

Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum

Minutes of the Meeting (via Zoom) on Tuesday, 21st October, 2025 at 2pm

Abbreviations used:

DAS	Disability Advice Service East Suffolk	DWP	Department for Work & Pensions
ESC	East Suffolk Council	HWS	Healthwatch Suffolk
PC	Parish Council	SCC	Suffolk County Council
SCDF	Suffolk Coastal Disability Forum	WDF	Waveney Disability Forum

Present:

Linda Hoggarth	Disability Forum for Suffolk [SCDF Chair]
Simon Daws	Vice-Chair, SCDF
Paul Kelly	Secretary, SCDF
Pati Ferreira-Whittaker	ESC Communities Officer for Kesgrave, Rushmere St Andrew, Martlesham, Carlford & Fynn Valley
Sue Abel	Service Manager, Leading Lives (Saxmundham Hub)
Simon Barnett	Integrated Transport Manager, SCC
Jack Bloomfield	Organisational Development & EDI Apprentice, ESC
Rachel Crawford	Service Delivery Lead, Shaftesbury Suffolk Memory & Dementia Support Service
Deborah Darby	Councillor, Melton PC
Scilla Dyke	Volunteer with various organisations
Helen Fairweather	CEO, Headway Suffolk
Bryan Frost	Councillor, Trimley St Mary PC
Jess Harvey	Wellbeing Suffolk
Grace Hill	Volunteer with various organisations
Sharon Hobbs	21 Young Hearts Café
Steve Hodgkiss	Vice-Chair, Suffolk Sight
Nellie Kuma	Project Officer, Community Action Suffolk
Michelle Nummelin	Disability Employment Advisor, DWP
Sue Peace	Councillor, Westerfield PC
Bryony Peall	Live Well Hub, Leiston
Andrew Provan	Vice-Chair, WDF
Graham Walker	Chair, DAS
Sally Watson	Community Engagement & Partnership Manager, Healthwatch Suffolk

Guest:

Anne Finn	Travel Team, Estates & Facilities, East Suffolk & North Essex NHS Foundation Trust
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Apologies:

Steve Race	Manager, DAS
Trish Riches	Secretary, WDF
Yvonne Smart	Trimley St Martin PC

1. Welcome

Linda welcomed everyone to the meeting. However, due to technical difficulties, Simon D. chaired the meeting with assistance from Pati and introductions were made.

2. Apologies

The above apologies were received and noted.

3. Parking Issues - Ipswich Hospital

3.1 Anne Finn from the Travel Team at East Suffolk & North Essex NHS Foundation Trust [ESNEFT] was welcomed to the meeting.

3.1 Anne said that she had read the minutes of previous SCDF meetings in relation to hospital parking issues and provided an update on the current situation. She would then respond to questions and comments.

3.2 Updates to parking at Ipswich Hospital:

- Work around the front of the hospital is complete, giving 2 extra blue badge parking bays; blue badge bays now total 82 across the hospital site. There are free 30-minute drop-off zones where patients can be dropped off and collected.
- Car park C (next to Garrett Anderson Centre) is available for visitor parking with 73 bays for blue badge holders, having been previously reserved for staff parking. Staff parking has been moved from car park C to car park J (near the Diabetes Centre).
- More bus services are coming into the bus turning circle; alternative ways to get to the hospital now include using park-and-ride services from the north and south of Ipswich.
- New parking contractors, Group Nexus, took over ESNEFT's car parking services on 22nd October from the previous contractor, Parking Eye.

