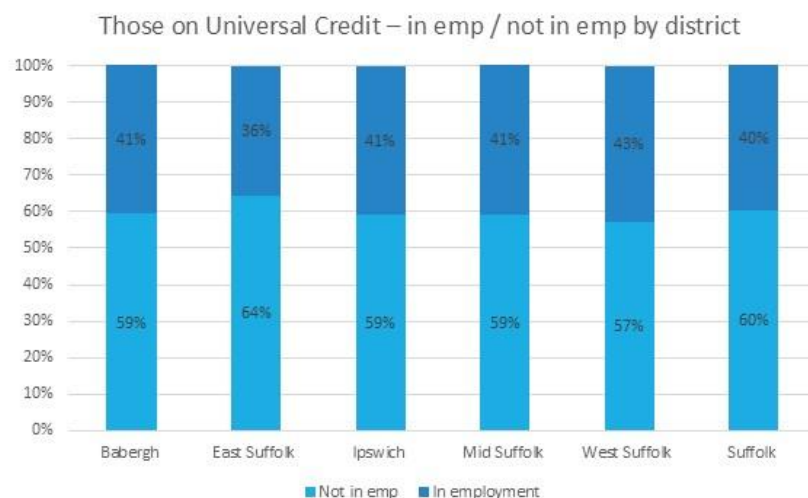
Refuges on Universal Credit

- Recently released Gov't data shows c.1.5% of all those on UC are refuges
- This would mean c.1,100 people in Suffolk on UC are refuges.
- In Suffolk, there are an estimated 2,500 – 3,000 refuges in total (<https://suffolkrefugee.org.uk/background/>)
- Based on national data, c.79% of refuges on UC are not in employment – for Suffolk this would be 869 individuals.

Source: Suffolk PH data set / Gov't UC statistics

Data for Suffolk geography & national

Universal Credit claimants – Feb 2025, in employment / not in employment

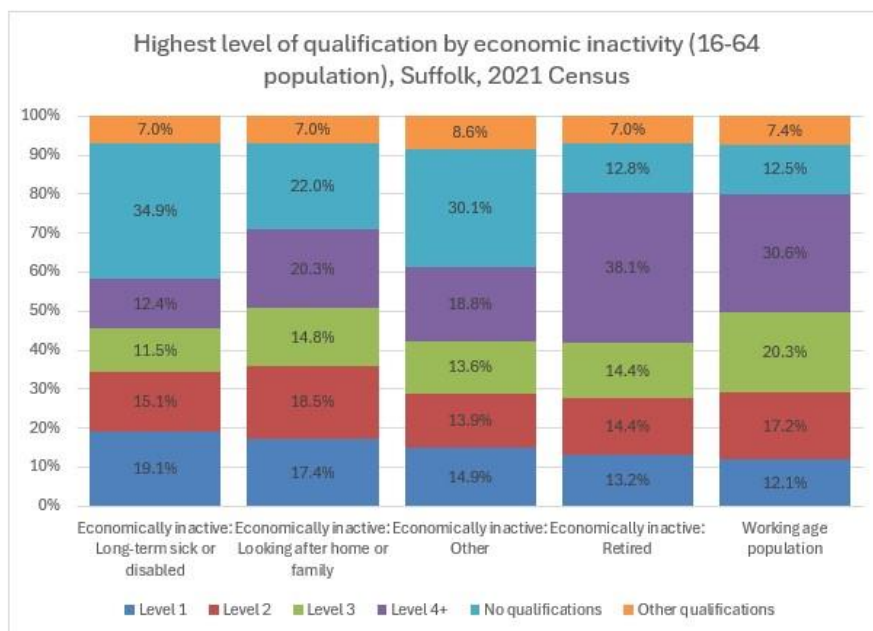


- Overall, in Suffolk, there is a 60/ 40 split of those claiming UC who are not in employment (60%) and in employment (40%)
- There is some variation at district level, a high of 64%/36% in East Suffolk to a low of 57%/43% in West Suffolk, but given this is only one month of data, these variations are not considered significant
- The wider finding is that 40% of those on UC are in employment – highlighting that they are facing *in work poverty*

Source: <https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml>

Data for Suffolk geography

Qualifications for economically inactive

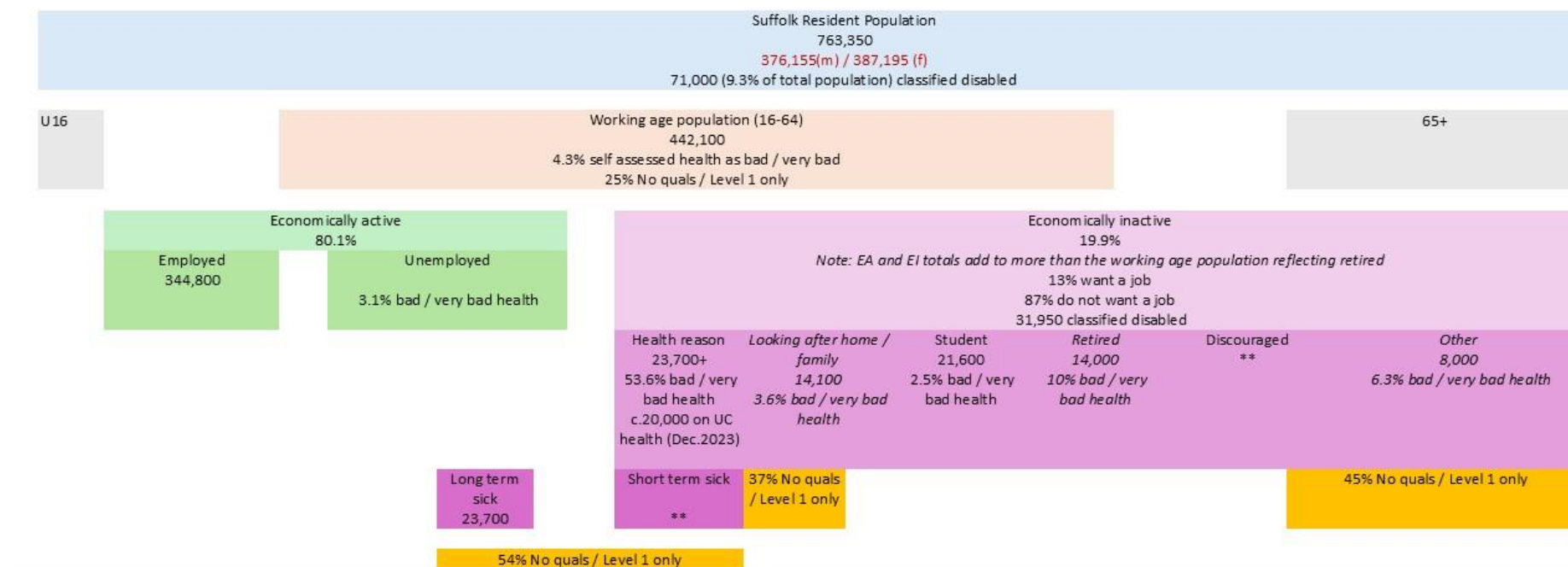


- Those who are economically inactive (excl. retired) are significantly more likely to have a lower / no level of qualifications than both economically inactive overall and those in the working age population as a whole: range of 22% - 34.9% no qualifications in economically inactive cohorts, compared to only 12.5% for working age population overall
- Easy to access, entry level qualification programmes are needed for the economically inactive cohorts that enable them to gain a qualification while addressing the barriers they face (transport, caring needs, disabilities etc).
- Recent research from British Chambers of Commerce found, at national level, 79% of 18-24 who are out of work due to ill health have only GCSE qualifications or lower
- In interpreting this data, it is difficult to know the cause-and-effect relationship, that is, is the lack of skills holding people back from getting employment or are those who are long term sick / caring for others not able to acquire the relevant skills and training they need?

Source: 2021 Census via Suffolk Public Health

Data for Suffolk geography

Economically inactive – Suffolk cohorts



Source: OPR Consulting based on data provided via Suffolk Public Health, some totals may not add due to rounding.

Section 3 – Mapping Provision

Mapping provision - summary

- Suffolk has a number of organisations that support those who are economically inactive
- Most programmes and services support those who are 18+ (some go down to 16+ and focus specifically on young people). Given the increasing number of those between 16 – 24 who are on UC, and have already been on welfare for a number of years, more research to identify relevant targeted support for this age group should be considered
- There appears to be a gap in the market for support for those who provide care. Based on key word searches (internet and Info-Link) it was difficult to identify support specifically targeted at those providing the care, rather than those with the care need (e.g. a disabled young person)
- There is good coverage of each of the six individual *journey to work* stages, that is no one stage is unsupported, but due to the nature of funding (often short term, programme specific) there is limited provision that supports an individual throughout the entire *journey to work* and continues to sustain employment with targeted support for employers – **how can the system start to operate as an integrated system of health, skills, employability and barriers to engagement, supported by organisations across both VCFSE and paid provision? See also LEVERS section**
- Given the multiplicity of needs faced by those who are economically inactive (e.g. training needed, support with childcare, transport) there needs to be a strong focus on individualised, tailored support. Based on this desktop review many organisations state they provide wrap-around support, but without doing further detailed research it is not possible to assess the quality or impact of these services.
- There is no single directory for service provision that is used across the health, skills and employer engagement network
- Maintaining an up-to-date directory of commissioned programmes is difficult given frequent changes in funding and service provision
- There is no consistent referral method, stakeholders consistently stated it was a case of referring to *who you know*
- Info-Link, owned and hosted by Suffolk County Council, provides a good starting point – but search functionality needs enhancement, and the system needs to be more widely promoted if it is to be of benefit for Get Suffolk Working
- From the participant point of view there is an over-whelming amount of data to sift without any coherent support to know whether an organisation or advice service (particularly those that provide online support only) is right for you
- The lack of feedback from employers when you do apply for a job was consistently cited by both DWP staff and those seeking employment as a major weakness in the system – more support is needed in the later stages of the *journey to work* to support both the applicant and employer

Approach to mapping

Initial data sheet provided by SCC Skills Team outlining a number of key services in Suffolk

- sheet needed updating to reflect programmes currently in operation
- removal of entries summarising Strategies and Plans

OPR desktop review of services available in or service Suffolk

- Grouped into types of service (charities, commissioned provision, accreditation schemes etc.)
- Each service mapped to reflect the Journey to Work stages which it supports (note this element of the mapping has not been validated but is based on an online assessment only)

Review of SCC Info-Link and engagement with team to review complementarity, overlap and improvements

Face to face workshops with DWP customers to hear their views on the support available

Mapping services in Suffolk

A separate EXCEL file is available that maps services and programmes to support those who are economically inactive to find work

Types of services

- 3 government grants and accreditation schemes to support those with disabilities seeking employment (e.g. Disability Confident)
- 28 charities based in / serving Suffolk that specifically target those who are economically inactive and seeking employment
- 18 commissioned programmes funding services that are targeted at the economically inactive / unemployed and seeking work, education or training
- 4 additional services included, e.g. SCC Adult Learning, DWP provision

Cohorts supported

- The majority of services target those who are 18+, with a few focused on young people (16-25) (e.g. Suffolk Positive Futures – Catch 22, Turning Point)
- The mapping only identified one service that was specifically gender focused (Smart Works)
- Participants and some providers (interviewed as part of stakeholder engagement) noted there were issues with achieving critical mass for some programmes (e.g. literacy support in rural areas), which lead to the course being cancelled and possibly not offered again for some months, impacting a person's employability chances.
- There is little identifiable support for those who are EI because they provide care. Services exist to support the person receiving care (e.g. a disabled young person), but the mapping did not provide any clear links to services for those who provide care (e.g. a parent) and may want to secure e.g. a part-time role
- Those leaving care, the transition age group going from children's services to adult care, are not specifically identifiable as a supported cohort on the public facing services, however, this could be because of the more tailored, wrap-around support that they require – more research is needed to identify what support this cohort requires.

