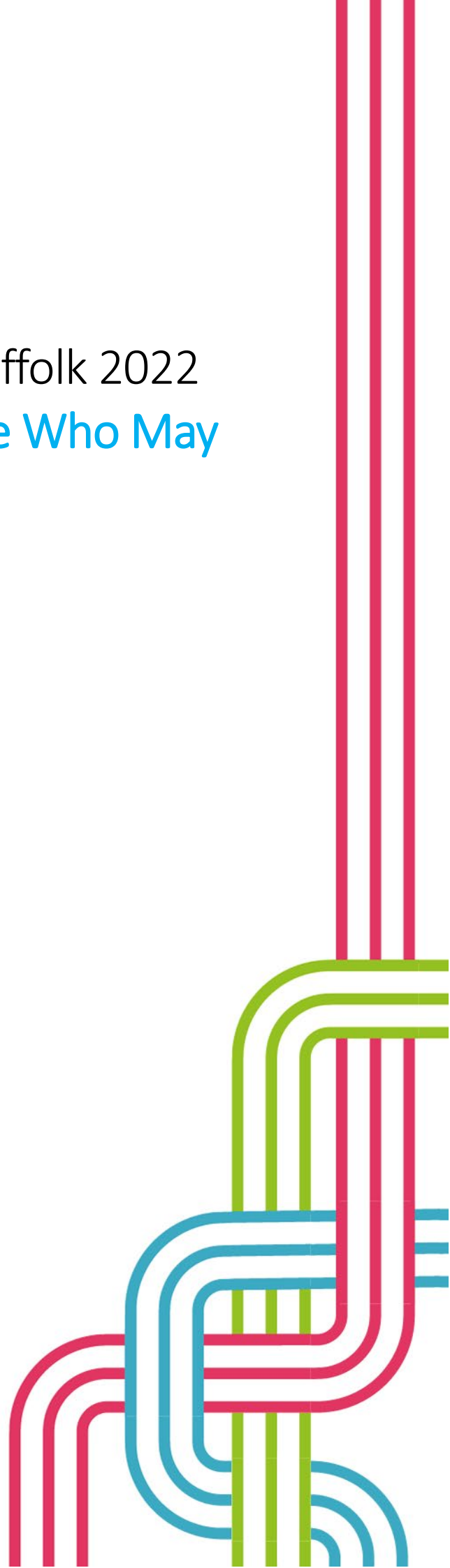


The State of Children in Suffolk 2022  
**Children and Young People Who May  
Need Extra Support**



# Children and Young People Who May Need Extra Support

## Key points

1. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, there were 3,937 children in need in Suffolk. The rate of children in need has increased in Suffolk in recent years, and the current rate of 257.6 (per 10,000 children aged under 18) is the highest it has been locally since 2013. Although increasing, the current rate in Suffolk remains significantly lower (statistically) than the England average of 321.2 per 10,000, and below the rate for its statistical neighbours (267.1 per 10,000).
2. There were 498 children in Suffolk who were subject to a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The rate of child protection plans in Suffolk has increased in recent years, and the current rate of 32.6 (per 10,000 children aged under 18) is the highest it has been locally since 2014. Although increasing, the current rate in Suffolk remains significantly lower (statistically) than the England average of 41.4 per 10,000, and below the rate for its statistical neighbours (37.3 per 10,000).
3. Neglect (56.2%) was the most common initial category of abuse recorded for children on child protection plans in Suffolk. This proportion is significantly higher (statistically) than the England average of 48.2%. A further 33.5% of child protection plans in Suffolk were due to emotional abuse.
4. There were 947 children in care in Suffolk on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. Since 2018, the rate of children in care in Suffolk has steadily increased, and the current rate of 62 (per 10,000 children aged under 18) is the highest it has been since 2018. Although increasing, the current rate in Suffolk is significantly lower (statistically) than the England average of 67 per 10,000 (but higher than Suffolk's statistical neighbours, 59.6). The Suffolk rate is affected by numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children: unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are a statistically significantly higher percentage of looked after children in Suffolk than England, and than most (eight) of Suffolk's statistical neighbours.
5. Locally, most children in care in Suffolk had a recorded need of abuse or neglect – 67.5%. This is similar to the national average of 66%. Local families in acute stress (10.6%) and “family dysfunction” (9.0%) were the other two highest categories of need of children in care.
6. Between 2015/16 and 2020/21, the number of pupils receiving special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support in all schools in Suffolk increased from 10,803 to 12,670 (a significant increase from 9.9% to 11.4%). Although increasing, the current proportion in Suffolk remains significantly lower (statistically) than England (12.2%) and Suffolk's statistical neighbours (13.0%).
7. The top five most common primary needs among pupils receiving SEND support in Suffolk in 2020/21 were: speech, language, and communication needs (19.8%); social, emotional, and mental health needs (17.6%); specific learning difficulties (17.4%); moderate learning difficulties (13.7%); other difficulties or disabilities (10%).
8. In 2021/22, 4,327 pupils in Suffolk had a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan in Suffolk (3,964 excluding pupils at independent schools). Among pupils with a statement or an EHC plan in Suffolk (excluding pupils at independent schools), the most common primary needs in 2021/22 were: autism spectrum

(25.0%), speech, language, and communication needs (16.2%), and social, emotional and mental health needs (14.0%).

9. In 2020/21, 19.3% of primary school pupils in Suffolk (10,969 pupils) were eligible for free school meals. 15.9% of secondary school pupils were eligible (7,119 pupils). Both percentages are significantly lower than England (21.6% of primary pupils, 18.9% of secondary pupils), but higher than Suffolk's statistical neighbours (18.7% primary pupils and 15.7% secondary pupils).
10. In January 2021, 10.2% of state-funded primary school pupils in Suffolk did not have English as a first language (5,813 pupils). In state-funded secondary schools, it was 7.5%. (3,350). These percentages are statistically significantly lower than England (20.9% and 17.2%), but higher than Suffolk's statistical neighbour group (7.1% and 5.8%).
11. In 2019/20, it was estimated that around 12,260 children under the age of 16 in Suffolk had a reported disability (9%). Social or behavioural impairments were the most common impairment type reported among disabled children (37%), followed by mental health and "other" (both 21%).
12. 1 in 5 Gypsy Traveller mothers will experience the loss of a child compared to 1 in a 100 in the non-Traveller community.
13. Among 16-24 year olds in Suffolk, there are an estimated 4,190 to 6,050 people who are likely to identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other.
14. In 2020/21, the impact of being a young carer was identified in 418 children social care assessments across Suffolk (6.6% of completed assessments, significantly higher than England 3.5%).
15. Of the 175 care leavers aged 17-18 in Suffolk in 2020/21, 96.0% were in suitable accommodation, which is significantly higher than England (90.7%). Among 436 Suffolk care leavers aged 19-21 years old, 86.7% were in suitable accommodation, statistically similar to England (87.3%).
16. 70.8% of 175 care leavers aged 17-18 in Suffolk were in education, employment, or training in 2020/21, statistically similar to England (65.0%). Of 440 Suffolk care leavers aged 19-21, 48.6% were in education, employment, or training, statistically similar to England (52.0%).

## Language

Children and young people at greater risk of experiencing physical or emotional harm or experiencing poorer outcomes because of one or more factors in their lives are often referred to as being "vulnerable."<sup>2</sup> Whilst it remains important and necessary to identify and prioritise vulnerable children and young people, such labels are often associated with negative connotations, disempowering, and emphasising limits. Children and young people don't start off by describing themselves as vulnerable, adults do. In light of this, the term "vulnerable" has not been used in this report and has been replaced with the phrase children and young people who "may need extra support."

## Why are children and young people who may need extra support important in Suffolk?

There are many groups of children and young people who may need extra support, including: children in need and children in care; children with learning disabilities and special educational needs; children exposed to adverse childhood experiences; asylum-seeking and refugee children; children in poverty; young carers; teenage parents; care leavers; young offenders; young people who smoke, drink, or take drugs; children and young people at risk of exploitation. This list is by no means exhaustive, and many of these groups frequently overlap. This means many children and young people are likely to require extra support, care, and interventions in a number of multi-dimensional ways.

The risk factors that lead to children and young people needing extra support are equally multi-dimensional, and can include: substance misuse during pregnancy; parental mental illness; poor nutrition; poor housing or living conditions; difficulties at school; peer pressure; a child's physical and emotional health; the absence of supportive relationships; neighbourhood violence; unemployment and job insecurity; discrimination; bereavement.<sup>3-4</sup> It is likely many children and young people will experience one or several of these risk factors at the same time, with different levels of consequences over the course of their lives, including into adulthood. These risk factors may also be known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which are covered below, and also in the [State of Children in Suffolk](#) chapter on feeling safe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted, and continues to impact, young and old alike. There are likely to be some children and young people, who before the pandemic already required extra support or were living in challenging situations, that will be facing particular hardships.<sup>5</sup> These children and young people have often been cut off, or had limited access to, many of the sources of support they might previously have had or needed: schools, children's centres, health visitors, networks of family and friends, home visits from social workers. At the same time, their families may have faced the additional burdens and challenges of financial and social pressures, as well as the impact of three national lockdowns.

Throughout the pandemic, Suffolk County Council and partner agencies have made strenuous efforts to see children and young people, and their families, both virtually and in person. Such efforts would have helped to mitigate against the many challenges faced by Suffolk families during the pandemic. For example, "many young people have really increased their participation in meetings such as child in care reviews, as they feel safer and more able to communicate online."

This report looks at several groups of children and young people in Suffolk who may need extra support. The information presented should be used to help improve support, care, interventions, and outcomes for those who often find themselves in greatest need. It should also be used to help reduce differences in health outcomes between those who have the best and poorest health.

## Data

Much of the data used in this report (published June 2022) is for the period up to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2021. After the reporting year has closed, council staff are busy extracting, checking, and cleaning data for submission to the Department for Education, where it goes through further checks before being published as datasets around seven months after the year end (for example, 28 October 2021). This report will be updated in autumn 2022 with the latest published data, as this is robust and will enable statistical comparisons with England to be made.