- **Blue badge parking permits have to be re-registered for the new contractor.** At the main hospital reception, the customer service team will be able to whitelist a blue badge holder for the day and help with the re-registration process (the clock part of the blue badge must be left in the vehicle and the photo ID part must be taken to reception, together with the car registration number. If a person has a smart phone, they will be able to scan a QR code to start the process off. Brochures will be available which will provide information about this process. More than one vehicle can be registered per blue badge holder.
- Re-registration of blue badges will still be essential whenever a person's blue badge is renewed or their vehicle is changed.
- The previous parking contractors, Parking Eye, have purged some blue badge holder data, so penalty notices may be issued that are invalid. If that occurs, contact the Travel Team.
- **For all matters concerning parking at both Ipswich Hospital, Colchester General Hospital and the Colchester Primary Care Centre please e-mail the ESNEFT Travel Team:**
travel.team@esneft.nhs.uk

3.3 Members raised the following questions:

- **Question:** A new clinical requirement is to have a blood test (prior to seeing a consultant) at either Ipswich Hospital or Ravenswood Medical Practice; previously a blood test could be taken at a GP surgery. This will have an impact on blue badge parking. **Response:** The clinical reasons change for the change in procedure will be investigated.
- **Question:** Is it possible to expand parking at the hospital? **Response:** No, a request to build a multi-storey car park was refused planning permission.
- **Comment:** Some of the acute slopes leading to road crossings and the non-flush dropped kerbs around the hospital site are proving difficult to negotiate for wheelchair users and their assistants. **Response:** The Travel Team will require the exact location where difficulties are being experienced. Notify the Travel Team travel.team@esneft.nhs.uk.
- **Question:** Could a more simple map be available which shows exactly where parking spaces for blue badge holders are located? The current map is far too complicated. **Response:** The Graphic Designers will be contacted to see what can be done.

3.4 Anne was thanked for joining the meeting and providing the updates to the parking arrangements.

[Secretary's Post-Meeting note - ESNEFT's website news (<https://www.esneft.nhs.uk/category/latest-news-stories-from-esneft/>) dated 23rd October, 2025, which mentions the changeover of parking contractors **does not mention the need to re-register blue badges to secure free hospital parking**. The ESNEFT Travel Team (F.A.O. Anne Finn) has been contacted to ask why this information is missing from ESNEFT's website.

Please see attached leaflets (in portrait & landscape format) received from the Travel Team at ESNEFT. The leaflet explains how to register for a Blue Badge parking permit with Nexus, the new car parking operator at Ipswich Hospital & Colchester Hospital. The parking permits with Parking Eye, the previous operators, are no longer valid.

Members may also find this article of interest:

<https://www.ipswichstar.co.uk/news/25584575.ipswich-hospital-blue-badge-parking-working-holders/>

4. 21 Young Hearts Café

4.1 Sharon Hobbs, Director & Co-founder, 21 Young Hearts Café, was welcomed to the meeting. She explained the setting up of the Café and the reasons for establishing it as follows:

- She and her husband have a son, Kyle, who is 24, with Down's syndrome and lots of medical needs. The idea of a café was born through wanting better opportunities in life for Kyle and for anybody else who has a disability. They have a belief that every person deserves the opportunity to be the best version of themselves and that disability should not be a barrier to success.
- The café was set up as a Community Interest Company [CIC] by Sharon and her husband after 4 years of planning.
- 21 Young Hearts Café can be described as a community café in The Square, in Martlesham Heath, near Woodbridge, serving as a training and employment hub for young adults with disabilities, whilst operating seven days a week with a menu of barista coffee, tea, cakes, sandwiches, toasties, panini and light refreshments.
- There are 12 trainees at the moment on two shifts. The morning shift is from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and the afternoon shift is from 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

- Training is free and all the trainees learn everything from opening up the café in the morning, to cleaning and operating the till. Two trainees are learning how to make coffee with the barista machine which has been simplified with only two buttons. It is a safe place for all the trainees to come and learn.
- The local community have really supported the café from the start. They did 800 covers on their first two days of operation, but on average, after 8 weeks of operation, they have between 120 and 150 customers per day.
- The menu is being expanded with jacket potatoes and soup. Everything is home made, nothing is bought in. It is hoped that eventually some trainees will be taught cooking.
- The ambition is that once fully trained, the trainees will be employed and paid for their shift. In the longer term, they hope that the trainees will be offered placements within other organisations.
- For more information, go to www.21younghearts.co.uk or e-mail at hello@21younghearts.co.uk

4.2 Sharon was thanked for her contribution and wished every success for the future development of the café.

5. Headway Suffolk

5.1 Helen Fairweather, Chief Executive, Headway Suffolk, was welcomed to the meeting.

5.2 Helen explained that Headway looks after people (over 16 years) with any neurological conditions such as brain injury, stroke, tumour, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's or dementia; in fact anything that attacks the brain.