Journey to work – the 6 stages

Addressing barriers – support to assess and address an individual's needs across a broad spectrum and including, but not limited to skills, transportation, health considerations, inclusion factors, confidence and motivation

Becoming work ready – supporting individuals with a range of transferable skills and training, managing work place expectations, what to expect as an employee, what your employer will expect of you.

Becoming job ready – support with specific skills and training to be successful in a chosen job, and how to apply for work. This could include programmes commissioned by councils and delivered via local colleges and the voluntary sector.

Supporting into work – specific programmes designed to support individuals or cohorts to gain employment, this could include e.g. application writing and CV development and work placements / experience.

Sustaining employment – on-going support and coaching to ensure individuals can retain a job once they have secured employment. This can also include employer based support e.g. mental health in the workplace programmes.

Progressing within work – on-going support to individuals or cohorts to progress within their current job role or to seek progression elsewhere, this could include e.g. business networking events and professional development courses.

Mapping provision – the journey to work

Addressing Barriers (1) Access to work (grants) Disability confident Health adjustment passport Access Community Trust Anglia Care Trust Emmaus Future Female Society Get Set UK Greenlight Trust Leading Lives Leonard Cheshire Lofty Heights Mencap The Poppy Factory Shaw Trust Suffolk Mind The Family Business Apollo project Connect to work DWP	Becoming Work Ready (2) Health adjustment passport Anglia Care Trust Emmaus Get Set UK Greenlight Trust Inspire Suffolk Leading Lives Leonard Cheshire Mason Trust Mencap The Poppy Factory The Mix, Stowmarket Pathways Care Farm Realise Futures Shaw Trust Suffolk Mind Icanbea Apollo Connect to Work Project Search Skills Bootcamps Suffolk Work Well Thrive VENI DWP	Becoming Job Ready (3) Health adjustment passport Get Set UK Inside Connections Inspire Suffolk Leonard Cheshire Mason Trust Mencap The Mix, Stowmarket Pathways Care Farm The Poppy Factory Shaw Trust Workers Educational Association Icanbea Apollo Connect to Work Nucleus Employability Hub Project Search Skills Bootcamps Suffolk Work Well Thrive VENI DWP
Progressing within work (6) Disability confident Health adjustment passport Business in the Community Care Development East Future Female Society Mencap The Poppy Factory Apollo Apprenticeships UK Good Health at Work Power Up Programme DWP	Sustaining employment (5) Disability confident Health adjustment passport Business in the Community Care Development East Future Female Society Mencap The Poppy Factory Apollo Apprenticeships UK Connect to Work Good Health at Work Nucleus Employability Hub Power Up Programme DWP	Supporting into work (4) Access to work (grants) Disability confident Health adjustment passport Business in the Community Care Development East Emmaus Future Female Society Get Set UK Leonard Cheshire Mason Trust Mencap The Mix, Stowmarket The Poppy Factory Pathways Care Farm Realise Futures Smart Works The Family Business Apollo Apprenticeships UK Connect to Work Nucleus Employability Hub Power Up Programme Project Search Skills Bootcamps Suffolk Work Well Thrive VENI DWP

Service mapping - analysis

The mapping exercise demonstrates the range of organisations involved in service delivery

- Many operate at national level, some are regional, some are Suffolk specific, even hyper local
- While there is a wealth of provision, there is no coherent journey for a particular participant “in the system”
- If a participant is working directly with a work coach, they can provide guidance, but these resources are very limited and there is little time available to engage

Stakeholder comments on mapping support services

- Fit note data – delivered by GPs but no integration with wider health system, mental health therapists, physical therapists (currently a pilot in Haverhill to look at improving outcomes – need to monitor results)
- Transition from CYP to adult social work (current pilot to map participant journeys – need to monitor results) is much needed to understand where the gaps are and how support can be offered as young people transition to employment (or education / training) – raised by those in ASC and also those in VCSE sector who work with vulnerable young people
- Some providers and participants noted a disconnect between stated priorities (e.g. Sizewell C commitment to employing those furthest from the labour market) and practice (comments from DWP customers and VCSE supporting prison leavers)
- Noted as a particular need for those leaving the justice system is the immediate need for support – e.g. recently released from prison, has secured a work position but needs money to buy work boots – who can provide the immediate £80 without three weeks of paperwork?
- There is little connection between programmes – a participant finishes one and then “leaves” the system, how can we improve handover?
- Inconsistent referral process – *it’s who you know, as there isn’t enough information about what is available* (VCSE stakeholder)

Info-Link (Suffolk County Council)

Info-Link – an online directory of community services and activities in Suffolk

Owned by Suffolk County Council

- Public Health host Info-Link / Children and Young People (CYP) / Adult Social Care (ASC) pay to use it
- C.40,000 active users / monthly page views c.95,000
- Recent survey of Adult Social Workers (75 responses) showed 80% user rate

All records on Info-Link are validated by SCC team

Currently searchable by key word and can be filtered by age bands, district geography, accessibility requirements

Will the website is relatively easy to use, it provides the user with a list of organisations or sign-posts to further advice – the user has to then follow these leads themselves

Support for those with employability needs is more likely to be found via specific search by need type, rather than a generic employment search, likely reflecting that the system is hosted by Public Health. Greater engagement with the employability and skills teams could enhance search functionality.

Participant views on “the system”

3 workshops held with DWP customers
Haverhill, Sudbury and Lowestoft
25 participants in total (ages have been estimated)

Each month I apply for about 40 jobs and I'm lucky if I hear back from 1 – Female 30-40 yr old

The only link that really works is between DWP and HMRC – if you do any work then HMRC quickly get in touch for tax – why can't the rest of the system join up in that way? Male 35 – 55 yr old

Did work experience with a big retail chain – was a great programme but then when it ends there's nothing more and no-one thinks it mattered – Male 25 – 35 yr old

I spend all my time chasing the system – housing doesn't join with DWP, with child health needs and appointments – Male, 35-55 yr old

I didn't know I could ask for training through my work coach – it's always just about applying for jobs – Female 35 – 50 yr old

It is so draining to come into the job centre, it would be wicked to get a job and not have to do this anymore – Male 25 – 25 yr old

Section 4 – Stakeholder levers

Stakeholder levers - summary

- There is a strong *golden thread* of priorities to support those who are economically inactive running through regional and local strategies – there is less focus on shared activities and indicators of success
- Track record of partnership working across the region, with both strategic and operational groups in place to develop and deliver Get Suffolk Working – this needs to be built on to ensure the **system works as a system and not a series of stand-alone organisations**
- While not mentioned by Suffolk stakeholders there is a question on whether greater co-location of service delivery and customer engagement, through GPs / health anchors, could lead to greater impact? More research is needed to understand the benefits of e.g. work coaches within GP surgeries
- But Get Suffolk Working plan provides an opportunity to build a shared understanding of demand and greater coordination of actions and activities – leading to more effective and efficient delivery with a more demonstrable impact on participants
- Employers are under significant pressures at the moment (labour market shortages, tax increases, employee rights). For Get Suffolk Working to be successful, more needs to be done at a system level to address the barriers for those who are economically inactive, balanced against the role of the employer.
- Employers should be encouraged to do more on preventing any increase in economic inactivity – further research is needed on how this could be delivered, e.g. through greater health at work programmes.
- Work is needed to
 - Develop an agreed data set available at a Suffolk level and reflecting local issues, which can be monitored and reported to a wide range of audiences, including the DWP
- More can be done to share resources, including job roles, across teams within local councils, thereby making better use of limited funds

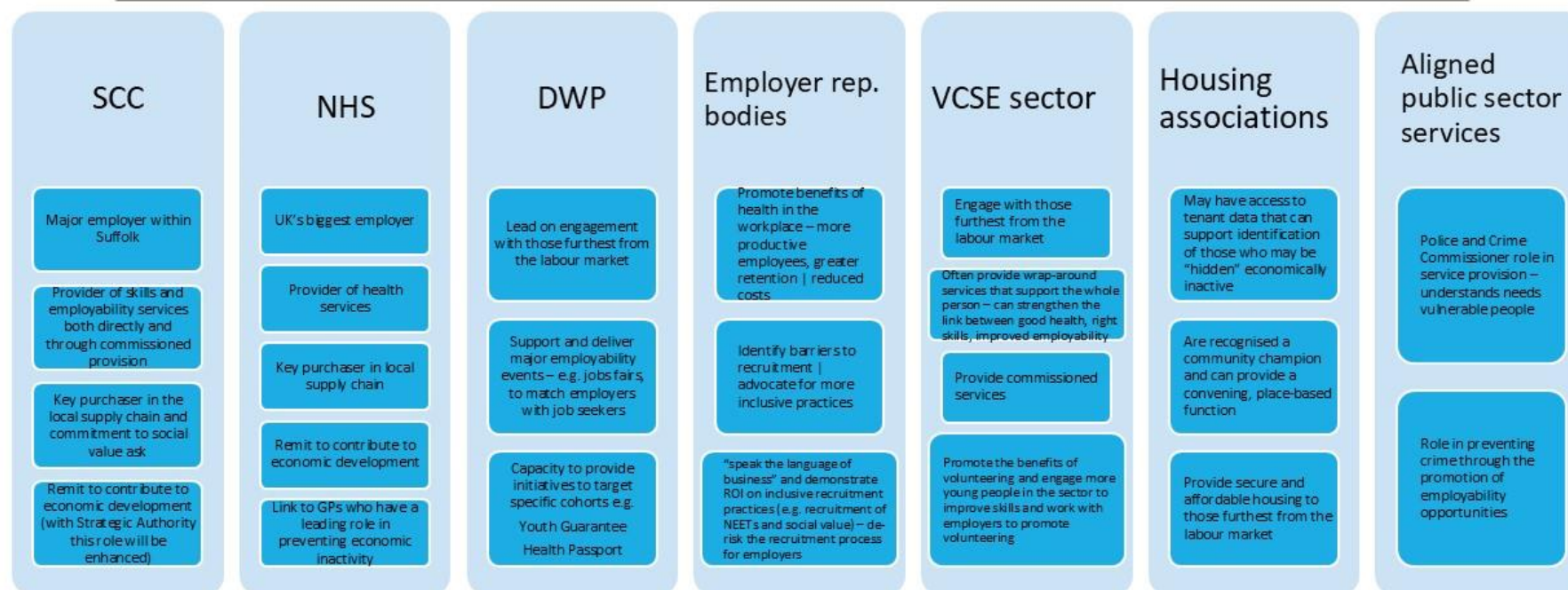
Strategic alignment of plans and strategies