Previously unpublished figures produced by Suffolk County Council's Children and Young People's Services have been rounded to the nearest 5. Figures below 5 (including zero) have been suppressed.

### Statistical comparisons

This report compares Suffolk's figures with England and with Suffolk's Children and Young People's Services statistical neighbours: local authorities whose populations have similar socioeconomic characteristics (across a range of socioeconomic indicators). Performance compared to statistical neighbours can show performance that is above or below expected. It has not been possible to test for statistically significant differences between Suffolk and its statistical neighbours. Suffolk's statistical neighbours (for Children and Young People's Services) are Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, East Sussex, Gloucestershire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Shropshire, Somerset, and Worcestershire.<sup>1</sup>

### Impact of COVID-19 on data

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK have been felt and experienced by young and old alike, and will affect people's lives both in the short, medium, and long term. One of the many consequences of the pandemic has been its impact on data collection. Across many areas, such as the economy, education, health and wellbeing, the pandemic has affected what data has been collected and what has been published. Even when published, not all data has been comparable with pre-COVID-19 data.

For the majority of indicators used in this report, data has continued to be collected throughout the pandemic. It is important to recognise, however, that the pandemic is likely to have impacted children and young people who may need extra support in many different ways. This may have led to an increase in the reporting of certain characteristics, or in some cases, a reduction.

## What is the local picture?

### Children's safety and wellbeing in Suffolk

There are two main routes for raising concerns about a child or young person in Suffolk – the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which deals with safeguarding referrals, and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

The Suffolk MASH helps people in the county who are at risk of harm, abuse, and neglect. Established in 2014, the MASH receives and processes all safeguarding referrals of children and adults at risk of harm and abuse. It consists of around 60 professionals from health, police, education, social care, probation, youth justice, mental health services and housing. The main advantage of the MASH is that professionals can share information their agency may have on a child or young person immediately. This helps to ensure that decisions made take account of all available information.

The MASH was developed as a result of learning from previous experiences, especially from lessons highlighted by reviews of serious safeguarding incidents across the country. A recurring theme of these reviews is the importance of information sharing and close working arrangements between relevant agencies. The importance of the MASH model has been strongly endorsed by a number of organisations.<sup>6-7</sup> The Care Act 2014 also highlights the benefits of a MASH.<sup>8</sup>

The CAF is used by people working for organisations across Suffolk including schools and children's centres. The aim of CAF is for everyone, including children, young people, parents, and carers to agree the first steps and types of support that will help families work their ways out of problems and

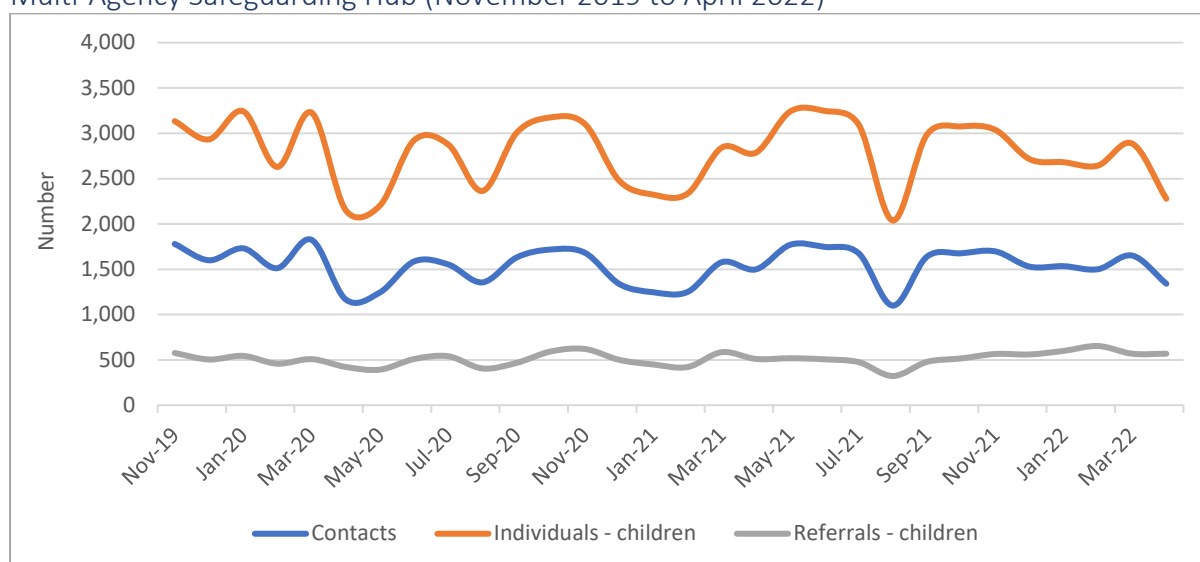
resolve difficulties. If existing support is not sufficient and families are struggling, they can also request additional help by making a CAF referral.<sup>44</sup>

Unlike the MASH, CAF is voluntary, where families, children and young people can choose to be involved, and can withdraw at any time. They can also choose which service providers they want their information to be shared with.

## Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

The latest numbers of contacts, individual children and referrals to the Suffolk MASH are shown in Figure 1. As a single contact may involve multiple children (brothers and sisters for instance), the number of individuals is higher than the number of contacts. Although there is fluctuation during the year (for example, numbers tend to fall during school holidays), current numbers within the Suffolk MASH are similar to those before first national lockdown (March 2020).

Figure 1: Total number of contacts, individual children, and referrals processed by Suffolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (November 2019 to April 2022)



Source: Suffolk County Council. Children and Young People<sup>9</sup>

In the year April 2021 - March 2022, a total of 34,365 contacts came through the MASH. The three biggest sources of referrals remained: Police (10,800 contacts), education/schools (7,705) and health (5,500).

During March 2022, 55.6% of episodes resulted in information and advice being given (55% March 2021). 36.2% went on to Children’s Social Care (34% March 2021), and 4.4% (7.3% March 2021) were referred to the Early Help Team. Of those that transferred to Children’s Social Care, 80% went on for an assessment (78% March 2021), 17% were a Section 47 investigation (a child protection enquiry) (20% 2021), and 2% were handled as either pre-birth, court report requests and complex strategy discussions.

Just over one third of referrals in the year to March 2022 were for children aged 12 to 17 (34.5%, 35.9% in 2021), followed by those aged 6 to 11 (32%, 31.1% in March 2021), and children under five (31.4%, 22.8% in 2021), 2% were for unborn children. 49.3% of referrals were for males, 47.3% females, 0.4% non-binary; the remaining 2.7% were unborn children or “indeterminate.”

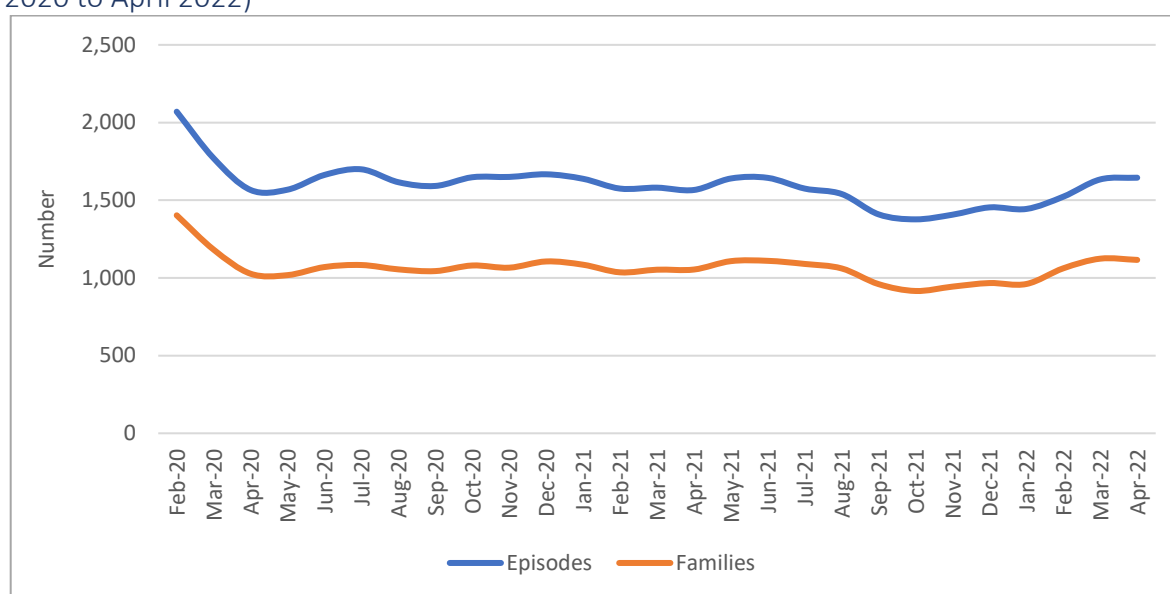
## Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The number of open CAFs in Suffolk has remained relatively stable since April 2020, although February and March 2020 had higher numbers, and numbers have been increasing since January 2022. This may indicate reduced demand during the pandemic (Figure 2).

In March 2021, the two most common needs identified in CAFs in Suffolk were mental health and emotional problems (38.8%), followed by educational attainment (25.9%). These two needs accounted for 64.7% of identified needs.

The main reason for CAF cases being closed in March 2021 in Suffolk was for sustainable progress being made (33.7%), followed by outcomes met (18.9%). Only 9.5% of cases were closed due to either a lack of engagement or withdrawal of consent.

Figure 2: Cumulative number of open Common Assessment Frameworks in Suffolk (February 2020 to April 2022)



Source: Suffolk County Council. Children and Young People<sup>9</sup>

## Suffolk Family Focus

As part of the national Supporting Families programme<sup>45</sup>, Suffolk Family Focus (SFF) is a transformational programme which uses a whole family approach to address multiple disadvantages: “a single point of contact and one plan”.<sup>46</sup> Activities include reducing duplication with other agencies, improving the sequencing of interventions, and minimising done-to and done-for working practices. SFF is aligned with Suffolk Signs of Safety and Wellbeing.