5.3 Their services are all free to their clients and include:

Home Care Service (in a person's own home)

- Personal care
- Assistance with medication
- Help with food preparation
- Laundry
- House work
- Rehabilitation

Our Home Care Service is currently rated as outstanding by the Care Quality Commission.

Community Support Service (funded by Sizewell C):

- Satellite Hub at Leiston
(Live Well Centre every Monday & Tuesday)
- Satellite Hub at Aldeburgh
(Aldeburgh Community Hospital every Wednesday & Thursday)

5.4 Helen said that, in some instances, people can be collected to come into the hubs using C.A.T.S. Help is also given to people to use public transport including bus services to go to the hubs.

5.5 Activities range from outings, arts & crafts, cooking (recently with air fryers), word games, darts, skittles, etc. and are tailored to the needs of the attendees.

5.6 A light lunch is also provided.

5.7 The aim is to give people more independence, relearning the skills that they have lost because of brain injury / damage.

5.8 Headway also provides holidays:

- Respite holidays in Norfolk and Suffolk
- Group holidays (e.g. at Wroxham, Norfolk, including sailing, canoeing and cruise boating)

5.9 People return from their holidays in an improved condition than before the holiday, far better than after traditional respite care.

5.10 To sum up, Headway is trying to give rehabilitation and care for people to stay in the community for as long as possible.

5.11 Members raised the following questions:

- **Question:** Do you offer any opportunities for creative arts therapy?
Response: Yes, quite a lot of art, drama and music takes place because music is a very good stimulant for the brain.
- **Question:** Do you have any dance activities? **Response:** Dancing is the one activity better than music. Dance takes place when it is safe to do so. The hubs are disabled friendly, so wheelchair users can participate in dancing.
- **Comment:** The East Anglia Sailing Trust at Levington offers sailing for disabled people and it is good for their wellbeing. **Response:** Headway

goes to Wroxham in partnership with the Nancy Oldfield Trust and they help with the water-based activities.

- **Question:** Does Headway Suffolk cover the whole of Suffolk or is it just East Suffolk? **Response:** Headway Suffolk covers the whole of Suffolk and has done so for the last 15 years. There are more hubs at Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds.
- **Question:** A member commented that she is a trained dancer, has taught dance and is also a trained performer. Can she volunteer to help at a hub? **Response:** Like all charities, Headway Suffolk looks forward to having volunteers and the expertise that they bring.

5.12 Helen was thanked for her contribution to the meeting.

6. Shaftesbury Suffolk Memory and Dementia Support Service

6.1 Rachel Crawford, Service Delivery Lead for the Shaftesbury Suffolk Memory and Dementia Support Service [Shaftesbury], was welcomed to the meeting.

6.2 Rachel explained that Shaftesbury were commissioned in April, 2025 and took over from Dementia Connect. They are contracted for five years with the possibility of two more years. Shaftesbury has been in existence for over 180 years and was founded by Lord Shaftesbury.

6.3 Shaftesbury's centre, Icanho, is at Stowmarket. It is a rehabilitation centre for people with brain injuries. Over one hundred people per year have highly specialised rehabilitation to help them within the community and living back at home. Patients are referred by health professionals.

6.4 This service is part of Shaftesbury, but works with memory loss and dementia. The idea is to empower people. They have worked with Healthwatch Suffolk to find out what people wanted in Suffolk.

6.5 People and their carers are supported across Suffolk. A seven day a week free helpline (Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, Sunday & Bank Holidays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) on 0808 281 5804 is for anyone concerned about memory loss or dementia; it could be the person themselves, carers, neighbours or an organisation.