Addressing Get Britain Working priorities

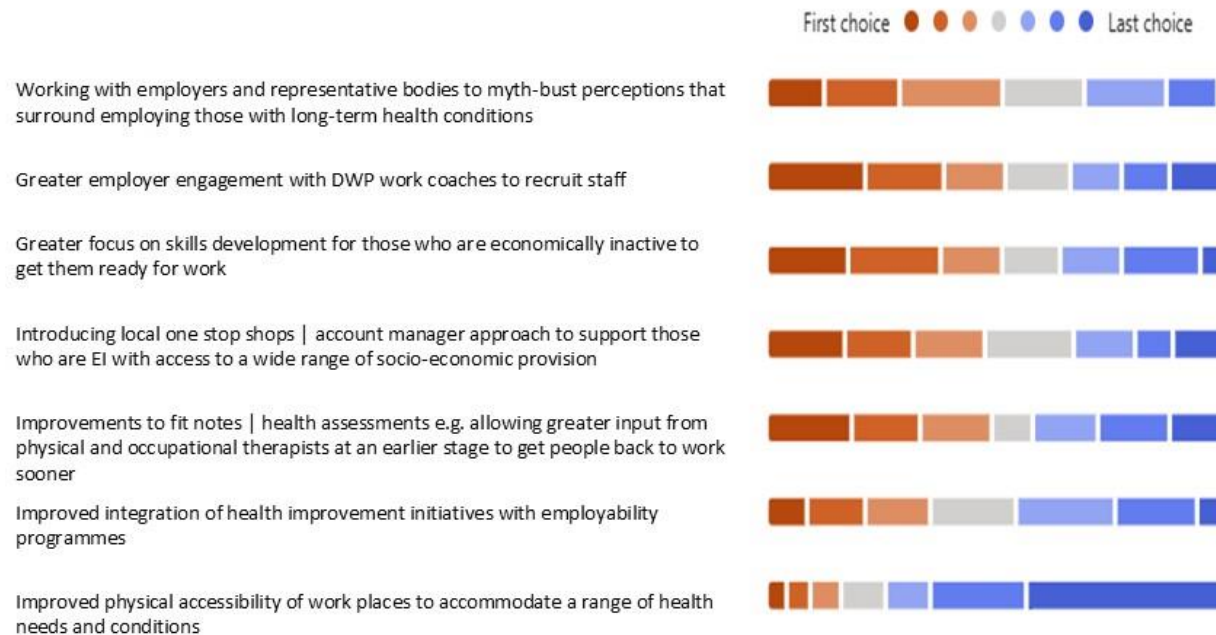
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy: addressing the wider determinants of health, including employment and supporting good mental health for all
- Norfolk and Waveney ICS: addressing health inequalities reflecting the importance of decent work on good physical and mental health
- Connect to Work Delivery Plan: programme of work to deliver a “place, train and maintain” model for employment
- Freeport East Skills Strategy: providing new, additional employment opportunities for all, but especially those who are currently unemployed or underemployed, thereby reducing in-work poverty and inequality
- Tackling Poverty Strategy: deliver Work Well Suffolk (coaching and employment support to become job ready) for those with barriers to employment and long term health conditions (including mental health).
- Sizewell C: up to £22m to access education and skills centres of excellence along with commitments to employ those furthest from the labour markets where appropriate
- Suffolk Economic Strategy: boost productivity through workforce health and wellbeing initiatives and build an inclusive talent pipeline
- LSIP: improving accessibility to skills and training provision for all



Levers by organisation



DWP Survey of work coaches – local levers to encourage return to work



- What will have the greatest positive impact on improving outcomes for those who are economically inactive.
- The second statement – *greater employer engagement with DWP work coaches to recruit staff* was ranked as a top three choice by 51.4% of respondents.
- Over 50% of respondents also rated *working with employers (statement 1)* and *greater focus on skills development (statement 3)* as their top three.

Enhancing public sector collaboration – recent joint activities

Job Fairs

- Integration between DWP, councils, employers
- Recent experience in Suffolk very positive, with record attendance
 - Customers: 325, 131, 200, 82
 - Employers: 19, 8, 9, 14
 - Providers: 15, 0, 12, 11
- Increasing engagement with VCSE sector and colleges is widening the net and offering greater opportunities
- All held in central, easy to access locations, praised by both employers and attendees
- DWP staff recognised for their open and engaging manner, willingness to help and support

Drop in events (Thrive programme)

- Aimed at 16-24 year olds not in education, employment or training
Advice on jobs, volunteering, work experience, support with money and access to foodbank
- June 2025 – Sudbury (and every second Wednesday)
- Sponsored by SCC, Suffolk New College, Inspire, West Suffolk College, Lofty Heights, DWP, Sudbury Arts Centre, Thrive and funded by UK Government
- June 2025 – Stowmarket (and every second Tuesday)
- Sponsored by SCC, Suffolk New College, Inspire, West Suffolk College, Lofty Heights, DWP, The Mix, Thrive and funded by UK Government

VCSE – Green Light Trust – a young person's journey: preventing potential economic inactivity

- Young person referred by high school after difficulty in concentration, emotional regulation and trust in adults – they had become disengaged from education
- Supported via a 12 week programme of structured, nature based learning and hands on activities
- Progressed onto a Green Light Trust EHCP pathway with personalised timetable
- Re-engaged with education and sat GCSE Maths
- Continued to accrue AQA credits and mentored younger participants at Green Light
- Supported to secure an apprenticeship in Ipswich and began training at CITB Construction College
- Is now a digger driver at Truplant

Levers to support employers, more needs to be done - stakeholder comments

We need to work closely with local businesses to enhance their understanding of long-term health conditions, promote inclusive hiring practices, and support them in making reasonable adjustments (local authority)

Only 9% of employers currently recruit through Jobcentres (national figure - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/biggest-shake-up-of-jobcentres-in-decades-gets-underway>)

Need to work more with employers to present more positive image of some sectors ie care, food production – and opportunities for progression and security (FE College)

Need to increase employer support of Work Trials and Work Experience, with engagement with DWP to maximise EDI pathways (DWP representative)

Levers identified in wider research / trailblazers



Women work & health

- Improving the tracking of young people most at risk of dropping out
- Tailoring the benefits and support systems to recognise any step towards work as a positive among the hardest to reach young
- Focus on the quality of the job for those most at risk of poor mental health
- Ensuring that work is geographically practical for young and women with children



Greater Manchester Live Well

- Aims to tackle health, social and economic inequalities by changing how we work in our public services, and with people and communities.
- It will do this by growing the support, control, connections and resources to lead a healthy happy life through:
 - A network of welcoming and empowering Live Well centres and spaces
 - Equal, connected and consistent support that brings together the best of our public services and sustainably-funded local Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise groups
 - A Live Well workforce that collectively pulls support around individuals, families and communities
 - Integrated financial, housing, employment, well-being, health and social support as well as opportunities for social connection
- Access from any neighbourhood and through our health service.



South Yorkshire Trailblazer

- A system steward to provide oversight for the first time of the myriad different initiatives to help people back into employment
- A system manager to work with service providers, break down barriers, manage performance and address any gaps in services
- Personalised support to connect people with services from initial engagement to attachment and triage to ongoing interaction
- Employment activation to leverage training, development and employment opportunities and help people back into the workplace
- Evaluation to measure improvements in health, wellbeing and employment outcomes, focused on the individual rather than the programme
- Preventative approaches to help people at risk of becoming economically inactive such as school leavers, those leaving their current employment or career changers.

Section 5 – Local systems

Local systems - summary

- Period of rapid change within local government, health boards and employer environment
 - At local government level Suffolk is part of the devolution priority programme (May 2026 elections) and also local government reform (2027 shadow authorities?)
 - Suffolk & North East Essex ICB and Norfolk & Waveney ICB are due to be merged by end of 2025
 - The VCFSE sector supports SNEE through a 145 member Assembly collaborating on key issues and progressing workstreams – it is important this link is not lost through merger and re-structuring
 - DWP, Jobcentre Plus and National Careers Services' are undergoing alignment, but very limited information available as yet
 - Employers are facing significant pressures with increased NI contributions, employment bill and fluctuating market conditions
- Substantial competing demands and uncertainty about future organisational boundaries will impact on the ability to align programmes and funding streams
- Significant opportunities for addressing some of the key barriers (skills and training, access to transport) will become the responsibility of the newly elected Mayor for the Strategic Authority (for Norfolk and Suffolk). This includes
 - skills and training (Adult Skills Budget)
 - Strategic transport (public transport investment)
- But remaining question on how Mayor will work in partnership with health authorities given organisational governance?
- Focus must be on working with large employers, not just businesses. Suffolk's anchor network, often public sector organisations (local authorities, health bodies, colleges), employ substantial numbers of staff and can lead by example in piloting specific initiatives and programmes
- It will be critical to align existing funding (Skills Boot Camps, SWAPs) alongside Connect to Work funding and potentially joint health funding, to deliver a suite of programmes for those who are economically inactive

Stakeholder comments – from workshops and questionnaires

- Recognition of the role of economic development and skills teams in working with providers and employers to promote work
- System has to join up health and employment support
- Significant scope to improve role in “finding and supporting” those who are economically inactive through greater engagement with communities and housing teams
- Opportunities for much greater engagement given Sizewell C and other infrastructure that is coming to Suffolk – lots of jobs, not just construction
- Rural nature of the county makes access to work difficult
- Transport is a real barrier to employment

Local authorities



- Need greater alignment between health and work pathways – clearly identify how a health offer can support getting back into employment
- Work locally, build on the anchors work
- Given we are a coastal area we only have a 180 degree employment market in some areas
- Do we know enough about women’s health issues and the impact these can have on career and employability?