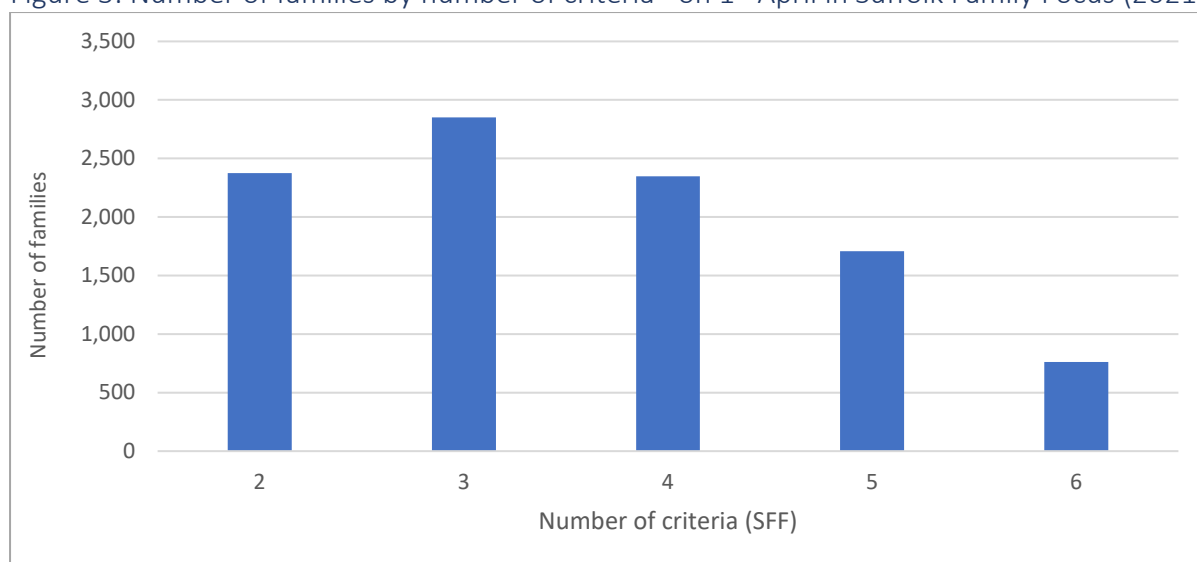
In the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, eligible families (with dependent children, or expectant parents) had to have at least two of six “problems” defined by national government.<sup>47</sup>

1. Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour.
2. Children who have not been attending school regularly.
3. Children who need additional support, from the earliest years to adulthood.
4. Families experiencing or at risk of worklessness, homelessness or financial difficulties.
5. Families affected by domestic abuse.
6. Parents and children with a range of health needs.

Whilst SFF data does not include all families who may need extra support, the data provides a helpful insight into the needs that some local families may have.

On 1st April 2021, there were 10,045 families recorded on SFF requiring support. Of these, 2,375 had two SFF criteria (23.6% of families), 2,850 (28.4%) had three, 2,350 (23.4%) had four, 1,710 (17%) had five, and 760 (7.6%) had all six criteria (figure 3). Nearly a quarter (24.6%) of all families in SFF had five or six criteria recorded.

Figure 3: Number of families by number of criteria\* on 1<sup>st</sup> April in Suffolk Family Focus (2021)

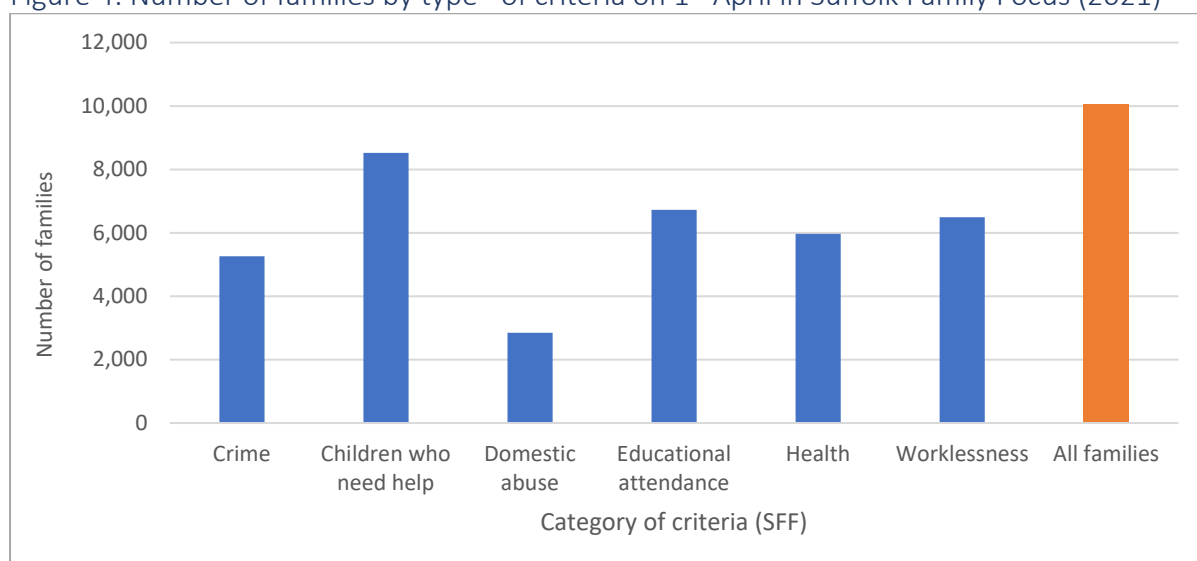


Source: Suffolk County Council. Children and Young People<sup>9</sup>

\* Each family has at least two and up to all six Suffolk Family Focus criteria

The most common type of criteria recorded by families in SFF on 1st April 2021 was ‘children who need help’, which was recorded among 8,525 families (figure 4). This was followed by ‘educational attendance’ (6,720 families) and ‘worklessness’ (6,490 families).

Figure 4: Number of families by type\* of criteria on 1<sup>st</sup> April in Suffolk Family Focus (2021)



Source: Suffolk County Council. Children and Young People<sup>9</sup>

\* As families can have multiple types of criteria, the sum of all criteria is greater than the total number of families



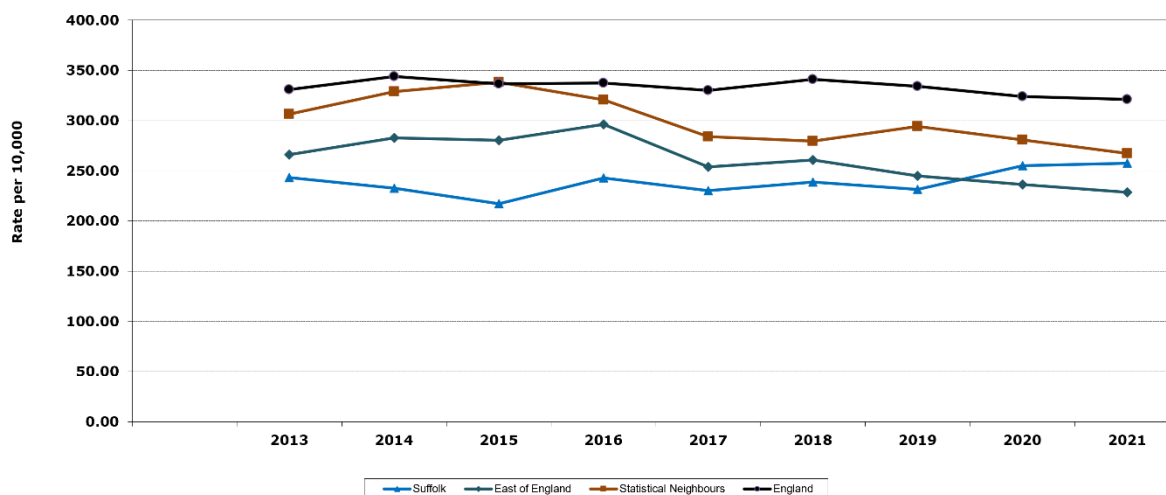
## Children in Need

Children in need are a legally defined group of children (under the Children Act 1989), assessed as needing help and protection as a result of risks to their development or health.<sup>10</sup> This group includes children subject to Child in Need Plans, Child Protection Plans, Children in Care (also known as Looked After Children), young carers, and disabled children. Children in need include young people aged 18 or over who continue to receive care, accommodation or support from children’s services and unborn children.<sup>11</sup>

The Department for Education’s longitudinal analysis estimated that around 6% of children in England will be in need at some point over the course of a year.<sup>12</sup> Children in need have poorer outcomes at every stage of education than their peers, with a widening attainment gap as they progress through school. They are also more likely than other children not to be in education, employment, or training (NEET) after the age of 18.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, there were 3,937 children in need in Suffolk. This includes children on child protection plans, children in care, young carers, children with disabilities, and children in need, as well as some unborn children and young people over 18 who continue to receive support from children’s services, although rates are calculated by the Department of Education based on the population aged under 18. This compares with 3,532 children in need locally in 2019. The rate of children in need has increased in Suffolk in recent years, and the current rate of 257.6 (per 10,000 children aged under 18) is the highest it has been in the past nine years (Figure 5). The Suffolk rate remains significantly lower (statistically) than the England average of 321.2 per 10,000 and is also lower than the average for Suffolk’s statistical neighbours (267.13 per 10,000), however rates in England and in the East of England are declining.

Figure 5: Rate of children in need on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2013 to 2021)



Source: Department for Education. Statistics: children in need and child protection<sup>13</sup>

The demographic profile of children in need in Suffolk on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 is shown in Table 2. Boys are over-represented among children in need compared with girls – 54.0% (statistically similar to England, 53.6%) versus 43.2%. A significantly higher percentage of Suffolk children in need were unborn (2.6% compared to 1.9% England), although numbers are small.

