

Overview

This report summarises the performance and outcomes delivered by East Suffolk Community Partnerships (CPs) during the 2025/26 financial year. It is the first annual report of its kind and provides a clear snapshot of how partnership working has addressed local issues, informed by data and stakeholder insight.

The 2025 Refresh

From April 2025, Community Partnerships underwent a refresh shaped by feedback from stakeholders, Chairs, and Communities Officers. This refresh introduced a stronger, more consistent framework while retaining flexibility to respond to local need. Key developments included:

- Updated **CP Principles**, with Partnerships encouraged to strengthen their practice in line with these.
 - Introduction of a **single Outcome Proposal Tracker**, giving Officers, Chairs, and finance colleagues a shared source of information. This has since evolved into a broader outcome monitoring system to better demonstrate impact.
 - Delivery of **targeted training sessions** for Chairs and Communities Officers, with topics directly informed by attendee requests.
 - **Peer learning visits**, with each Communities Officer attending at least one other CP meeting to share and learn from different delivery approaches.
 - Development of a **Recommended Practice Guide**, offering practical advice on workshops, data use, and effective meeting design.
 - Introduction of **post-meeting debriefs** between Officers and Chairs, strengthening reflective practice and shaping future training.
 - Establishment of a **data-sharing partnership with Citizens Advice East Suffolk**, enabling CPs to understand emerging resident issues through interactive dashboards hosted on the council website.
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Key Figures at a Glance

The 2025/26 year saw a significant improvement in the quality and quantity of outcome data collected. CPs can now evidence impact statistically, alongside qualitative feedback.

- **519 attendances** at Community Partnership meetings
- **28 CP meetings** held across East Suffolk
- **Average attendance:** 18 stakeholders per meeting
- **27 non-cash benefits** delivered (outcomes achieved without direct CP funding)

- **£2.57 match funding** secured for every £1 of CP funding (up from £1.70 in 2023/24)
- **8,584 volunteering hours** linked to CP-funded projects
- **£171,680** estimated minimum financial value of volunteering

Beyond funded outcomes, CP meetings also generated added value through new partnerships, improved data sharing, and reduced duplication across voluntary organisations.

Each Community Partnership continues to report into the Community Partnership Board once a year – with the Chair and/or Communities Officer presenting on key achievements, challenges and opportunities – and several projects originating in one Community Partnership area have received Board funding in 2025/26.

Maximising Value Through Match Funding and Volunteering

Match funding remained a priority throughout the year, enabling CP budgets to stretch further and unlock wider social value. For example, a £1 contribution from a CP towards new flooring for Hour Community generated over **£40 in social value and match funding**.

Volunteering estimates are intentionally conservative, based on applicant-provided figures and valued at the standard £20 per hour rate. Actual social value is likely to be considerably higher, though difficult to monitor consistently at scale.

Impact Case Studies

Over the past year, CPs have worked with a wide range of partners to deliver tangible benefits for local residents. Selected examples illustrate the breadth of activity.

Using Local Insight to Inform Action

Demand-responsive transport providers across East Suffolk face shared challenges, particularly recruiting volunteer drivers. Licensing requirements mean only drivers licensed pre-1990 can automatically drive minibuses, while training new drivers is costly.

Following feedback from Halesworth Area Community Transport, the CP Board allocated £20,000 to support transport providers with volunteer driver training. This aims to expand volunteer capacity, improve service consistency, and increase social value for both volunteers and service users.

Sustainable Opportunities in Rural Areas

Several CPs identified the need for accessible exercise opportunities in rural communities to support physical health and wellbeing.

The Woodbridge, Melton and Deben Peninsula CP supported an established CIC to deliver heavily subsidised exercise classes for residents facing transport barriers. Over time, participants will contribute a

reasonable fee, supporting long-term sustainability. Early feedback indicates consistent attendance levels sufficient to maintain the programme.

Building Resilience in New Developments

Rapid housing growth can affect community cohesion and awareness of local services.

In Felixstowe and surrounding villages, a small CP investment of £300, combined with support from local organisations and developers, enabled two wellbeing-focused community events in December. These events received 100% positive feedback and have led developers to commit to similar activities in the future.

Stakeholder Engagement

CP meetings continue to attract a broad mix of stakeholders, ensuring informed decision-making and locally relevant priorities. Regular attendees include councillors at parish, district, and county level, alongside statutory services such as NHS Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, Suffolk Police, and voluntary sector organisations.

Looking ahead to 2026/27, CPs will focus on **“attendance with purpose”**—ensuring the right people are present to add value, rather than measuring success solely by numbers.

Data, Outcomes, and Social Value

CPs are now collecting more robust outcome data than ever before, including measures of social value—the wider economic and wellbeing benefits generated by activities and behaviour change.

Through updated monitoring processes, CPs are capturing both intended outcomes and broader social value. Further social value statistics will be published during 2026/27 as data becomes available. Additional datasets, including outcome proposals and match funding, are accessible via the East Suffolk Council Dashboard under *Tackling Inequalities*.

Marmot Place Integration

The Marmot Place project, launched in November 2026, will increasingly align with Community Partnerships and their commitment to tackling a wide range of inequalities in our eight CP areas. While remaining distinct, closer collaboration around data sharing, match funding, and joint working is expected to enhance outcomes for residents and start to impact on inequalities across deprived, coastal and rural communities.