Health partners



- Can work to break down the silos – address the wider issues that people are facing
- Work locally – go to where the need is
- Early engagement to prevent future inactivity – e.g. work with schools on attendance
- We need much more data on who the cohorts are (SEND, transitioning young people, mental health conditions) and this data must be shared
- How can we engage the justice system in this work? Need to work closely with those supporting ex-offenders and working to prevent offending
- Transport can be a significant barrier to employment
- What about early stage entrepreneurship – Vinted etc?
- Suffolk Volunteering Strategy has objectives to promote volunteering – which could provide a two-way mechanism for employers to give back to their communities and to encourage greater transitions from volunteering into paid employment

VCFSE



Stakeholder comments – from workshops and questionnaires

- More needs to be done to mitigate the stigma of living in social housing which can affect employment prospects
- Housing associations can work with the media and recruiters to tackle the stigma that comes from having a social rented address
- Recognising the engagement role that housing associations have with their tenants and using this as a channel to publicise initiatives and available support
- Housing associations must be considered a key partner and kept in the loop on new initiatives – need to be made aware of “what is out there”
- Anecdotal evidence suggests social housing tenants are twice as likely to be out of work as those in other tenures
- Many HAs offer targeted support to residents or those with barriers to support employment – e.g. Havebury have a support fund for transport costs, Orwell offers guaranteed interviews to disabled candidates who meet job criteria

Housing associations



- Recognise their role as providers of skills and training
- Good partnerships developing – e.g. West Suffolk College and BMSDC on digital poverty work, how can this be scaled up?
- But noted there is no overt recognition of the role they could play in preventing future economic inactivity – e.g. improving work aspiration through enhanced career development
- Schools based career advice is very limited, how can wider qualifications be promoted?
- College escalator model goes into primary schools – this is the stage where we need to be engaging
- Colleges are large employers and have extensive reach into the community

Colleges and training providers



- Focus needs to be on employers, not businesses, many large employers in Suffolk are anchor institutions in the system and can lead by example
- Need incentives for employers to support those who are economically inactive
- Promote work experience as a key stepping-stone
- Need greater buy-in from medium and large employers
- Diversity of employment and seasonal nature of work can create further barriers to employment

Employer engagement



Structural changes – current proposals

Devolution timeline

- Significant structural change proposed for Suffolk and Norfolk with introduction of a Strategic Authority (Mayoral Elections May 2026, for those on Devolution Priority Programme)
- The Strategic Authority will be responsible for:
 - Skill and training
 - Including responsibility for the Adult Skills Budget
 - Strategic transport
 - With responsibility for public transport
 - Economic development
 - Housing and regeneration (addressing housing affordability)
 - Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies, potential role)

Local Government Reorganisation

- DPP areas to submit final LGR proposals to Government (26 Sept 2025)
- Government to make decision on LGR proposals for DPP areas (Jan – April 2026)
- Likely that Shadow Unitary elections to be held May – December 2027
- New Unitary authorities go live – April 2028

Structural changes - continued

Health organisations

- Merger of Suffolk and North East Essex with Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (by end of December 2025)
- Transfer of North East Essex element to Essex ICB
- Significant uncertainty on job roles and alignment of work programmes as merger is progressing
- Where will the VCFSE Assembly sit in the new structure? This will be critical to ensuring engagement with the Local Infrastructure Organisation (Community Action Suffolk)

Job Centre Plus offices and National Careers Service

- Government announced £55m for merger of JCP and NCS, but little detail available as yet to substantiate proposals
- Pilot work initiated in West Yorkshire (Pathfinder) to offer a new Coaching Academy, careers events focused on local growth sectors and more personalised Jobcentre appointments

Skills England

- Newly established Executive Agency with a remit to identify skills gaps, improve training and ensure people have access to the skills they need for good jobs

Funding opportunities – stakeholders and system

Connect to Work (CtW) will be the primary funding stream for *Get Suffolk Working*

- Positive feature of CtW is funding for 3+2 years, to support c.3,000 individuals over the period
- Additional provision for training and upskilling through Skills Boot Camps and Sector Based Work Academies (SWAPs) will continue to be critical in providing support for those who are economically inactive
- Leadership funding provided to all ICSs through WorkWell could support the development and roll-out of the CtW programme at the statutory partner level

Will be necessary to link up with health organisations to bid for future Trailblazer / specific initiatives

- Widening Access Demonstrator bid submitted to secure funding for young people in deprived communities to access entry level roles in health and social care
- Individual Placement and Support (IPS) for severe mental illness – funding provided to all ICSs, need to coordinate on integrating personalised job support with mental health provision
- Employment advisor programme in MSK Pathways (further info to be released)
- MSK Physical Activity Hub programme – competitive process to bid for funding (will be focused in areas of deprivation)

Decisions to follow establishment of Strategic Authority on the allocation of the Adult Skills Budget to the Mayor

Additional opportunities to develop joint bids for future funding through statutory and VCFSE organisations

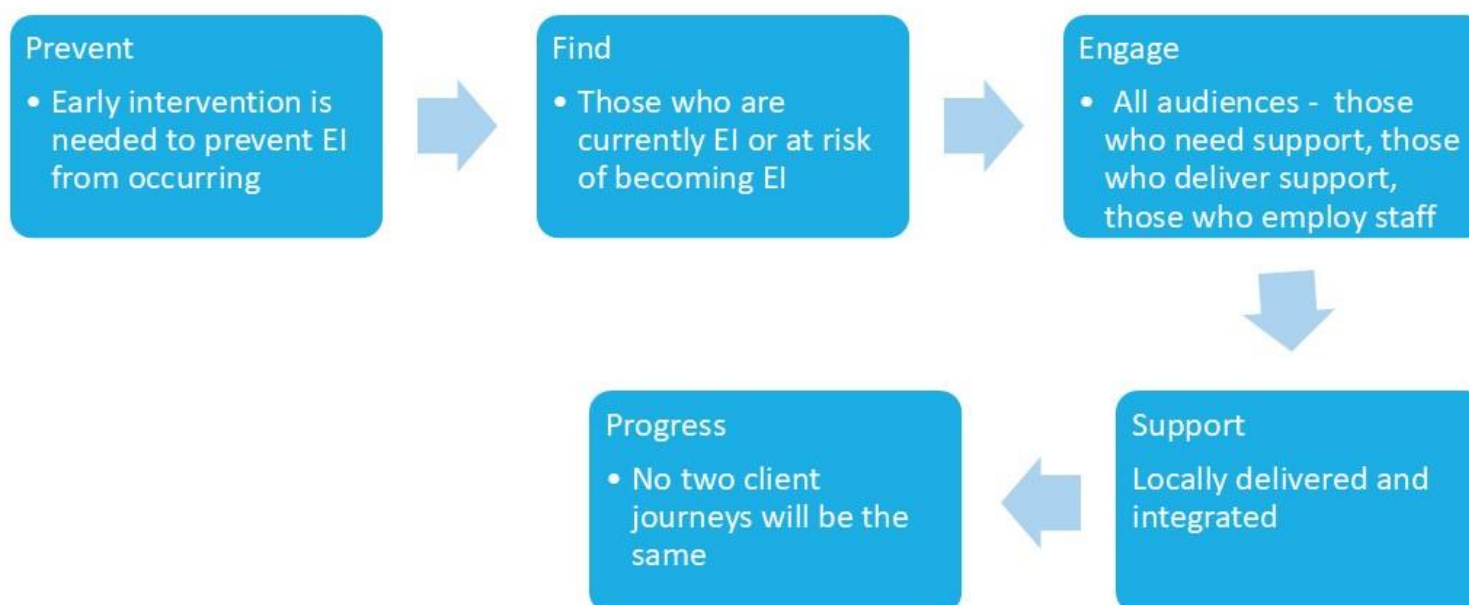
It is important to also note that various funds which would have been used to fund this type of support are unlikely to continue – e.g. UKSPF

Section 6 – Actions and longer term goals

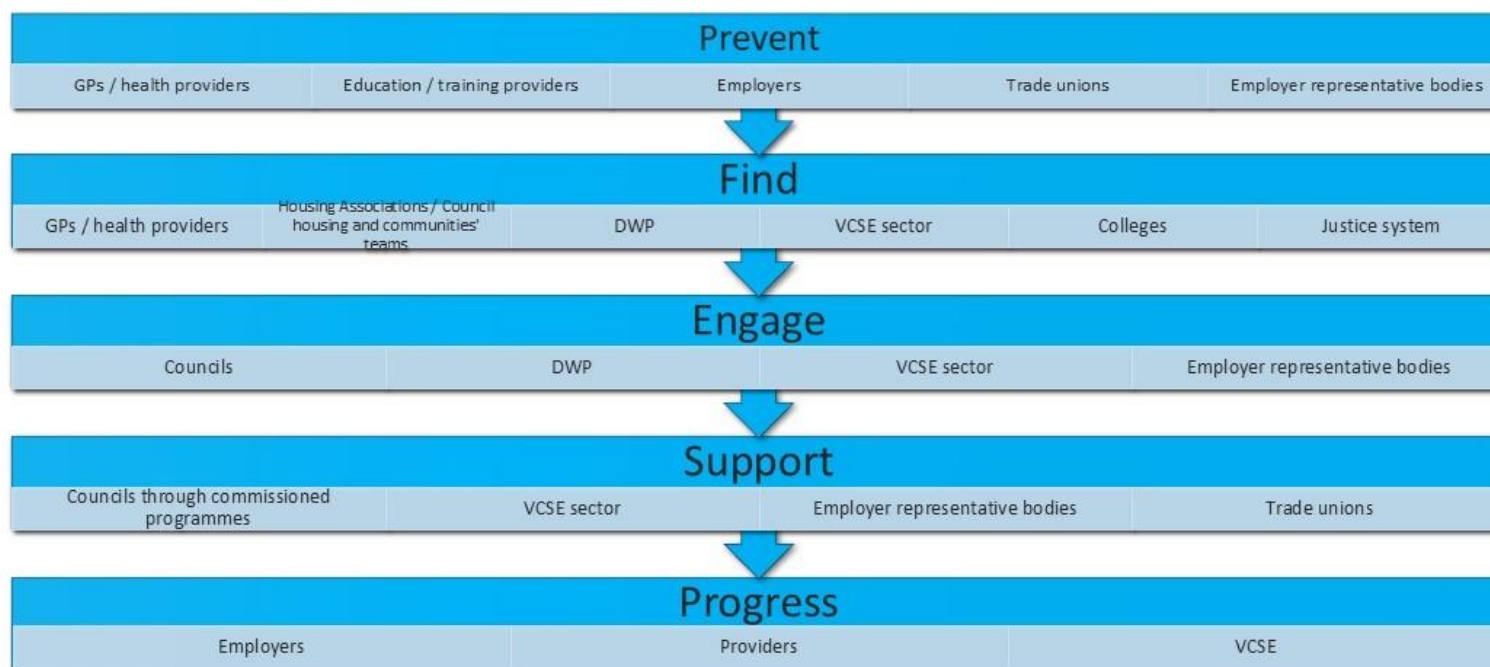
Actions and goals - summary

- 5 stage action plan has been drafted - each stage will require integrated approach across the system to ensure delivery. The role of stakeholders have been mapped to each of the 5 stages, with further detail on the key actions and indicators to be monitored / developed given.
- Short term actions are to:
 - Prevent
 - *Building on DWP work – develop a Suffolk specific high-level dashboard of risks to becoming economically inactive, coving both place and cohorts*
 - Find
 - *Establish a task and finish group to agree a single suite of baseline data to be shared and monitored for GSW, consider geography, time bands, sample size and consistency (new indicators)*
 - *Within SCC, CYP and ASC work on mapping transition journeys to be shared with GSW Project Team to learn lessons and identify good practice. Recent national research (see SCC Scrutiny Cttee Report July 2025) has highlighted better co-ordination and transition support should be a priority for central and local government*
 - Engage
 - *Establish a participant panel to ensure the voice of the potential beneficiaries is heard and reflected in GSW actions. Bi-monthly meetings (Oct 2025 – April 2026) as plan is further developed.*
 - *Continue the work initiated through the GSW Partnership (see next section) to promote the key principles underpinning GSW, develop a shared language, agreed priorities and constructively challenge where joint working can be further embedded across institutions.*
 - Support
 - *Maintain and expand the mapping that has been started and highlight gaps where new services are needed to inform social enterprises where to target their efforts. Work with Info-Link to consider improvements to search functionality and user engagement. Further discussion also needed on the JOY system to determine applicability.*
 - *Consider how to ensure greater coordination across the VCSE and local authority sector on funding applications for programmes to support the economically inactive. (indicator – number of joint applications submitted / funding awarded)*
 - Progress
 - *In collaboration with the delivery of the 2025-2028 Volunteer Strategy, monitor and report on non-traditional routes to employment, e.g. self-employment for disabled, volunteering – use case studies to demonstrate impact and support future funding bids for pilot work. (indicator – report on volunteering / work experience programmes)*
- More detail is needed from DWP on the national indicators to be monitored as there are challenges with data collection at geographic levels and for specific cohorts.