A significantly higher percentage of children in need in Suffolk were White (79.9%) compared to England (70.9%), with the percentage of children from each other ethnicity group significantly lower

than England. The percentage of children in need in Suffolk recorded with a White ethnicity is significantly similar percentage of White pupils in Suffolk schools (80.5%).<sup>14</sup>

Compared to England, Suffolk had significantly higher percentages of children in need who were unborn (2.6% compared to 1.9%) or under 1 year (8.4% compared to 4.4%). The percentage aged 1 to 4 years old (16.7%) was statistically similar to England (16.0%), as was the percentage aged 16 and over (24.6% Suffolk, 24.4% England).

Table 2: Demographics of children in need on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk and England (2021)

Table 2a Sex of children in need on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk and England (2021)

Sex	Suffolk count*	Suffolk %*	England %
Male	2,125	54.0%	53.6%
Female	1,700	43.2%	44.3%
Unborn	105	2.6%	1.9%
Undefined	5	0.2%	0.2%
Total	3,937	100%	100%

Table 2b Age of children in need on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk and England (2021)

Age	Suffolk count*	Suffolk %*	England %
Under 1	330	8.4%	4.4%
1 to 4	655	16.7%	16.0%
5 to 10	1,015	25.8%	n/a
11 to 15	970	24.6%	n/a
16 and over	970	24.6%	24.4%
Total	3,935	100%	n/a

Table 2c Ethnicity of children in need on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk and England (2021)

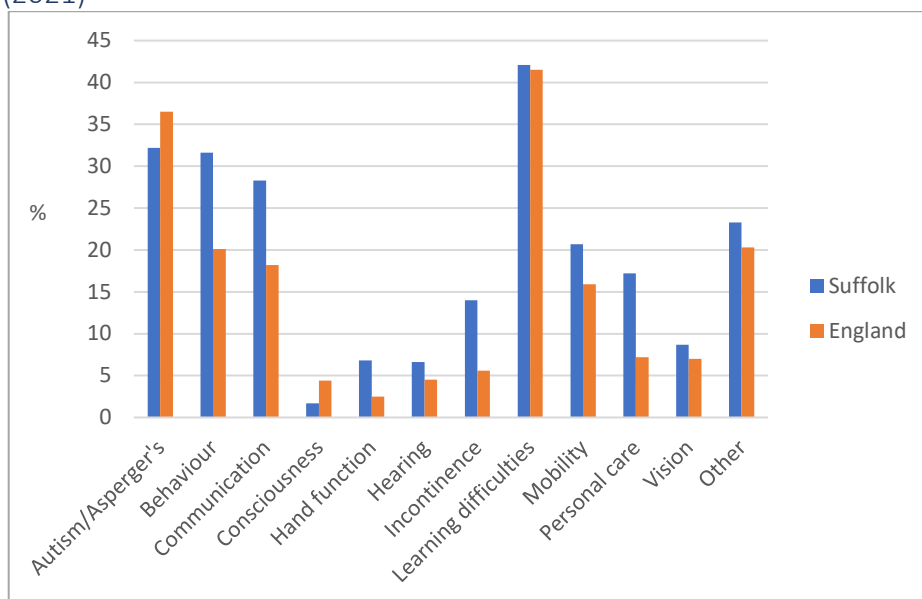
Ethnicity	Suffolk count*	Suffolk %*	England %
White	3,145	79.9%	70.9%
Mixed	280	7.1%	9.0%
Asian or Asian British	115	2.9%	7.9%
Black or Black British	100	2.6%	8.7%
Other Ethnic Group	295	7.5%	3.5%
Total	3,935	100%	100%

Source: Suffolk County Council. Children and Young People<sup>9</sup>. Department for Education. Statistics: children in need and child protection<sup>13</sup>

\*Numbers may not add to total, and percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Of the 3,937 children in need in Suffolk on 31 March 2021, just over 1 in 10 children in need (516, 13.1%) had a disability recorded, statistically similar to England (12.7%). Learning difficulties (42.1%, statistically similar to England 41.5%), Autism or Asperger's (32.2%, statistically similar to England 36.5%), and behaviour (31.6%, significantly higher than England 20.1%) were the top three most common disabilities recorded in Suffolk (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Percentage of disabilities\* recorded for children in need on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2021)

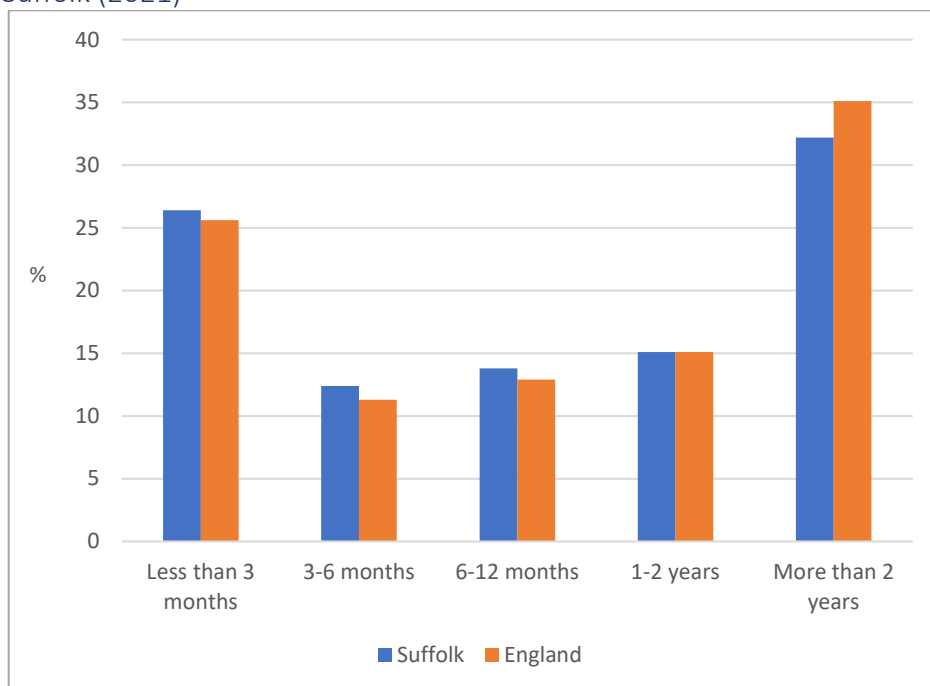


Source: Department for Education. Statistics: children in need and child protection<sup>13</sup>

\* A child may have more than one disability recorded so the percentages will not sum to 100%

Among children in need on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, nearly a third (32.2%) of episodes of need in Suffolk had lasted for more than two years (based on duration of open case), significantly lower than England (35.1%, Figure 7). Just over one quarter of episodes of need in Suffolk (26.4%) had lasted less than three months (statistically similar to England, 25.6%).

Figure 7: Duration of episode\* of need (percentage) for children in need on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2021)



Source: Department for Education. Statistics: children in need and child protection<sup>13</sup>

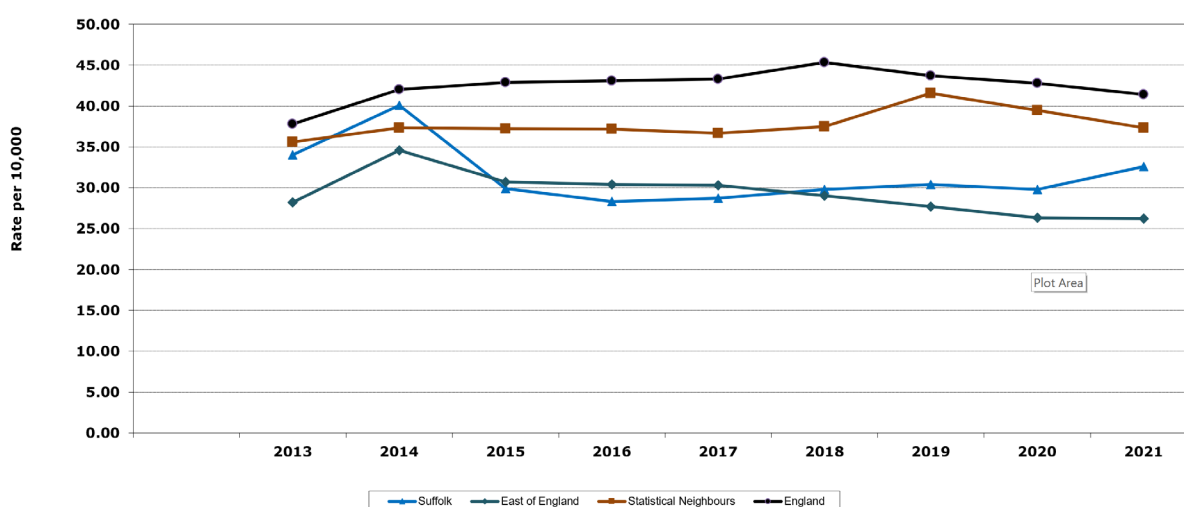
\* The duration of episodes open on 31<sup>st</sup> March is calculated as the difference between 31<sup>st</sup> March of the reporting year and the referral date (a child begins an episode of need when they are referred to children's social care services)

## Children with a Child Protection Plan

Local authorities have a responsibility to provide child protection plans for those children in need who are at risk of harm through physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, or neglect. Child protection plans are developed with multi-agencies and reviewed regularly to ensure that plans are in place to keep children safe.

There were 500 children in Suffolk who were subject to a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. This compares with 460 in 2020. The rate of child protection plans in Suffolk has increased in recent years, and the current rate of 32.6 (per 10,000 children aged under 18) is the highest it has been locally since 2014 (Figure 8). Although increasing, the current rate in Suffolk remains significantly lower (statistically) than the England average of 41.4 per 10,000.

Figure 8: Rate of children subject to a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2013 to 2021)



Source: Department for Education. Local authority interactive tool (LAIT). 2021<sup>1</sup>

The demographic profile of children subject to a child protection plan in Suffolk on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 is shown in Table 3. A higher percentage of boys (50.6%) than girls (46.4%) were subject to a child protection plan.

