

### East Suffolk Youth Employment Service Supporting Young People During Lockdown

The East Suffolk Youth Employment Service was launched in November 2019, providing routes to employment, education and training for young people aged 16-24 in East Suffolk.

Supported by grant funding from Suffolk Public Sector Leaders, Suffolk County Council and the East Suffolk Partnership, Inspire Suffolk was commissioned to deliver a year long, district-wide service, operating from several premises strategically located in East Suffolk.

Young People in Felixstowe, Leiston, Lowestoft and Saxmundham were able to drop-in and meet with an experienced Work Coach who would provide 1-2-1 coaching and support, identifying appropriate pathways into employment, education, and training. The remaining towns and villages were served through a demand led, peripatetic service.

By mid-March, East Suffolk YES was on target and had supported some 272 young people from across the district. Within this group, 177 young people were identified as requiring more intensive support and were helped into employment, education or training.

Just as the YES programme was 'finding it's stride', the Prime Minister's announcement that the UK would move into a period of 'lockdown' from the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, meant that Inspire Suffolk could no longer meet with young people face to face and in person. The principle method of engagement and support for young people was no longer available.

The ongoing COVID-19 epidemic and consequent need for shielding, social distancing and self-isolation meant that the supplier, Inspire Suffolk, would need to make significant changes to the way the programme was delivered to ensure that the programme could provide the same level of support to young people and facilitate the continued success of the programme.

The need for the services provided by YES have not diminished during the current COVID-19 crisis. Economic uncertainty, the fear of catching the virus and enforced social isolation means that the demand for the service, particularly 1-2-1 support, is likely to continue and grow over the coming months.

Compounding the issue, re-deployment of front-line public sector staff and the uncertainty facing many charitable organisations who work with young people has meant that potential gaps existed within the referral networks and have required time to re-establish.

The external environment means that engaging with young people has become more difficult, many young people already live with varying degrees of chaos within their lives. Whether these are crowded domestic arrangements, abusive relationships within a

household or poor access to digital services. Young people often lack a 'safe space' to focus and talk freely about their aspirations and needs.

Throughout April, Inspire Suffolk have learned to adapt, drawing on traditional telephony as their primary means of engaging with young people. In addition, Inspire Suffolk have had to accelerate their development and adoption of digital services to facilitate a bespoke package of support.

Where classroom teaching and training may have been the norm eight weeks ago, Google Classroom has filled the void, providing the YES Careers Club, a bespoke, 6-week programme of structured learning. Video conferencing platforms are augmenting 1-2-1 coaching activities and facilitating mock interviews.

East Suffolk Council has worked with Inspire Suffolk to encourage and support their work in adapting to the 'new normal'. Whilst it is still too early to assess the success of the new approach to delivery, Inspire Suffolk have engaged with an additional 28 young people during April.

Young people aged between 16-24, who want support and/or looking for employment, education or training can talk to the YES delivery team using the contact details below.

Telephone: 07590983297

Email: [info@yessuffolk.co.uk](mailto:info@yessuffolk.co.uk)



*YES staff taking a group of our young people around Sizewell B*