Get Suffolk Working – action plan



Stakeholder roles



Prevent

(for the next 5 slides those actions in italics are those prioritised for short term – within 3 months)

Building on DWP work – develop a Suffolk specific high-level dashboard of risks to becoming economically inactive, covering both place and cohorts

Work with employer representative groups and anchor institutions to promote employee retention, particularly for those newly entering / returning to the workplace, or considering leaving. Highlight the role of employers in supporting those in work with risk factors (health issues, caring needs etc) **AND** the support available to them

Review the approach and outcomes from skills escalator work and consider wider scale up across late stage primary and secondary schools

Identify success stories and disseminate

Indicators

- **overall rate of economic inactivity**
- **change in the reason for economic inactivity**
- **those on UC with a health conditionality reason preventing work**

Find

Recognise that the hardest to reach may not be in the benefits or employment support system – those without an address are often hidden

Compile a single, shared data set of those to be targeted via Get Suffolk Working

- *Establish a task and finish group to agree a single suite of baseline data to be shared and monitored for GSW, consider geography, time bands, sample size and consistency (**new indicators**)*

Work across partners to identify those who are “active” in one part of the system, but not joined up across skills, health and employability

- Work across council teams, e.g. housing, communities and skills teams to share data on those who are economically inactive and could benefit from support
- Develop approach to better engage GPs to identify those at risk of becoming economically inactive, through e.g. fit note data, with a particular focus on mental health (**indicator – monitor reason for fit note**)
- *Within SCC, CYP and ASC work on mapping transition journeys to be shared with GSW Project Team to learn lessons and identify good practice. Recent national research (see SCC Scrutiny Cttee Report July 2025) has highlighted better co-ordination and transition support should be a priority for central and local government.*

Engage

Different methods of engagement will be needed for different groups

Establish a participant panel to ensure the voice of the potential beneficiaries is heard and reflected in GSW actions. Bi-monthly meetings (Oct 2025 – April 2026) as plan is further developed.

Deliver an awareness campaign: ensure stakeholders know what they can do to support **and** what they can expect of partners – take the campaign out to GPs, health practitioners, housing associations, VCSE.

Continue the work initiated through the GSW Partnership (see next section) to promote the key principles underpinning GSW, develop a shared language, agreed priorities and constructively challenge where joint working can be further embedded across institutions.

Use public sector anchor institutions to lead by example and incentivise other large employers to engage. Consider the development of a MOU between Suffolk anchor institutions and DWP to promote appropriate job opportunities through JCP.

Support

Maintain and expand the mapping that has been started and highlight gaps where new services are needed to inform social enterprises where to target their efforts. Work with Info-Link to consider improvements to search functionality and user engagement. Further discussion also needed on the JOY system to determine applicability.

*Consider how to ensure greater coordination across the VCSE and local authority sector on funding applications for programmes to support the economically inactive. **(indicator – number of joint applications submitted / funding awarded)***

Work with Connect to Work providers to deliver local, place-based support to those who need it through a single door approach – longer term goal of embedding joint case management across council and health services

Use a sector-based approach, informed by local employers, to scale up existing employability programmes (e.g. visitor economy via VENI, construction sector via SCC infrastructure social value ask) and monitor results

Progress

Consolidate the work that has started at officer and Board level through GSW to maintain momentum and improve accountability and demonstrate impact from GSW. Publicise best practice and invite constructive challenge to the participant journey.

*In collaboration with the delivery of the 2025-2028 Volunteer Strategy, monitor and report on non-traditional routes to employment, e.g. self-employment for disabled, volunteering – use case studies to demonstrate impact and support future funding bids for pilot work. **(indicator – report on volunteering / work experience programmes)***

Monitor those who have found employment and get them to engage with the participant panel to break down perceptions – develop a network of community champions who can lead on place based promotional work.

Work with recruitment consultants and HR firms to improve inclusive recruitment practices and provide feedback on what works and what does not

National indicators to be monitored (from DWP) for the whole plan

Indicator	Changes / challenges	Current situation	Going forward
Employment rate	Age band changing to 18-66, this will make trend analysis more challenging Employment rate is not the same as economically active	Suffolk tracks EoE quite closely / Rate is above that for England as a whole Much more significant dip in Suffolk due to covid then in the East or England – shows seasonality and sector dominance	Can be tracked at Suffolk level, will need to watch age-band changes
Real earnings – non-retired households	PH do not have a source for this – best match is disposable income data, but not split retired / non-retired		Likely to require further advice from Gov't on what will be monitored
Regional variation in employment rates		Suffolk are currently in top-third 63/205.	Can be tracked at Suffolk level.
Health related economic inactivity rate	APS data gives a snapshot in time and can distort the picture depending on sample	Suffolk currently at 28.6%	More granular detail needed on health conditions and co-barriers to work
Disability employment gap	Watch percentage change along with absolute volume of disability within population	c.45% of all disabled are EI in Suffolk / Breakdown available by EA categories	Continue to monitor
% of 18-24 NEET with increase in 16-21 in Edu or job with training	Age group data not currently available at LA level. Sub-regional data available for 16-17	Place based research needed to map NEETs across the county and address the barriers they face	Likely to require further advice from Gov't on what will be monitored
Employment gaps among parents 18-66	Important to review as poverty is lower for children in working families	Further research is needed at a Suffolk level – anecdotal evidence suggests pockets of intergenerational worklessness is a key issue	Parents to be considered further in GSW
Female employment rate		Suffolk tracks EoE since April 2014 except 2 major dips – Apr 20 – Mar 21 (covid) and Jul 23 – Jun 24 (?) / Both Suffolk and EoE generally above England	Key in Suffolk given population change and proportion of women working

Local indicators from aligned plans and strategies

Activity or indicator	Plan specific target	Relationship to GSW / alignment of indicators
Local Skills & Improvement Plan		
Bite sized courses	SNC delivery	Potential to grow these courses and expand to EI cohorts?
Mapping skills provision		Link with GSW mapping to ensure all relevant courses are captured
Connect to Work		
Out of work participants achieving 1 st year earnings	50% of participants	Match to target cohorts for GSW
Out of work participants achieving lower threshold earnings	40%	
Out of work participants – higher threshold earnings	29%	
In work participants achieve an outcome	80%	
Adult Social Work		
Support those who are economically inactive in the care system into work	5%	
Suffolk Economic Strategy		
Expand talent pool by growing economically active population	35,000 add'l by 2045	Expansion of total population that is economically active to 88%
More people qualified to Level 3+	45,000 add'l by 2045	Currently 63.6% of working-age population, this would expand to 74% of working-age population with Level 3+

Section 7 - Governance

Governance - Summary

Development and implementation of Get Suffolk Working is built on a track record of partnership working across the region

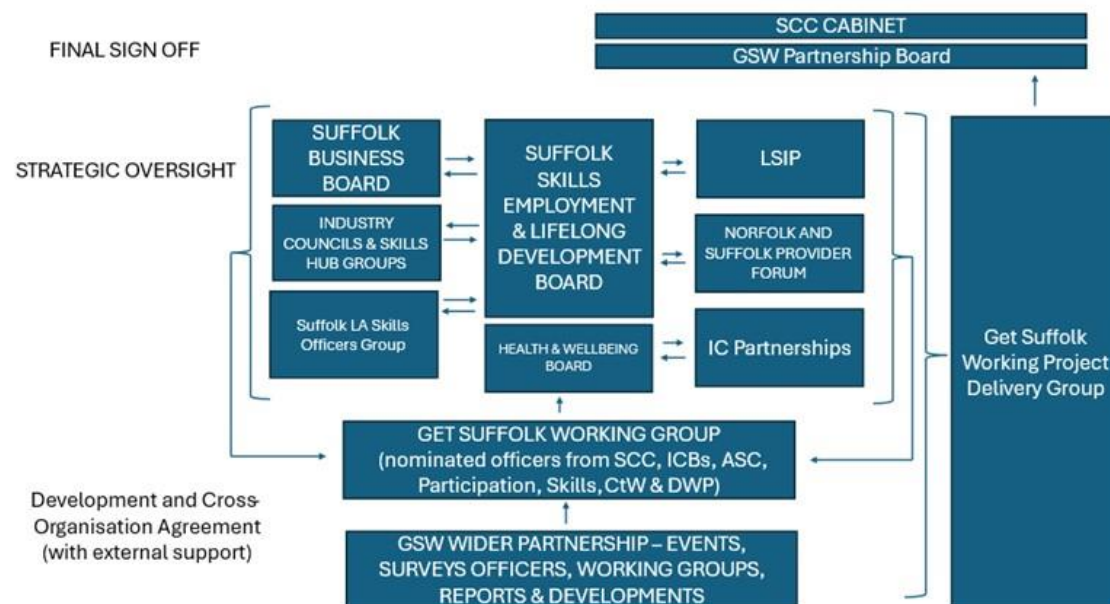
Connect to Work plan will underpin delivery

Strategic governance is embedded in existing system through Suffolk County Cabinet, Suffolk Business Board and Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board

- Newly established Skills, Employment and Lifelong Development Advisory Board (SELDAB), reporting to the Suffolk Business Board, will provide constructive challenge and strategic advice to those delivering Get Suffolk Working

The operational Get Suffolk Working partnership to continue, focusing on the on-going development of the plan