Around three in ten children (29.1%) were aged 5-10, whilst one quarter were aged 1-4 (24.5%) or 11-15 (25.1%). The percentage of Suffolk children subject to a child protection plan and recorded with a White ethnicity (91.4%) is significantly higher than the percentage of White pupils in Suffolk schools (80.5%).<sup>14</sup>

Table 3: Demographics of children subject to a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2021)

Table 3a: Suffolk children subject to a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March by sex (2021)

Sex	Number*	%*
Male	250	50.6%
Female	230	46.4%
Unborn	15	3.0%
Undefined	0	0.0%
Total	500	100%

Table 3b: Suffolk children subject to a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March by age (2021)

Age	Number*	%*
Under 1	75	15.3%
1 to 4	120	24.5%
5 to 10	145	29.1%
11 to 15	125	25.1%
16 to 17	30	6.0%
Total	500	100%

Table 3c: Suffolk children subject to a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March by ethnicity (2021)

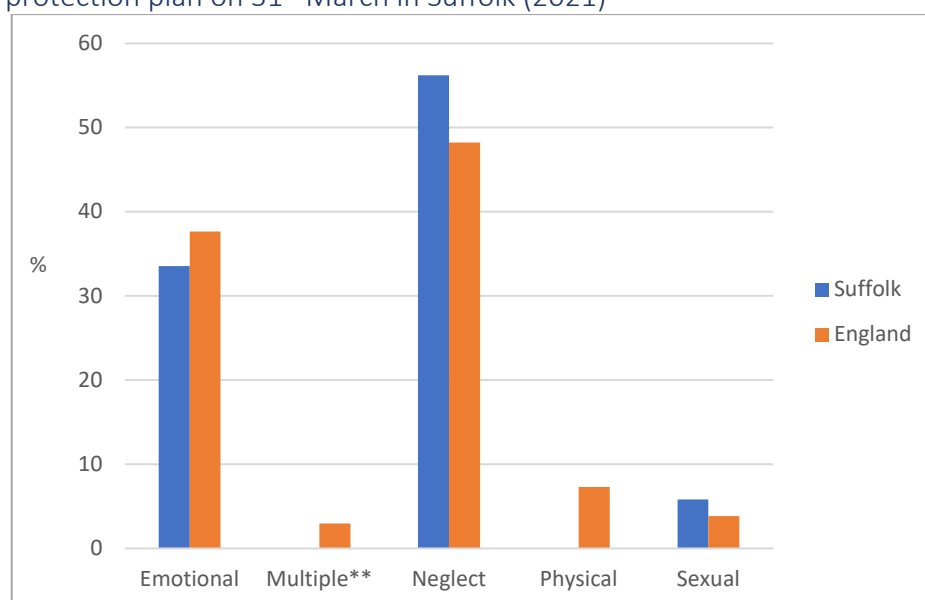
Ethnicity	Number*	%*
White	455	91.4%
Mixed	30	6.2%
Asian or Asian British	0	0.8%
Black or Black British	10	1.4%
Other Ethnic Group	0	0.2%
Total	500	100%

Source: Suffolk County Council. Children and Young People<sup>9</sup>

\*Numbers may not add to total, and percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Neglect (56.2%) was the most common initial category of abuse recorded for children on child protection plans in Suffolk. This proportion is significantly higher (statistically) than England (48.2%, Figure 9). A further 33.5% in Suffolk were due to emotional abuse, statistically similar to England (37.7%).

Figure 9: Initial category of abuse\* (percentage) recorded among children subject to a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2021)



Source: Department for Education. Statistics: children in need and child protection<sup>13</sup>

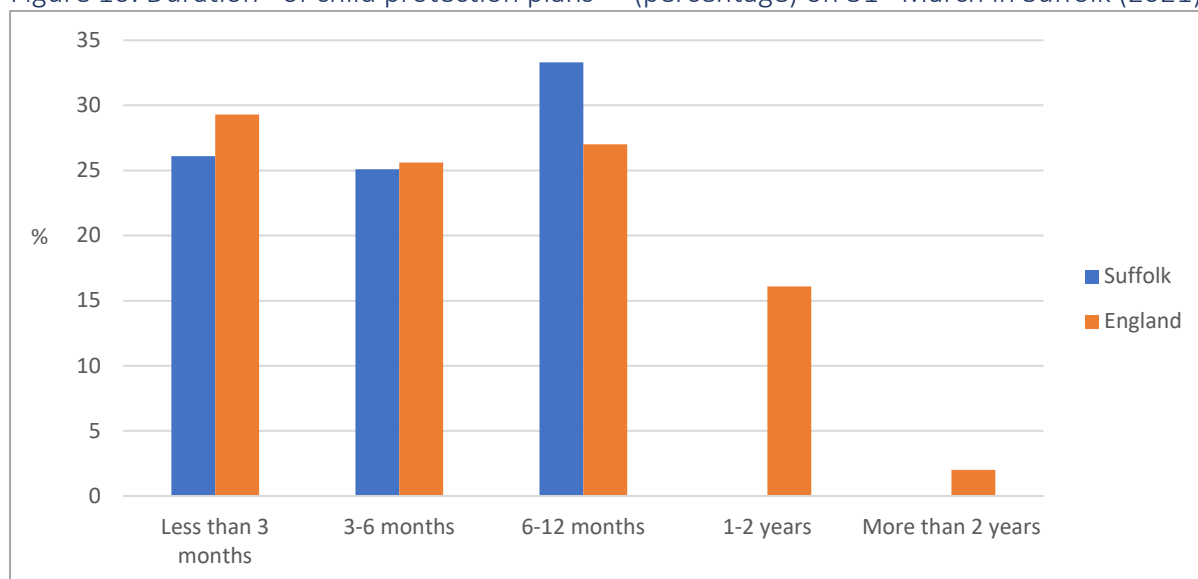
\* Percentages for multiple and physical abuse for Suffolk have been suppressed and not reported

\*\* Multiple refers to instances where there is more than one main category of need; children in this category are not included in any other category of need, therefore a child is counted only once

Among children with child protection plans in Suffolk on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 (Figure 10), 1 in 3 (33.3%) plans had lasted between 6-12 months (statistically higher than England, 27.0%), 26.1% had lasted

less than three months (statistically similar to England, 29.3%), whilst a further 25.1% had lasted between 3-6 months (statistically similar to England, 25.6%).

Figure 10: Duration\* of child protection plans\*\* (percentage) on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2021)



Source: Department for Education. Statistics: children in need and child protection<sup>13</sup>

\* Percentages for 1-2 years and more than 2 years for Suffolk have been suppressed and not reported

\*\* The duration of a child protection plan on 31<sup>st</sup> March is calculated as the time between the child protection plan start date and 31<sup>st</sup> March of the reporting year

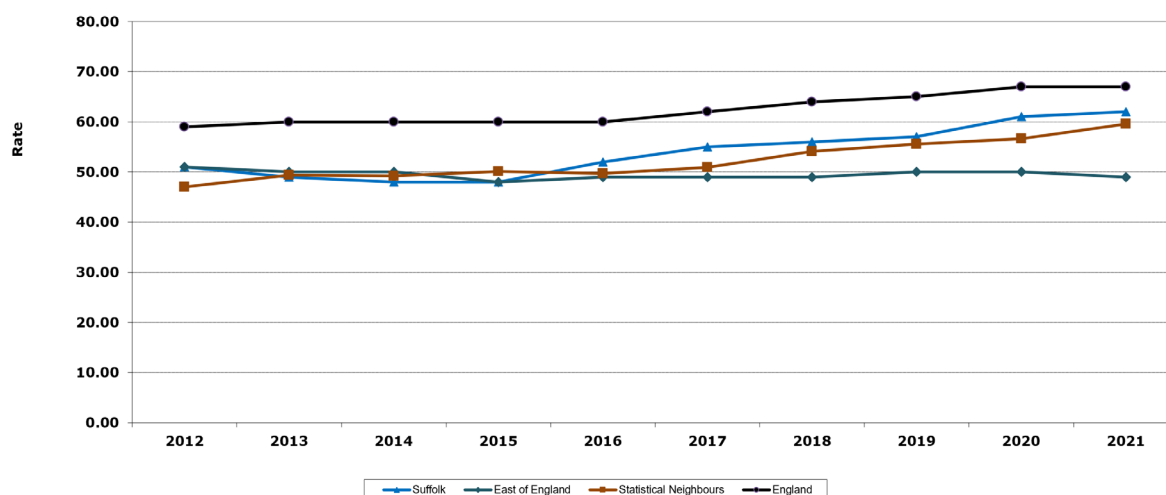
## Children in Care

Children in care (also known as children who are looked after) describes children and young people who are cared for in a foster home or in a residential home, such as a children’s home. Children in care may be subject to a care order, which is a legal order to remove children from their parents or carers, or parents may request care for their child. Children and young people in care are often among the most socially excluded children in need in England. Care-experienced girls and women are over-represented in the youth and criminal justice system, although the majority of children in care do not come into conflict with the law.<sup>42</sup> There are significant inequalities in health and social outcomes compared with all children, and these contribute to poorer health outcomes and social exclusion of care leavers later in life.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Suffolk children in foster care “blossomed because their carers were at home more,” while court closures led to delays for “children needing permanence.”<sup>40</sup>

There were 947 children in care in Suffolk on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, of which 69 (7%) were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This compares with 854 children in care locally in 2018 (of which 71 were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children). Since 2018, the rate of children in care in Suffolk has steadily increased, and the current rate of 62.0 (per 10,000 children aged under 18) is the highest for ten years (Figure 11). This is higher than Suffolk’s statistical neighbours (59.6 per 10,000). Although increasing, the current rate in Suffolk remains significantly lower (statistically) than England (67 per 10,000). The Suffolk rate is affected by numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children: unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are a statistically significantly higher percentage of looked after children in Suffolk than England, and than most (eight) of Suffolk’s statistical neighbours.

