

Suffolk County Council meeting Thursday 18 March 2021, vote taken on Motion 3.

Motion 3 – Proposed by Councillor Jack Abbott and seconded by Councillor Mary Evans.

Motion text:

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a terrible effect on so many of us. Thousands have lost their jobs, or seen their incomes drop. Children and young people have seen months wiped off their education. We have missed so many of the things we enjoy in life, not least seeing our friends and loved ones. Most tragically of all, 125,000 people have lost their lives.

The impact on mental health has also been severe, with loneliness, depression and stress all rising, in addition to the effects caused by rising unemployment, domestic violence and absence from the classroom.

Suffolk County Council made a firm commitment to tackling mental health with the Time to Change pledge in 2018 and does much excellent work. However, the pandemic has exacerbated many already critical issues, as well as presenting new challenges which will take months if not years to overcome.

Therefore, it is critically important that Suffolk County Council remains unwavering in its determination to work with partners to support our residents, and minimise the current and future impact on mental health by making the following pledges to:

1. Promote to our public sector partners the benefits of the Suffolk Signs of Safety, solution building and trauma responsive approach to practice.
2. Continue to develop Mental Health and Wellbeing practice for schools in Suffolk through the Suffolk Wellbeing in Education Programme and the work of SCC Psychology and Therapeutic Services alongside the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust and Mental Health Support Teams in delivering training, sharing resources and support interventions as well as through the provision of online resources including Kooth, the online chat and counselling support service, the Source website and the Wellbeing Hub.
3. Prioritise our 0-19 services for those families with the greatest need including mental health; working with our health visitors and primary care partners to ensure that all babies and parents are seen face-to-face by a health visitor in the first 12 weeks of life. We will support Suffolk Libraries with its Suffolk Lifeline offer and its provision of designated safe spaces to support individuals with their mental health and wellbeing.

4. As a caring employer, ensure the focus on employees' mental health is upheld, and the array of resources and support available continues to meet demand. This includes offering all SCC employees updated resources and support along with tailored support to individuals through a 24 hour/7 day a week support line from which face-to-face counselling can be obtained. This must take into account the exceptional (and sometimes traumatic) circumstances both during and following the pandemic and include services which respond to post-traumatic stress disorder and moral injury. Suffolk County Council will also signpost relevant support to care staff, teachers and other key workers at the Healthy Suffolk website run by Public Health Suffolk - healthysuffolk.org.uk/covidhub/information-for-professionals.
5. Build on the work of Suffolk Collaborative Communities Board in its priority focus on BAME communities, in response and recognition that Health inequalities are increasing; whilst Suffolk County Council is not the main commissioner of Mental Health services, we are committed to working in partnership to ensure that culturally appropriate and readily accessible information, advice and guidance is provided to all of our communities in Suffolk.
6. Help tackle the debt crisis by continuing to promote the Hardship Fund and ensure all communities and vulnerable residents can access support through the Suffolk Advice and Support Service.
7. Enable residents to enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of Suffolk's natural environment through initiatives such as the Healing Woods, Quiet Lanes and Keep Moving Suffolk.

Member's present agreed the motion by general assent.