Governance structure for Get Suffolk Working



Governance groups

Accountable body – Suffolk County Council

- Suffolk County Council Cabinet to sign off initial Get Suffolk Working plan (Sept 2025)
- Get Suffolk Working – Project Delivery Group (senior officers from skills, ICBs, DWP drafting plan)

Strategic oversight and alignment of priorities

- Suffolk Skills, Employment and Lifelong Development Advisory Board (SSELDAB) – advisory board reporting to the Suffolk Business Board to provide strategic, coordinated leadership on all skills and employability issues across Suffolk. Meets 3x per annum and will receive updates on Get Suffolk Working and provide constructive challenge
- Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB) – statutory board with the role of improving wellbeing outcomes for Suffolk and commissioning integrated provision across health, public health and social care. Meets bi-monthly and will receive regular updates on Get Suffolk Working

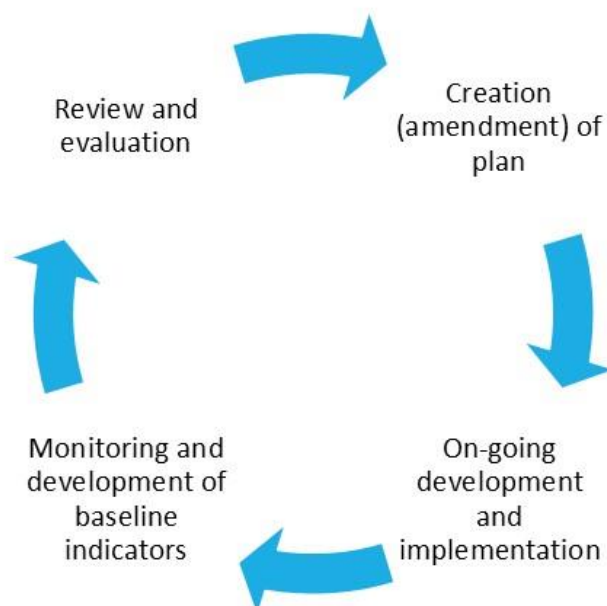
Get Suffolk Working – Partnership Board (Council, DWP, Health)

- Signatories to the Get Suffolk Working plan
- Supported by the Get Suffolk Working Project Delivery Group (officer group that meets three weekly to develop, amend and implement the local plan) – this group will continue to meet throughout 2025 / 2026. Their role will be expanded to include monitoring implementation (particularly via the Connect to Work team), disseminating best practice and providing officer leadership for GSW.

Get Suffolk Working – Partnerships

- Partnership Working Group – nominated officers across key public sector stakeholders engaged on a regular basis to provide a steer on the further development of Get Suffolk Working and ensure actions and recommendations are “sense-checked” and can be embedded into the local system
- Wider Partnership – an online network across stakeholders (100+ organisations) to raise awareness of GSW and secure input as needed. Engagement on a c.bi-monthly basis via a newsletter that both provides information and seeks views

Planning cycle



- Plan creation & sign-off
 - Led by SCC, DWP, ICB officers with oversight by Partnership Board and sign-off by SCC
 - Initial sign-off by September 2025 and submission to DWP
- Development and Implementation
 - Initial period of implementation Sept 2025 – May 2026
 - On-going development of plan (Challenges 2-6) Oct 2025 – Mar 2026
- Monitoring
 - Monthly meetings of the Project Delivery Group
 - 3x p.a. meetings of SSELDA to receive updates and provide constructive challenge
- Review and evaluation
 - April 2026 to feed into development of joint plan for new Strategic Authority

Sources / References

Primary research

April 2025 – Notes from SCC led workshop on Get Suffolk Working

June 2025 – Online survey of Suffolk based DWP work coaches (136 responses) – OPR led – separate report available

June 2025 – 3x workshops held with DWP customers, Haverhill, Sudbury and Lowestoft – OPR led – separate report available

June 2025 – Suffolk Chamber People and Skills workshop – SCC attendance, notes provided to OPR

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 House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8536/economic-inactivity-welfare-and-longterm-sickness/>
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 Public Health Data Set: Get Suffolk Working data pack (July 2025), available from SCC Skills
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 Scope – Understanding the challenges of disabled jobseekers <https://business.scope.org.uk/understanding-the-challenges-of-disabled-jobseekers/>
 Sizewell C: <https://cheddar-staging.mywebsitepreview.co.uk/news-views/250m-suffolk-boost/>
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 Suffolk Observatory: <https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/>
 Suffolk Poverty Strategy: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/2022-07-18-tackling-poverty-strategy-2022.pdf>
 Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Strategy <https://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/asset-library/Health-and-Wellbeing-Strategy-22-27.pdf>.
 Vanner, Robin, *Understanding Society – Women Work and Health*, Analysis and recommendations from a roundtable discussion, University of Essex (available from SNEE)

Annex K – Skills Demand and Supply by Sector (Norfolk and Suffolk)

Across Norfolk and Suffolk there is a need to upskill the workforce and create a pathway to Level 4+ qualifications. Only 43% of the economically active Norfolk and Suffolk population hold a Level 4+ qualification, relative to the national average of 54% and we are aware that the requirement for higher level skills is increasing. This is particularly imperative for Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, as only 36% of Higher Education (HE) qualifiers were in STEM subjects relative to the national average of 41%. The outlined Skills Bootcamp categories will help support this pathway.

Please note that where Lightcast tables quote historic achievement and forecasted annual openings these are correct at the time of accessing the information (June 2025)

Digital Sector

There is a continued increase in demand for technical and digital skills across the Norfolk and Suffolk economy. The volume of unique job postings in Norfolk & Suffolk for digital occupations has risen over the last 12 months, increasing from 645 in April 2024 to 681 in March 2025 (a 6% increase).

The demand-supply variance table shows that some of these vacancies are forecast to be in areas which are currently underrepresented locally in FE and apprenticeships. The table displays evidence of a need for increased provision in the following digital core bootcamp subject areas; DevOps, Games, Software Development & Support; as well as Computer Engineering spanning across the Cloud, Cyber, Network, Software Engineering and Web subject areas as well. Data Analysis skills requirements in the Agricultural sector was highlighted in the recent Local Skills Improvement Plan and an area of focus for the Eastern Space Cluster group supporting the Agri-Food Industry.

SSA 2 Program	Program	FE & Apprenticeship Achievements (2022)	Forecasted Openings (2023/24)	Annual Demand-Supply Variance
ICT Practitioners	IT/Computing	94	1,441	1,347
	ICT Systems Support	5	1272	1,267
	Information Systems	1	602	601
	ICT Systems Installation & Maintenance	0	595	595
	Game Development	0	567	567
	Software Development	0	424	424
	Communications	0	333	333
Engineering	Computer Engineering	0	276	276
	ICT Practitioners n.e.c.	126	228	102
ICT Practitioners	Hardware Development	0	98	98

Technical

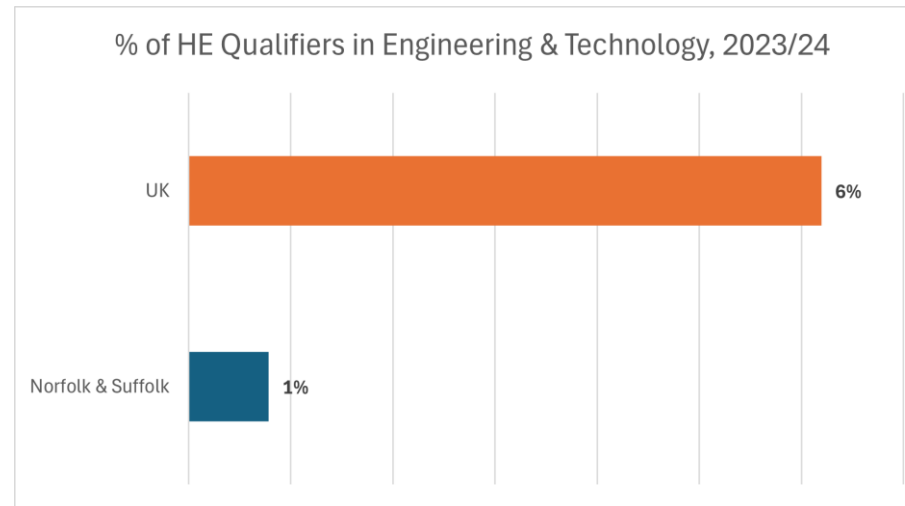
Norfolk and Suffolk have a strong a growing Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector, with national expertise in automotive, civil aviation, space, composites, and pharmaceuticals. The New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (NAAME) network, which consists of over 200 businesses, have identified the need to enhance skills in areas such as engineering design and project management, welding, electrical and electronics, fabrication and health and safety. The network has identified the need for sustainable HR management, lean and digitisation recognising it will deliver innovation, productivity and support the transition to net zero.

Local research has shown a serious current shortage of technical-skilled staff and significant gaps in the technical skills of the existing workforce. It highlights the compelling need for additional numbers of technically skilled people and an imperative to expand technical training by at least 10% in the next five years.

The volume of unique job postings in Norfolk & Suffolk for engineering-related occupations has risen rapidly over the last 12 months, increasing from 4,795 in April 2024 to 5,201 in March 2025 (an 8% increase).

Engineering-Related Occupations is defined as: Manufacturing & Production, Transportation, Maintenance, Repair & Installation and Engineering

Despite the substantial anticipated future demand for engineering-related skills across Norfolk & Suffolk, the volume of Engineering & Technology higher education qualifiers from local providers currently falls far short of the national average. As a result, one of the ambitions for the technical core bootcamps is to support the pathway into Level 4+ qualifications.



Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

The demand-supply variance table shows that some of these vacancies are forecasted to be in areas which are currently underrepresented locally in further education and apprenticeships. There is clear evidence of a need for increased provision across all the technical core bootcamp subject areas.

SSA 2 Program	Program	FE & Apprenticeship Achievements (2022)	Forecasted Annual Openings (2023/24)	Demand-Supply Variance
Engineering	Manufacturing Technologies	48	4,417	4,369
	Transportation Operations & Maintenance	441	3,970	3,529
	Engineering (General)	291	1,162	871
	Aerospace Engineering	0	622	622
	Industrial Engineering	0	517	517
	Production & Manufacturing Engineering	130	626	496
	Mining Engineering	0	485	485
	Engineering Technology	92	486	394

Materials Engineering	0	361	361
Marine Engineering	2	341	339
Engineering n.e.c.	13	352	339
Nuclear Engineering	0	286	286
Computer Engineering	0	276	276
Civil Engineering	4	241	237
Mechanical Engineering	14	245	231
Forging	0	107	107
Welding	24	118	94
Energy & Water	0	68	68
Renewable Energy	0	34	34

Demand-Supply Variance (Lightcast) – Manufacturing Technologies, Transportation Operations & Maintenance, and Engineering – Norfolk & Suffolk

Construction

The Norfolk and Suffolk construction sector is a major strength of the region. It is large and diverse, with emerging specialisation in Passivhaus and sustainable design.