Figure 11: Rate of children in care aged under 18 on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2012 to 2021)



Source: Department for Education. Local authority interactive tool (LAIT). 2021<sup>1</sup>

The demographic profile of children in care in Suffolk on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 is shown in Table 4. Just under two thirds (57.2%) of children in care were boys, statistically similar to England (55.7%). Around one third (37.0%) of children were aged 10-15 (statistically similar to England, 38.8%, whilst one quarter were aged 16 and over (statistically similar to England, 23.4%). The percentage of children in care who are White (81.8%) is significantly higher than England (74.7%), but statistically lower than the percentage of White school pupils (87.7%).<sup>14</sup>

Table 4: Demographics of children in care on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2021)

Table 4a: Children in care on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 by sex, Suffolk and England

Sex	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	England number	England %
Male	542	57.2%	45,050	55.7%
Female	405	42.8%	35,800	44.3%
Total	947	100%	80,850	100%

Source: Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

Table 4b: Children in care on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 by age, Suffolk and England

Age	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	England number	England %
Under 1	48	5.1%	3,930	4.9%
1 to 4	131	13.8%	11,670	14.4%
5 to 9	181	19.1%	15,020	18.6%
10 to 15	350	37.0%	31,330	38.8%
16 and over	237	25.0%	18,900	23.4%
Total	947	100%	80,850	100%

Source: Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

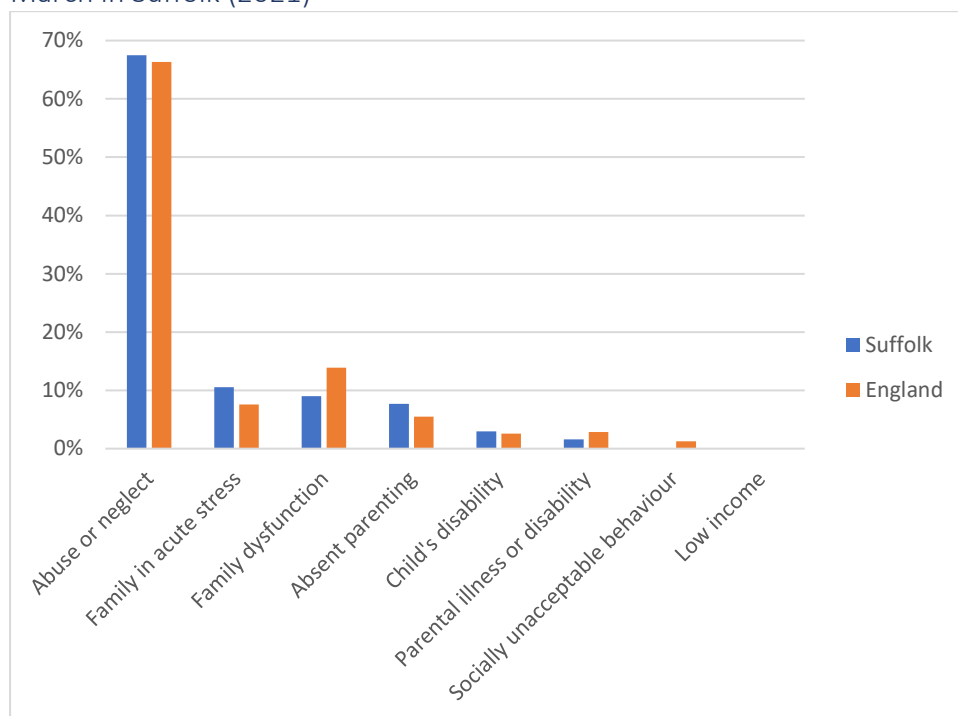
Table 4c: Children in care on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 by age, Suffolk and England

Ethnicity	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	England number	England %
White	775	81.8%	60,420	74.7%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	57	6.0%	8,270	10.2%
Asian or Asian British	33	3.2%	3,350	4.4%
Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British	27	2.9%	5,520	6.8%
Other Ethnic Group	49	5.2%	2,570	3.2%
Total	947	100%	80,850	100%

Source: Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

Most children in care in Suffolk on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 had a recorded need of abuse or neglect – 67.5% (Figure 12). This is statistically similar to the national average of 66.3%. Local families in acute stress (10.6%, significantly higher than England 7.6%) and “family dysfunction” (9.0%, significantly lower than England 13.9%) were the other two highest categories of need of children in care.

Figure 12: Percentage\* of children in care by main recorded category of need\*\* on 31<sup>st</sup> March in Suffolk (2021)



Source: Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

\* Percentages for socially unacceptable behaviour and low income for Suffolk have been suppressed and not reported

\*\* Category of need is the main category of the eight “need codes” at the time the child started to be looked after

7.2% of the 947 children in care in Suffolk on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (69 children in total), significantly higher than England (5.0%).<sup>15</sup> Many of these children and young people will have additional health needs that are specific to their asylum status, including poorer physical health and increased emotional, behavioural, and mental health problems.<sup>16</sup>

Local data (rounded) from October 2021 indicates there were 90 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children hosted across the county.<sup>17</sup> Of these, 20 (21.6%) were aged 15 and under, 35 (37.5%) were aged 16 whilst 35 were aged 17 (40.9%). The majority of these children were male (85 out of 90).

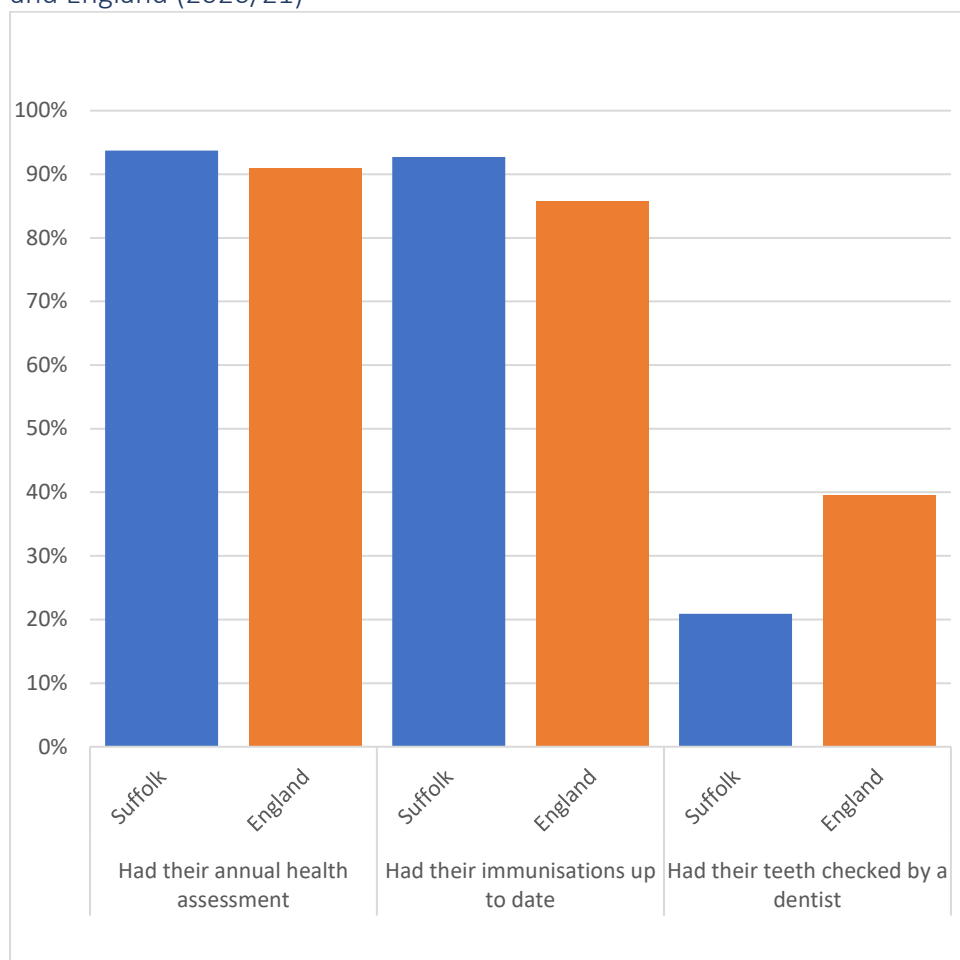


Nearly half of the children were from Afghanistan (47.7%, n=40), but included children from a range of countries such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Kuwait. The majority of children hosted in Suffolk in October 2021 were located in Ipswich (68.2%, n=60).

Local authorities are responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in care. This includes a child’s physical, emotional, and mental health, and acting on any early signs of health issues.<sup>18</sup> As part of this, local authorities need to ensure that children in care have access to regular health check-ups.

Most children who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months in Suffolk during 2020/21 were up to date with their annual health assessments and immunisations (Figure 13). The proportion who had their teeth checked by a dentist was 20.9% in Suffolk, significantly lower than England (39.6%). These proportions are likely to have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with fewer children being able to access their dentists. During 2019/20, for instance, the comparative figures were significantly higher for Suffolk (72.9%) and England (85.6%).