6.6 The helpline is manned by trained dementia advisors who can advise and offer support for up to 12 weeks with reviews. If it is necessary to see the patient face to face, there are seven advisors across Suffolk that work in the field and can meet the patient at a location where the patient feels relaxed.

6.7 The aim is to be community-engaged. The field advisors liaise with services across Suffolk so that patients can be offered alternatives to find what they need within the area.

6.8 The model pathway is for people to self-refer. They can ring the helpline or leave a message outside of the helpline hours. The patient only has to tell his / her story once. Information about the patient can be put on a data system that is used by doctors, hospitals and other services. But they also get referrals from the DSS, primary care, social services, doctors, the voluntary sector or from anyone who is concerned.

6.9 The aim is to carry out a holistic assessment of the patient, looking at all aspects of their needs, plus the ability to support them on their treatment journey after triage. They co-operate and integrate with other services across Suffolk, and beyond, to ensure that patients get exactly the right help that they need. They have a listening advisory group which meets regularly and they work with health commissioners to deliver strategic objectives.

6.10 In April this year, when Shaftesbury took over the service, 398 referrals came over from the previous system. This number has grown, so that by the end of August, registrations numbered 1,118. Currently, nearly 200 people are being registered per month.

6.11 Anybody that has been helped is supported by the service for up to 12 weeks or even longer. Alternatively, if they are put into self-management, with the chance to self-control, they can call whenever they like and get support again. People are never off the books.

6.12 Up to the end of April, of the 1,118 people known to the service, there were 567 on self-management, 80 supported by field advisors, 278 on Wait Well supported throughout their diagnosis and 198 waiting for first contact. The target is to contact a referral within 10 days. But in an emergency a referral will be contacted immediately.

6.13 Monthly catch ups are arranged with the Memory Services, Dementia Intensive Support Team [DIST] and the Rapid Elderly Assessment Team [REACT] to ensure communication, work together and reduce duplication.

6.14 Recently, the service held its first young onset dementia meeting in Ipswich. Interest came from about 20 people. So far, there are 45 people under 65 on the books. Shaftesbury is working with other organisations to collaborate and to deliver something unique for the age group.

6.15 Rachel was thanked for her contribution to the meeting.

7. Minutes from the Meeting held on the 15th July, 2025

7.1 The minutes were agreed.

8. Matters Arising

8.1 Item 7.2 Beach Wheelchairs at other Resorts:

8.1.1 Pati gave a brief update on beach wheelchairs - at the end of July, the Beach Wheelchairs Team sent a message apologising that the wheelchairs had been out of use so long because they were having trouble finding adequate storage and maintenance facilities.

8.1.2 However, from 11th August, there is one adult and one child wheelchair available at the beach office in Lowestoft, one adult wheelchair near the Pier at Southwold and one adult wheelchair at the Seashore Village in Felixstowe.

8.1.3 These wheelchairs are free to use, but must be booked at least three days in advance via beach.wheelchairs@eastsoffolk.gov.uk. It would be helpful to receive feedback after using any of these beach wheelchairs.

8.2 Item 7.4 Bus Services:

8.2.1 Bryan said that since August 31st, there is an hourly bus service (Number 73) that links Old Felixstowe, the Grove Medical Centre, Martlesham and Woodbridge. Simon B. was thanked for getting this service put in place.

8.2.2 Simon D. commented that he had tried to use the Number 73 service recently, but the bus drove straight past him. Other people had reported the very same problem. Simon B. said that he had raised the issue with the bus companies, who were going to repeat the message to their drivers that if anyone with a white cane, visible joystick or a guide dog is at a bus-stop then they should check whether the person intends to board the bus.

8.3 Item 7.6 Disability Information Day 2025:

8.3.1 Pati said that she wanted to thank everyone who attended the Disability Information Day because it was a very nice event despite the rainy weather. There were over 20 stalls and this gave members of the public the opportunity to seek a wide range of information and advice. The feedback from visitors was very good.