- 140,813 employed in CSN occupations in 2024 (17% above national average)
- 41,354 directly employed in the sector (15% above national average)
- Average wage of £41k per job locally in Construction, above the £32k local average across all industries.

As a result, there is significant existing demand for construction-related skills across Norfolk & Suffolk, with this demand increasing further over the last 12 months, with the volume of unique job postings in Norfolk & Suffolk for construction occupations increasing from 5,905 in April 2024 to 6,178 in March 2025 (5% increase). The ability to fill these vacancies is compounded by a 25% decrease of FE and Apprenticeship Achievements in construction between 2021 and 2022.

Furthermore, as outlined by the Technical Skills Legacy Report commissioned by the Suffolk Growth Programme Board and Norfolk County Council, demand for these particular skills sets will remain high over the next 15 years due to the volume of local nationally significant infrastructure projects due to take place. Because of this, there is evidence of a need for increased construction-related provision. As shown in the demand-supply variance table, some of these vacancies are forecasted to be in areas which are currently underrepresented locally in further education and apprenticeships.

SSA 2 Program	Program	FE & Apprenticeship Achievements (2022)	Forecasted Annual Openings (2023/24)	Demand-Supply Variance
Building & Construction	Construction	224	3,185	2,961
	Built Environment	0	1,329	1,329
	Construction Equipment Operation	3	989	986
	Insulation & Building Treatments	0	676	676
	Electrical and Electronic Technology	218	570	352
	HVAC & Refrigeration	0	233	233
	Carpentry	243	459	216
	CCN1 (Gas Safety)	15	215	200
	Window and Door Installation	0	188	188
	Stone Masonry	0	123	123
	Surveying	9	119	110
	Site Management	11	117	106
	Quantity Surveying	0	103	103
	Roofing	1	88	87
	Plastering	10	95	85
	Floorcovering Occupations	1	65	64
	Plumbing	166	215	49

Demand-Supply Variance (Lightcast) – Construction, Planning, and the Built Environment – Norfolk & Suffolk

Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV)

Home to the UK's largest container port at Felixstowe and nationally significant ports for the energy and agri-food sectors, Norfolk and Suffolk has a strong logistics cluster. With significant opportunities through Freeport East, A14 corridor emerging as a major location for smart logistics hubs and Port expansion and innovation plans.

The Norfolk & Suffolk logistics sector is a major strength of the region:

- 52,350 employed in Transport & Storage-related occupations (10% above national average)

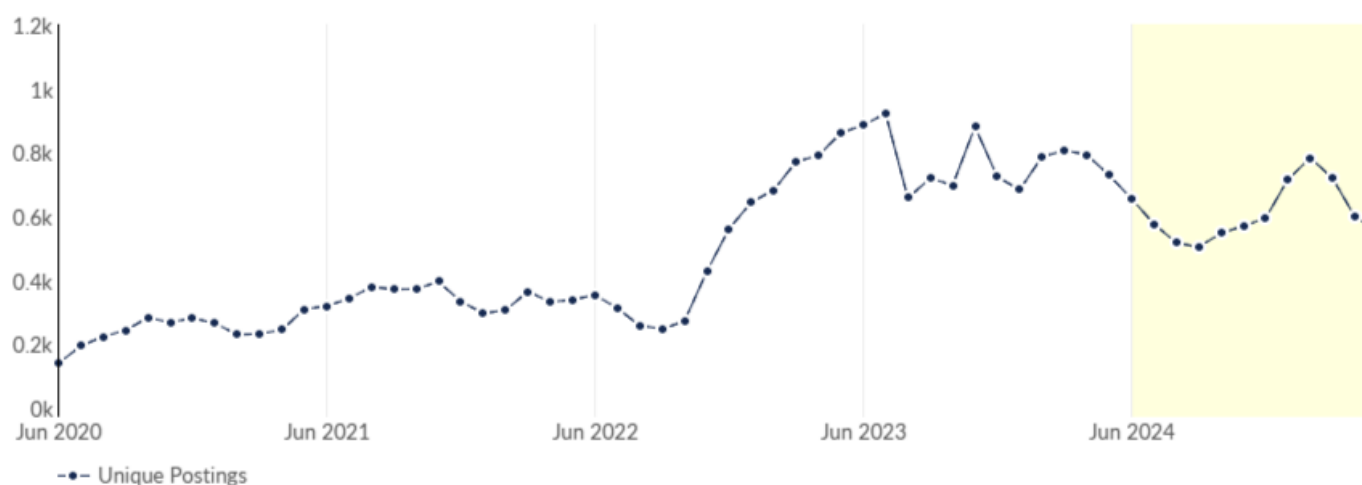
- 42,037 directly employed in the sector (15% above the national average).
- Sector employment increased by 4% locally in the past year, relative to 1% nationally
- Average wage of £39.5k per job locally, in comparison to £39.0k nationally

There has been a significant increase in transportation job postings over the last 12 months, increasing from 1,142 in April 2024 to 1,381 in March 2025 (a 21% increase). It is also worth highlighting that Suffolk is set to be the location for the UK's next major nuclear power plant project at Sizewell C – which will add even greater demand to this sector in terms of both labour and skills.

Early Years Careers

Early discussions with early years providers have indicated a need to provide support to increase skills in their workforce. The chart below shows the unique job postings trend for early years related roles. There has been a sharp increase in demand for these roles during the 2022/23 academic year, rising from 272 job postings in October 2022 to 923 job postings in July 2023. Over the 2023/34 and 2024/25 academic years, job postings have been relatively consistent at around 650 unique monthly job postings.

Unique Postings Trend



Unique Job Postings Trend (Lightcast) – Norfolk & Suffolk – Early Years

It is forecasted that, across 2023 and 2024, there will be 2,646 annual openings in paediatrics, and 1,759 in early years education. However, there were no recorded achievements in either sector subject area in 2022, highlighting the need to increase the supply of skills and labour across these areas.

Creative Industries

Norfolk and Suffolk have a strong and diverse creative industries sector, with concentrations around Norwich and Ipswich, with Norwich ranked 14th in the UK's creative clusters. It is one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK and covers a wide range of exciting industries from fine art to computer games.

5.7% of the UK's games developers reside in the area with plans to increase this to 10% through an Inward Investment bid via Dept of Business and Trade. Companies such as Sketchbook Games and Fairer Games are recruiting in this area.

The table below indicates that there are gaps between the local demand for roles with the creative industries and the supply of local further education and apprenticeship graduates with the relevant skills. For example, across 2023 and 2024, there were 4,530 forecasted annual openings in Arts, Media and Publishing related subject areas, however there were only 2,738 recorded achievements in those sector subject areas in 2022. This suggests that there are likely to be difficulties with filling these forecasted openings due to there not being the necessary skills and labour pipeline.

SSA 2 Program	Program	Achievements (2022)	Forecasted Annual Openings (2023/24)	Demand- Supply Variance
Arts, Media & Publishing	Publishing & Information Services	0	802	802
	Crafts, Creative Arts & Design	1,314	2,030	716
	Media & Communication	789	1,234	445

Demand-Supply Variance (Lightcast) – Early Years – Norfolk & Suffolk

Create East is a business scale up initiative funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. It provides creative industries business support through the Create Growth Programme, designed to create more jobs and drive economic growth. The development of skills within this business is key to their growth. Following a survey with some of these businesses, key areas of skills needs include - Digital Marketing/Branding and Creative leadership.

Leadership and Management

The Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy identifies the importance of prioritising leadership support for our entrepreneurs, SMEs and those in new high-growth businesses. Leadership and management fundamentally underpins three of the area's major strategic objectives and challenges – the adaption to digitisation and automation, building a greener and more sustainable economy, enhancing overall levels of productivity. If we are to attain any or all of these key objectives, high levels of leadership and management capability will be necessary. Develop high quality, innovative business leaders across all our sectors from start-ups to established companies will be key to our success.

The link between productivity improvement and developments in leadership and management training are well evidenced by a plethora of third-party research, as expressed by prominent bodies such as the CBI⁸², Chambers of Commerce, CIPD etc. Improving and investing in leadership and management is rendered all the more important for Norfolk and Suffolk in light of the analysis in our cross-cutting skills report. This report highlighted the extent to which certain segments of our local economy are led and managed by a cohort of employees set to retire imminently – and effect which has been brought into sharper focus recently by the increased trend in over 50s withdrawing from the full-time workforce - post pandemic.

Furthermore, local job postings data shows that leadership and management are two of the most in-demand skills in the Norfolk & Suffolk economy. In the last 12 months, management skills were in 17% (29,544 unique job postings) and leadership skills were in 7% (12,859 unique job postings) of total job postings across Norfolk and Suffolk⁸³.

Health and Social Care

Growth in Health and Social Care is essential if the sector is to be able to respond to an ever-increasing demand for its services. The sector accounts for approximately 110,149 jobs across Norfolk and Suffolk (6% of above the national average), some 15% of total employment, making it the largest sector by employment in this region.

⁸² CBI Feb 2022 – Invest in Leadership and management capability [How investing in leadership and management can boost attraction, retention and productivity | CBI](#)

⁸³ *Lightcast Top Common Skills analysis April 2024 – March 2025*

National data indicates that across adult social care in Norfolk and Suffolk 42% of the workforce have no qualifications compared to a national figure for the sector of 32%. The data also indicates that the proportion of qualified staff in Norfolk and Suffolk for levels 2, 3 and 4 and above is consistently 5 % lower than the national figure.

This sector experiences high staff turnover, for Norfolk and Suffolk this fluctuates at about 25%, with a vacancy rate of just over 4%. Conversations with DSHSC noted the continued demand for Leadership and Management together with courses on Learning Disabilities.

Green Skills

Local demand for green skills is growing rapidly, with evidence showing a substantial rise in demand for green jobs post-pandemic. As a result of businesses adjusting for a net zero economy, the volume of green job postings has increased significantly in recent months. The table below highlights some of the green skills that are in particularly high demand locally.

Green Skill	Vacancies	Location Quotient
Environment Health and Safety	1,696	0.96
Occupational Safety and Health	961	1.15
Waste Management	485	0.84
Environmental Laws	371	1.47
Safety Culture	331	1.10
Environmental Resource Management	270	1.42
High Voltage	267	1.07
ISO 14000 Series	266	0.91
Renewable Energy	250	0.70
Environmental Health	219	1.36
Planning Permission	218	0.79
Ecology	212	1.31
Water Treatment	187	0.63
Environmental Science	180	0.93
Geotechnical Engineering	173	1.07

Catering and Hospitality/Visitor Economy

In the Catering and Hospitality sector, there is substantial unmet demand. Although there were 171 training achievements in hospitality and catering not elsewhere classified in 2022, there are an estimated 3,687 annual job openings in 2023/24, leaving a shortfall of over 3,500. Similar gaps appear across other specialisms such as food and beverage services, cookery and catering, tourism and hospitality, and accommodation services. In many of these areas, there were either no recorded training achievements or only a small number, despite hundreds or even thousands of projected openings, underlining a shortage of skills in the visitor economy.