Figure 13: Percentage of children in care who received physical health assessments in Suffolk and England (2020/21)



Source: Suffolk Public Health and Communities analysis of Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

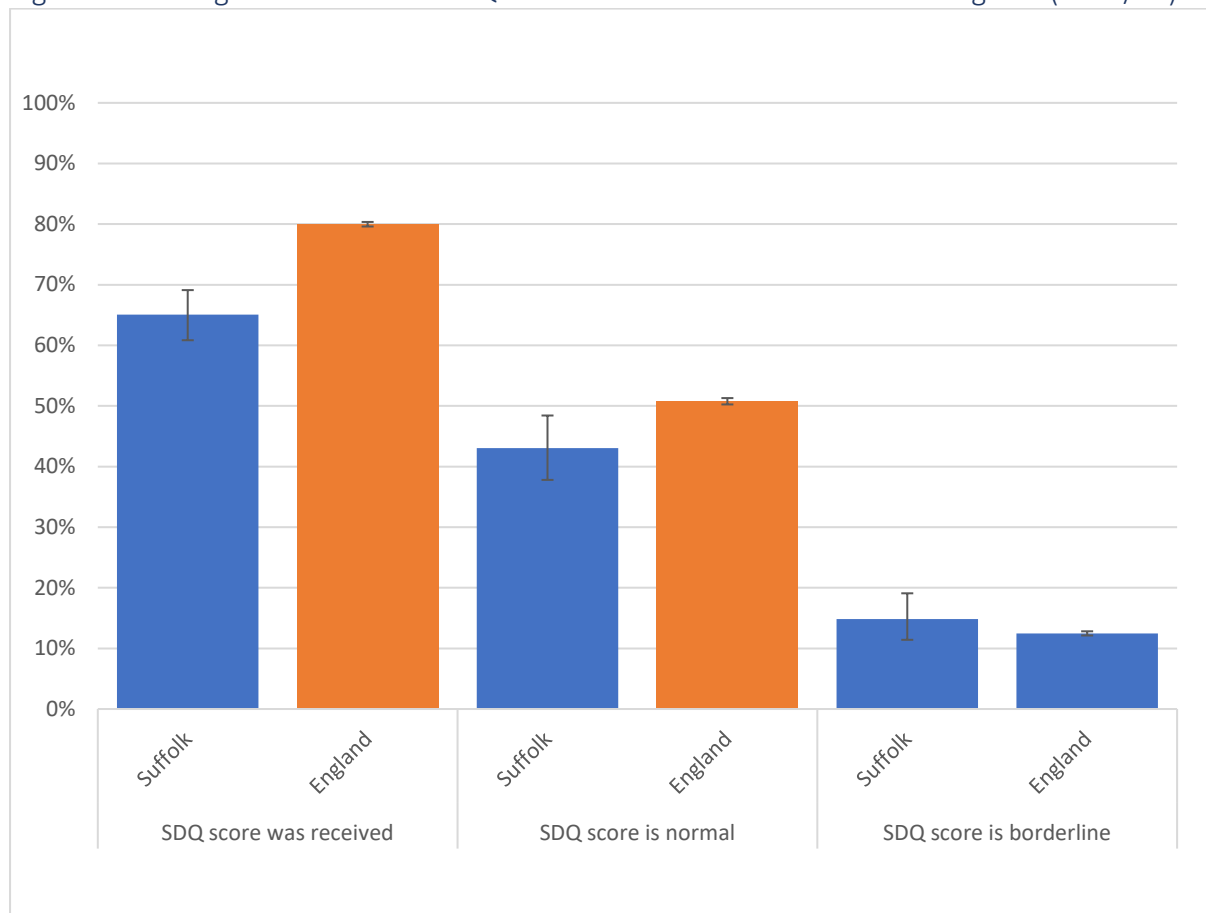
\* Local authority level data for children looked after on 31<sup>st</sup> March for at least 12 months

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a short behavioural screening questionnaire used to assess the emotional and behavioural health of children. 2021 data shows 65.1% of Suffolk

children aged 5-16 who had been in care continuously for at least 12 months had an SDQ score recorded (Figure 14). This was statistically significantly lower than England (80.0%). Locally, this percentage was significantly lower than 2020 (88.7%) during 2019/20, and the fall may be a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the SDQ:

- 43.0% of children in care in Suffolk had “normal” emotional and behavioural health, significantly lower than England (50.8%),
- 14.8% had “borderline” scores, not significantly different to England (12.5%),
- 42.1% had scores which were a “cause for concern,” not significantly different to England (36.8%).
- 57.0% of Suffolk children in care aged 5-16 had an SDQ score which was either a cause for concern or borderline, which is significantly higher (statistically) than England (49.2%).

Figure 14: Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire results in Suffolk and England (2020/21)



Source: Suffolk Public Health and Communities analysis of Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

\* Local authority level data for children looked after on 31<sup>st</sup> March for at least 12 months

## Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) include various forms of physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction experienced in childhood. These experiences can lead to poor health and social outcomes in adulthood. Public Health England explain that ACEs can be related to the child (psychological, physical, and sexual abuse or neglect), or related to the household they live in (parental separation, domestic violence, mental illness, alcohol abuse, substance misuse, imprisonment).<sup>19</sup> As the number of ACEs increase for a child, so does the risk of poor outcomes.<sup>20</sup>

A number of studies about ACEs have attempted to estimate how many children and young people live through specific adverse experiences.<sup>20</sup> By considering these studies, it is possible to estimate the number of children and young people in Suffolk who are likely to be experiencing them. Table 5 shows the lowest and highest prevalence estimates of children and young people aged 0-18 in Suffolk who may be experiencing particular ACEs.

It is important to recognise, however, that not everyone exposed to ACEs will go on to experience negative consequences. Protective factors against ACEs include: having supportive parents who read and talk to their children; having healthy relationships with parents, family members and friends; learning good communication skills.<sup>21</sup>

Table 5: Estimated number of children (aged 0-18) experiencing specific adverse childhood experiences in Suffolk (2020)

Adverse Childhood Experience	Estimate range	Lowest estimate	Highest estimate
Parental separation or divorce	18%-25%	28,880	40,110
Emotional, psychological, or verbal abuse	17%-23%	27,280	36,910
Childhood physical abuse	14%-17%	22,460	27,280
Exposure to domestic violence	12%-17%	19,260	27,280
Household mental illness	11%-18%	17,650	28,880
Household alcohol abuse	9%-14%	14,440	22,460
Household drug abuse	4%-6%	6,420	9,630
Childhood sexual abuse	3%-10%	4,810	16,050
Household member in prison	3%-5%	4,810	8,020

Source: Public Health Wales. Adverse Childhood Experiences and their impact on health-harming behaviours in the Welsh adult population<sup>22</sup>

For the period 2019/20, it was estimated that around one in three children in England lived with at least one parent reporting emotional distress, which is associated with an increased risk of behavioural and emotional difficulties in later childhood and adulthood.<sup>41</sup>

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are also covered in the [State of Children in Suffolk](#) chapter on feeling safe.

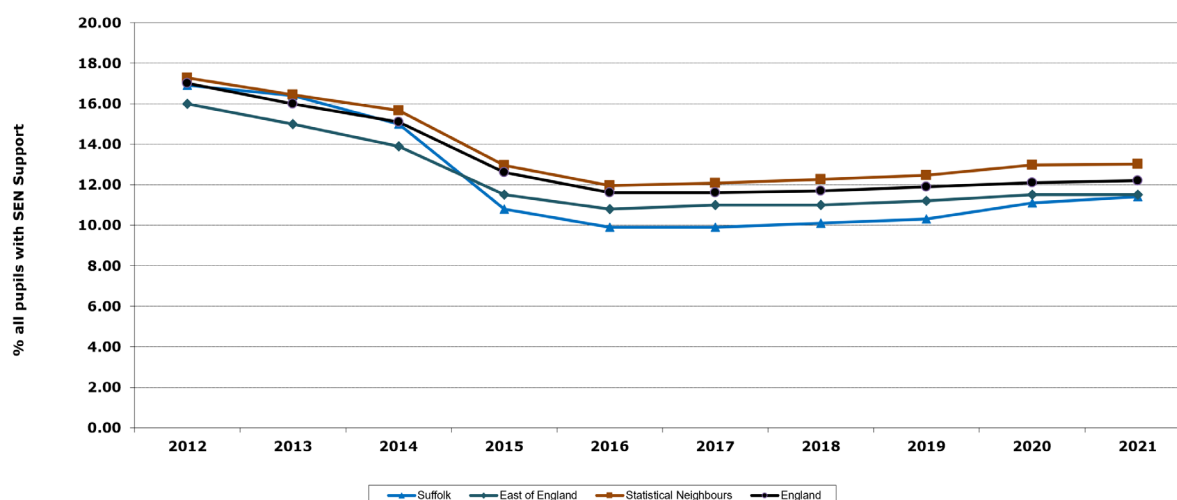
## Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Some children have difficulties or disabilities that make it harder and more challenging for them to learn compared with other children. A child's ability to learn may be affected by numerous factors, such as: behavioural difficulties, hearing or visual impairment, limited ability to socialise, difficulties with reading and writing, lowered ability to concentrate (for example, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or ADHD), mental health difficulties, long-term health conditions, physical disability. As a consequence, some children require additional support with their learning, such as children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Children whose needs can be managed within school receive special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support. Children with more challenging needs who require more support than their school can provide may need an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Not all children with SEND will have an EHC plan, but all children with an EHC plan have special educational needs.

Between 2015/16 and 2020/21, the number of pupils receiving SEND support in all schools in Suffolk increased from 10,803 to 12,670 (a significant increase from 9.9% to 11.4%; Figure 15). The percentage also increased significantly for England, from 11.6% to 12.2%. Suffolk remains significantly lower (statistically) than the England average, and below Suffolk's statistical neighbours (13.0%).

Figure 15: Percentage of pupils in all schools\* with special educational needs and disabilities support in Suffolk (2012 to 2021)



Source: Department for Education. Local authority interactive tool (LAIT).

2021<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait>

\* Includes: independent schools, pupil referral units, state-funded nursery schools, state-funded primary schools, state-funded secondary schools, state-funded special schools

The total percentage of pupils receiving SEND support in Suffolk (as well as the percentage in pupil referral units, and in state-funded primary schools) was significantly lower than England in 2021/22 (Table 6), while the percentage of pupils receiving SEND support in other settings was statistically similar to England. The most noticeable difference was in pupil referral units (35.2% Suffolk compared to 54.0% England).