Community Partnership Forum 2025

Held in October 2025 at East Coast College, Lowestoft, the Community Partnership Forum was widely regarded as a success. New elements included group transport, locally sourced catering, and practical, action-focused workshops under the theme *“Less PowerPoint, more action.”*

Feedback has informed planning for the 2026 Forum, which will take place at Woodbridge School. CP members are actively contributing to early planning, with Local Government Reorganisation developments also being considered.

Restless Progress: Looking Ahead

As CPs move into the new financial year, continuous improvement remains central. District-wide priorities include:

- **Attendance with purpose:** Engaging new stakeholders where they add clear value
- **Planned, gradual spend:** Spreading budgets and outcomes evenly across the year through effective forward planning

A Partnership Effort

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Community Partnerships during 2025/26. The achievements outlined in this report reflect the collective effort of officers, elected members, voluntary organisations, and community stakeholders across East Suffolk.

As we look ahead to Local Government Reorganisation across Suffolk, it was notable that the Community Partnership model was cited in both submissions as being a positive way to retain the connection between communities, local partners and the Council and we look forward to working together to influence the shape of the emerging Councils over the next two years.

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Appendix A

Community Partnership Forum – Summary of Responses and Insights

Date of Event: October 2025

Respondents: 57 individuals from a diverse range of organisations including councils, charities, trusts, and community groups.

[Click here for a brief video from CP Forum 2025](#)

Key Participation Insights

Representation: 56 organisations participated, including East Suffolk Council, Active Suffolk, Alzheimer's Society, and various town/parish councils.

Travel Modes:

Car: 82%

Walk: 5%

ESC Coach/Public Transport/Bicycle: Minimal use

Car Sharing: Noted by several attendees, indicating sustainability awareness.

Event Ratings (Scale of 1–10)

Marketplace Stalls: Majority rated 8–10 (47% gave top score of 10)

Lunch: Highly rated with average score of 8 out of 10

Venue: Mixed feedback; 47% rated it 10, but many noted it was cold

Pre-event Communication: Strong ratings, with 28% giving a 10

[Click here to watch the Forums keynote speaker, Dr Emily Murray - University of Essex](#)

Workshop Engagement

Session 1 & 2 Popular Workshops:

Mental Health Toolkit

Cyber Security Escape Room

Youth Council Engagement

Map of Opportunity

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Grant Millionaire Game

Workshop Ratings:

Session 1: Average score 4.69/5

Session 2: Average score 4.42/5

Benefits to Organisations

Networking: Most cited benefit – new contacts, partnerships, and visibility.

Knowledge Sharing: Attendees gained insights into local services, youth engagement, funding opportunities, and community health.

Collaboration: Many plan to follow up with contacts for joint projects or referrals.

Forum Timing Preferences

Top Choices:

During Office Hours: 46%

Mornings: 37%

Afternoons: 19%

Evenings: Least preferred

Additional Comments & Suggestions

Positives:

Excellent organisation and facilitation

Engaging keynote speakers

Eco-friendly catering appreciated

ID badge innovation (workshop/lunch info printed)

Constructive Feedback:

Venue was consistently described as cold – the size and shape of the atrium leads to heat loss which is unavoidable.

IT and AV issues affected presentations – agreements about IT and AV preparations were not adhered to by the venue on several occasions. These were rectified before the formal start of the day but did affect preparation for facilitators.

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Desire for more structured networking and a closing plenary – there were three set times during the day for attendees to network and collaborate. The layout of the space and lunch planning was designed with this in mind also. Considering the length of the day, especially for those travelling from the south of the district, a plenary was considered not a priority.

Suggestion to extend the event to allow attendance at more workshops – the event began at 0900 and ended at 1400. This does not take into account travel or setup/take down time for attendees. Two workshops during the day per person is considered a balanced amount. Post-event contact can be arranged between facilitators and attendees if requested.

Overall Sentiment

The Forum was widely praised as one of the best yet, with strong appreciation for its inclusivity, relevance, and networking value. Attendees expressed interest in future forums and suggested minor improvements to enhance accessibility and engagement.

Communications

Dr Murray has shared the event on her LinkedIn profile which has a significant reach. We have also been invited to work with Dr Murray and her colleagues at the Guardian newspaper to find and arrange a positive story for their ongoing collaboration.

Video of Dr Murray and Kevin Weggs Funding sessions have been uploaded to YouTube and will be promoted through the social media channels. Photography is stored online and able to be used as content throughout the year.

Slides where provided by the facilitators will also be uploaded to the CP web page for future reference.

Link to Comms photos and video content below;

Expenditure

In line with previous years, there was an allocation of £12,000 towards the cost of the event. The event came in £1,400 under budget. This takes into account purchasing of reusable CP banners and shared photography equipment between CPs and Marmot Place work which will enable more sustainable promotion of the CP moving forwards.

Summary/next steps

Positive feedback has been received by marketplace stall holders, facilitators and attendees. The venue posed the greatest challenges, both in advance and on the day of the event. We are limited in East Suffolk to the range of venues that can accommodate such an event. A deep dive of all options in the district has already begun.

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A follow up email to all attendees will be sent three months after the event to see what medium term impact has been gained by attending the Forum.

The topics and suggestions raised by Dr Murray will be explored further and shared with all CPs for consideration.