SSA 2 Program	Program	Achievements (2022)	Forecasted Annual Openings (2023/24)	Demand- Supply Variance
Hospitality & Catering	Hospitality & Catering n.e.c.	171	3,687	3,516
	Food & Beverage Services	59	2,199	2,140
	Portering	0	946	946
	Cookery & Catering	115	960	845
	Casino & Gambling Operations	0	745	745
	Tourism & Hospitality	37	741	704
	Restaurant & Catering Management	0	687	687
	Accommodation Services	0	592	592
	Licensed Premises & Bar Services	0	395	395
	Accommodation Management	0	307	307

Business Administration

The business administration sector shows even more significant shortfalls in absolute terms, despite higher levels of training provision. In business management alone, 477 individuals achieved relevant qualifications in 2022, but demand for this skillset stands at over 9,700 openings annually, resulting in a gap of over 9,000. Similarly, in marketing and sales, administration, and accounting and finance, there are thousands more vacancies than there are trained

individuals entering the labour market. This demonstrates a scale and relevance gap, where existing provision may not be sufficient in quantity or aligned with the evolving nature of business needs.

SSA 2 Program	Program	Achievements (2022)	Forecasted Openings (2023/24)	Annual Demand-Supply Variance
	Business Management	477	9,751	9,274
	Marketing & Sales	64	6,212	6,148
	Administration	155	6,104	5,949
	Accounting & Finance	226	3,895	3,669

Agriculture/Land management

In agriculture and land management, the data reveals considerable demand across both traditional and emerging roles. Agriculture and horticulture, in particular, show shortages of 1,735 and 1,382 respectively. Although animal care and veterinary science had 375 achievements, there remains a gap of 420 job openings. Environmental science also shows a smaller but notable mismatch. This points to an opportunity to support rural economies and the green transition by upskilling workers in areas such as sustainable land use, agri-tech, and environmental monitoring.

SSA 2 Program	Program	Achievements (2022)	Forecasted Openings (2023/24)	Annual Demand-Supply Variance
	Agriculture	182	1,917	1,735
	Horticulture & Forestry	117	1,499	1,382
	Animal Care & Veterinary Science	375	795	420
	Environmental Science	44	98	54

Marine sector

Finally, the marine sector faces a critical lack of training provision, with little to no recorded achievements across the four programme areas below. Marine engineering has a forecasted demand of 341 roles with only two individuals achieving relevant qualifications. Marine vessel maintenance, operations, and general maritime skills all show zero completions against forecasted openings, highlighting a total absence of training pipelines. This is particularly concerning given the strategic importance of maritime industries to coastal economies and trade infrastructure.

SSA 2 Program	Program	Achievements (2022)	Forecasted Annual Openings (2023/24)	Demand- Supply Variance
Engineering	Marine Engineering	2	341	339
Transportation Operations & Maintenance	Marine Vessel Maintenance & Repair	0	139	139
Travel & Tourism	Maritime Skills	0	54	54
Transportation Operations & Maintenance	Marine Vessel Operations	0	16	16

Annex L – Strengths and Challenges by Local Authority Area

West Suffolk District Council

Challenges:

1. **Skills Gap/Retention:** There's a major challenge in the mismatch between the skills of the local workforce and the demands in the area, especially in areas like technology, digital skills, and advanced manufacturing. We find that local businesses often struggle to find employees with the specific expertise they need, which can hinder growth.
2. **Limited Public Transport:** While major links are a strength for West Suffolk, the lack of extensive and efficient public transport especially in rural areas like Brandon and Mildenhall can be a barrier for economic activity. This makes it difficult for people without cars to access job opportunities or for businesses to attract a wider pool of candidates (this issue can also contribute to traffic congestion).
3. **Aging population:** Our aging population presents a challenge to the future workforce.
4. **Housing Affordability:** The cost of housing in West Suffolk, while less than in major cities, can be a barrier for younger workers and families. Higher property prices make it difficult to attract and retain talent in key sectors (especially in areas like Bury St Edmunds), particularly entry-level positions.
5. **Seasonal Employment:** Sectors like Agriculture and tourism are subject to seasonal fluctuations which can lead to inconsistent employment where works have irregular hours and income. While the tourism and agriculture sectors are vital, the seasonal aspect can create economic instability for a portion of the workforce and limit long-term investment in related jobs.

Strengths:

1. **Logistics & transport links:** We are located close to major road networks, including the A14, which connects the region to the Port of Felixstowe and the wider national road system, making West Suffolk a crucial spot for logistics, warehousing, and distribution which has resulted in a high level of logistics companies and business parks who have set up here to leverage the transport links.
2. **Diverse Businesses:** The area does not rely on a single industry, we have strong foundation in sectors like food production, agriculture, tourism etc. this helps our local economy withstand changing times.
3. **Tourism Economy:** Attractions like the Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds Cathedral, and historical market town makes West Suffolk a thriving tourism area. The high level of tourism means extra revenue for the hospitality and retail industry as well as other businesses, creating jobs and encouraging investment in cultural and leisure facilities.
4. **SMEs:** Our region has a high density of small and medium-sized enterprises. Support from organisations and us the Council encourages start-ups and small business growth which is evident in the number of independent shops and services that contribute to our economy like Bury St Edmunds and Newmarket.

East Suffolk District Council

Challenges:

1. **Skills Gap/Retention:** There are challenges around the skills available in East Suffolk, and the skills demands of the area. Focus can be given to the major infrastructure projects which lie predominantly within the East Suffolk boundaries, i.e. Sizewell C, Sea link etc; which require general and specialised skills in construction, renewable energy, project management and others. Current trends indicate a talent drain from local business into the higher paying large-scale projects, with significant impact on economic growth diversity.
2. **Limited Public Transport:** East Suffolk's main A road is the A12. Currently undergoing various enhancements as part of the Sizewell C project delivery, it is the only major route which traverses the region from top to bottom. Parts of the A14 cut through the bottom of East Suffolk providing access to the ports of Ipswich and Felixstowe. Outside of these two major roads, all other transport must move via smaller A and B roads, which make reliance on these two major roads heavy, and congestion and accidents inevitable. The rain infrastructure is greater than in other parts of Suffolk, but travel times between two of the major towns, of Ipswich and Lowestoft via train travel is still over an hour. This makes it difficult for people without cars to access job opportunities or for businesses to attract a wider pool of candidates.
3. **Aging population and cultural challenges:** As in all areas our aging population presents a challenge to the future workforce. In addition, in some areas (i.e. Lowestoft) a culture of economic inactivity passed down through generations provides a different challenge to the workforce.
4. **Housing Affordability:** Whilst much more affordable in the north of the region than some areas of Suffolk, pockets of localised wealthy areas i.e. Woodbridge/Beccles can lead to poverty pockets which are hidden due to the rurality of the area. In addition, a confluence of second homeowners in various areas (Southwold, Aldeburgh) exacerbate availability of the already limited housing stock, which is affordable, so that young people have no choice but to move out of area, taking skills and talent with them.
5. **Seasonal Employment:** Tourism is a large employer in East Suffolk and is subject to seasonal fluctuations. This can lead to inconsistent employment with an over reliance on zero hours contracts. In turn this can create economic instability, and trends indicate that significant churn is experienced in this sector, with a detrimental effect on the ability for business to thrive in the wider tourist offer.

Strengths:

1. **Logistics & transport links:** East Suffolk has the Port of Felixstowe within its boundaries, and access to the smaller ports of Ipswich and Lowestoft, all of which provide good connection to Europe. Internally the A12 and A14 roads provide connections to the North of East Anglia, and beyond, and to the South, connections into London, and the West. In addition, the Freeport investments, and NSIPs investment of Sizewell C and Sea Link, have brought jobs, and opportunity to the area.
2. **Diverse Businesses:** East Suffolk has a thriving tourist industry, logistics, and agricultural base. It is also a region of diverse mainly small to medium businesses, which allows the region to flex in times of economic difficulty. Investment in the tourism and cultural economy in both Lowestoft and Felixstowe are helping to underpin the economic benefit of this sector, in addition to the development of the Tourism Strategy. Significant infrastructure projects such as Sizewell C, are bringing skills development into the area, and opening up job opportunities.

SMEs: The region has a high density of small and medium-sized enterprises. We have several programmes running to support start-ups, and business growth.

Babergh District Council

Babergh's strengths are in its historic market towns like Sudbury and Hadleigh for tourism and culture, alongside industrial areas and a high proportion of small businesses. Its residents report high levels of satisfaction with their local area and demonstrate strong life satisfaction and well-being. It has key companies such as GCB Cocoa, Tesco, Aspall, Konings (Copella) and Siemens.

- Higher business deaths than births – so reducing number of businesses over time - 355 Business births (IDBR 2022) 375 Business deaths (IDBR 2022)
- Lower than average earnings - median residents' earnings £35,188 (NOMIS 2024) compared to £39,702 East average
- 30.6% of residents have obtained NVQ4+ qualifications (NOMIS 2024)

Mid Suffolk District Council

Mid Suffolk's economic strengths lie in its strong logistics sector, particularly with its proximity to Freeport East and Gateway 14 as well as its thriving agri-food and drink sector. The district also has potential in areas like life sciences, ICT, and digital creative industries. Key local companies include Muntions, Climax Molybdenum, Akzo Nobel, Bosch and PPG Refinish.

- 425 Business births (IDBR 2022) 395 Business deaths (IDBR 2022)
- Lower than average earnings - median residents' earnings £37,694 (NOMIS 2024) £39,702 East average
- 36.5% of residents have obtained NVQ4+ qualifications (NOMIS 2024)

Both Babergh and Mid-Suffolk District Council

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District's economy faces several challenges, driven by historic local trends such as lower wages, poor transport connectivity, limited workspace provision in rural areas, poor broadband and mobile connectivity and higher house prices compared to national averages. Both districts have an older than average population which may present issues for future workforce supply.

Both districts have a higher than average levels of small and micro businesses meaning that they may have limited ability to innovate or scale, be vulnerable to market disruptions, and have a shortage of skilled labour.

Connectivity through transport is a major issue across both districts – identified by local employers (inc on Gateway 14) that limits ability to recruit and retain staff. Additionally issues with broadband connectivity will potentially hold businesses back as only 52% of premises have gigabit-capable broadband availability compared with 83.3% across England (Think Broadband)

Babergh Mid Suffolk is increasingly positioning itself as a hub for the green economy. Local initiatives funded under UK Shared Prosperity Funding are supporting jobs that promote green jobs and employment. There is employment in clean tech, home retrofitting, and environmental services.

Ipswich Borough Council

Since the pandemic Ipswich has seen a large number of individuals aged 19 or over who may be economically inactive or employed but experience a declining mental health and wellbeing with measures for life satisfaction, feeling worthwhile, happiness and anxiety all worsening issues.

It is therefore important that Ipswich population are supported and given the correct tools to progress into education, employment, or training.

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