8.3.2 Pati was thanked for all the work she did to make the event a success along with members of the Planning Group and Steve and Graham from DAS.

8.3.3 Pati noted that the Waveney Disability Forum were having their Information Day on the 27th October in Lowestoft.

8.3.4 It was hoped that an SCDF Information Day can be held in 2026 in a different location in East Suffolk.

9. Issues, Concerns and News from Members

9.1 Melton Level Crossing: Deborah said that the Melton Level Crossing would be closed from 10 p.m. on Friday 24th October and would not be re-opened until 6 a.m. on Wednesday 29th October for work to be carried out by Network Rail. It is believed that the emergency services have arranged special dispensation to go through.

9.2 DAS:

9.2.1 Graham said that DAS had recently celebrated their 40th anniversary with a birthday party with guests including Jenny Riddell-Carpenter MP for Suffolk Coastal.

9.2.2 He announced that DAS were launching a new business service, offering training for employers who wished to be better skilled and more confident to support employees with disabilities. For more information see www.daseastsuffolk.org

9.2.3 The website would be building up training materials, including ‘talking head’ videos showing disabled people talking about their experiences. Simon D. is their first ‘talking head’. These videos are a free resource, but employers that wanted more in-depth training or workshops would be charged for this service.

10. Update from Healthwatch Suffolk

10.1 Sally Watson, Community Engagement & Partnership Manager, at HWS said that there would be no update this time, but that she would brief us on a new project at HWS.

10.2 Each year HWS initiate a core project. A lot of their work is commissioned, but this project is their own. They thought that visually-impaired people needed a bigger voice and that HWS could help. So, Simon D. was asked to become one of their Health Ambassadors and help with the project.

10.3 This project is a Survey Monkey questionnaire asking visually-impaired people about healthcare provision, their access to it, their experiences and

outcomes and how they feel about healthcare. HWS put this questionnaire together and Simon D. assisted by using screen-assistive software to run through the survey. That input helped HWS to adapt the survey to better suit visually-impaired people. The survey was further adapted after stress-testing and Simon D. completed the final version of the survey seamlessly.

10.4 The survey is on the HWS website [www.healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk] and widely shared on social media via the RNIB, East Suffolk Guide Dogs and the Visually Impaired Forum. Members can help by sharing information about the survey with other groups working with visually impaired people.

10.5 Simon D. commented that he had completed two videos, recently, one for DAS and one for HWS. These videos try to get across what it is like to be visually-impaired.

10.6 Sally said that she was grateful for being put in touch with Wendy Johns from Suffolk Sight who has been fantastic. She is very encouraged by all the Suffolk Sight groups across the county. The survey is for anyone over 16 with a visual impairment that cannot be corrected with glasses. The survey runs to the end of January 2026. The survey responses will be analysed and a document produced which will go to the decision-makers.

10.5 The survey is available both electronically via websites and social media. The survey can be emailed in PDF format to print out.

11. Information Round / Any Other Business

11.1 East Suffolk Council

11.1.1 Pati announced that this would be her final meeting before going on maternity leave. ESC are currently recruiting for the post. She thanked everyone for the past year and a half with the Forum. Pati was thanked in turn by all at the meeting.

11.1.2 Pati asked Jack Bloomfield to briefly explain his role within ESC.

11.1.3 Jack said that his role was organisational development and as an Equality, Diversity & Inclusion apprentice. A big part of the EDI policy is to protect the characteristics of age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, plus socio-economic disadvantage. He will be organising the next ESC EDI event.

12. Topics for Meetings

12.1 Suggestions for guest speakers at future meetings can be sent to the Forum Secretary at secretary.scdf@gmail.com.

13. Date of Meetings in 2026

13.1 The Planning Group would set the meeting dates for 2026 at their next meeting and circulate these to members.

13.2 The provisional date for the next meeting of the SCDF would be Tuesday, 20th January, 2026, from 2pm to 4pm, via Zoom. The link for the meeting would be sent out in due course.