Table 6: Pupils with special educational needs by school type, as a percentage of total pupils in each school type, Suffolk and England (2021/22)

Type of school	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	Statistical significance comparison with England	England %
Independent	1,128	14.1%	Similar	14.7%
Non-maintained special	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.6%
Pupil referral unit	38	35.2%	Lower	54.0%
State-funded nursery	11	12.2%	Similar	14.5%
State-funded primary	6,891	12.1%	Lower	13.0%
State-funded secondary	5,280	11.6%	Similar	11.9%
State-funded special	15	1.1%	Similar	1.1%
Total	13,363	11.9%	Lower	12.6%

Source: Department for Education. Statistics: special educational needs (SEN)<sup>23</sup>

The top five most common primary needs among pupils (excluding pupils at independent or general hospital schools) receiving SEND support in Suffolk in 2021/22 were (Table 7):

1. speech, language, and communication needs (20.8%, significantly lower than England),
2. social, emotional, and mental health needs (18.6%, significantly lower than England),
3. specific learning difficulties (18.5%, significantly higher than England),
4. moderate learning difficulties (12.5%, significantly lower than England), and
5. autistic spectrum disorder (8.9%, significantly higher than England).

In total, these top five accounted for nearly four out of five (79.4%) all of primary needs locally. This is significantly lower than England (86.0%).

Table 7: Number of pupils in all schools\* with special educational needs and disabilities support by primary need in Suffolk (2021/22)

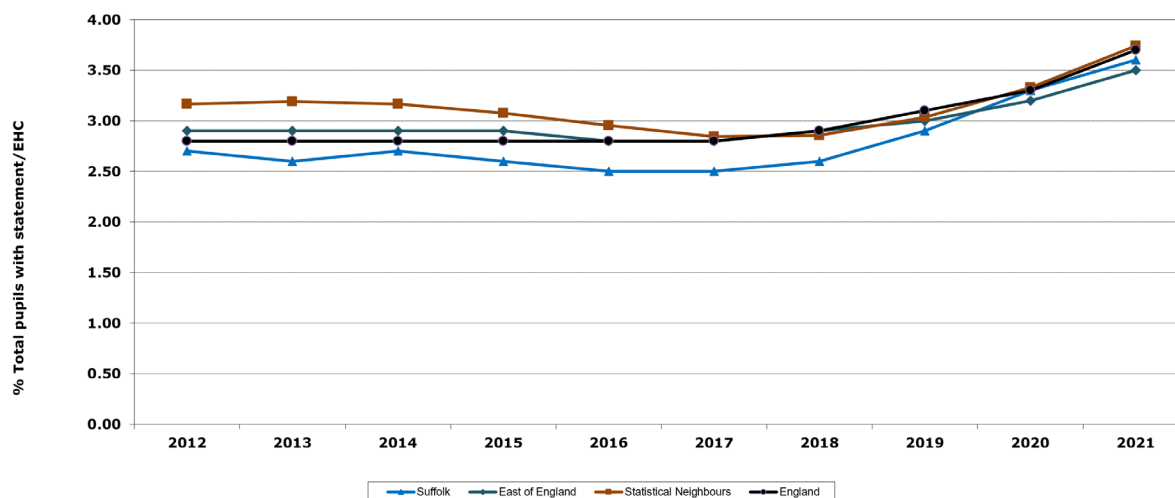
Type of need	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	Statistical significance comparison with England	England %
Autistic spectrum disorder	1,094	8.9%	Higher	7.6%
Hearing impairment	201	1.6%	Similar	1.6%
Moderate learning difficulty	1,530	12.5%	Lower	18.9%
Multi-sensory impairment	40	0.3%	Similar	0.3%
Other difficulty/disability	1,049	8.6%	Higher	4.3%
Physical disability	304	2.5%	Similar	2.2%
Profound and multiple learning difficulty	11	0.1%	Similar	0.1%
SEND support but no assessment of need	743	6.1%	Higher	4.4%
Severe learning difficulty	27	0.2%	Similar	0.2%
Social, emotional, and mental health	2,275	18.6%	Lower	20.0%
Specific learning difficulty	2,262	18.5%	Higher	14.4%
Speech, language, and communications needs	2,548	20.8%	Lower	25.1%
Visual impairment	151	1.2%	Similar	0.9%
Total	12,235			

Source: Department for Education. Statistics: special educational needs (SEN)<sup>23</sup>

\* Does not include independent or general hospital schools

The figure for Suffolk for 2020/21 is statistically similar to England (3.7%). 3.7% pupils in Suffolk's statistical neighbour group had a SEN statement or EHC plan.

Figure 16: Percentage of special educational needs and disabilities pupils in all schools\* with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan in Suffolk, East of England, and Suffolk’s statistical neighbours (2012 to 2021)



Source: Department for Education. Local authority interactive tool (LAIT). 2021<sup>1</sup>

\* Includes: independent schools, pupil referral units, state-funded nursery schools, state-funded-primary schools, state-funded secondary schools, state-funded special schools

The percentage of pupils with an EHC plan in Suffolk and England in 2020/21 was highest in state-funded special schools. Significantly higher percentages of pupils had EHC plans in Suffolk state-funded secondary schools and pupil referral units than England (Table 8).

Table 8: Special educational needs and disabilities pupils with an education, health and care plan by school type, Suffolk and England (2021/22)

Type of school	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	Statistical comparison with England	England %
Independent	363	4.5%	Similar	4.3%
Non-maintained special	No data	N/A	N/A	98.1%
Pupil referral unit	70	64.8%	Higher	28.2%
State-funded nursery	1	1.1%	Similar	1.4%
State-funded primary	1,322	2.3%	Similar	2.3%
State-funded secondary	1,210	2.7%	Higher	2.2%
State-funded special	1,361	98.9%	Similar	98.7%
Total	4,327	3.9%	Similar	4.0%

Source: Department for Education. Statistics: special educational needs (SEN)<sup>23</sup>

Among pupils with a statement or an EHC plan in Suffolk (excluding pupils at independent or “general hospital” schools), the top five most common primary needs in 2021/22 were (Table 9):

1. pupils on the autism spectrum (25.0%), significantly lower than England (31.3%)
2. speech, language, and communication needs (16.2%), statistically similar to England (17.4%)
3. social, emotional, and mental health needs (14.0%), statistically similar to England (15.0%).
4. Severe learning difficulties (12.3%), significantly higher than England (9.5%)
5. moderate learning difficulties (11.7%), significantly higher than England (9.7%)

In total, these top five accounted for four-fifths (79.2%) of all primary needs locally, significantly lower than England (82.9%).

Table 9: Special educational needs and disabilities pupils in all schools\* with a statement or an education, health and care plan by primary need in Suffolk (2021/22)

Type of need	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	Statistical comparison with England	England %
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	992	25.0%	Lower	31.3%
Hearing Impairment	87	2.2%	Similar	1.9%
Moderate Learning Difficulty	465	11.7%	Higher	9.7%
Multi- Sensory Impairment	20	0.5%	Similar	0.3%
Other Difficulty/Disability	172	4.3%	Higher	2.5%
Physical Disability	193	4.9%	Similar	4.2%
Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulty	61	1.5%	Lower	3.1%
Severe Learning Difficulty	489	12.3%	Higher	9.5%
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	554	14.0%	Similar	15.0%
Specific Learning Difficulty	259	6.5%	Higher	3.9%
Speech, Language and Communications needs	641	16.2%	Similar	17.4%
Visual Impairment	31	0.8%	Similar	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,964</b>			

Source: Department for Education. Statistics: special educational needs (SEN)<sup>23</sup>

\* Does not include independent or general hospital schools

## Free school meals

Families experiencing financial hardship, such as those on low incomes or in receipt of certain welfare benefits, can apply for their children to receive free school meals. School meals, health and learning are strongly connected. Children growing up in lower income families have poorer educational outcomes than their wealthier peers.<sup>24</sup> Providing healthy food – which can improve educational outcomes – could help close this attainment gap.

The proportion of state-funded primary school children in Suffolk eligible for free school meals increased from 11.2% in 2018 to 19.3% in 2021 (10,969 pupils), significantly lower than England (21.6%).<sup>25</sup> The figure is 18.7% for Suffolk’s statistical neighbours.<sup>1</sup> Among state-funded secondary school children, this proportion increased from 9.6% (2018) to 15.9% (2021), 7,119 pupils.<sup>25</sup> This is significantly lower than England (18.9%). The figure is 15.7% for Suffolk’s statistical neighbours.<sup>1</sup> The percentages have increased year on year since 2018 for Suffolk, its statistical neighbours and England.

## English as an additional language

Each year, schools in Suffolk (and throughout the country) carry out a School Census which collects information about a range of topics, such as age, gender, class size, and free school meals. The language spoken by children is also collected. Whilst English is the first language spoken by the majority of children at school, this is not always the case.

For some children, speaking two or more languages is a real asset and benefit in their educational development. Other children whose first language is not English, however, can struggle and face a number of challenges at school.<sup>26</sup>

In January 2021, 10.2% of state-funded primary school pupils in Suffolk spoke English as an additional language (EAL), significantly lower than England (20.9%, Table 10). In 2012 the figure for

Suffolk was 5.9%, and increased every year until 2020, although the change between 2020 and 2021 was not statistically significant. In state-funded secondary schools 7.5% of pupils have English as an additional language, significantly lower than England (17.2%). The percentage in Suffolk has increased every year since 2012 (4.2%). The percentages of children with EAL are higher in Suffolk than its statistical neighbours, where 7.1% of children in primary schools and 5.8% children in secondary schools have English as an additional language.<sup>1</sup>

Table 10: Number of school pupils whose first language is not English in Suffolk (January 2021)

First language	State-funded primary school Pupils	State-funded primary school %	State-funded secondary school Pupils	State-funded secondary school %
English	50,962	89.5%	41,366	92.2%
Not English	5,813	10.2%	3,350	7.5%
Not recorded	141	0.2%	172	0.4%
Total	56,916	100%	44,888	100%

Source: Department for Education. Schools, pupils and their characteristics<sup>25</sup>

## Children and young people with disabilities

According to the 2010 Equality Act, a person is considered to have a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effects on their ability to do normal daily activities.<sup>27</sup> Data from the 2019/20 Family Resources Survey found that 14.1 million people in the UK reported having a disability, an increase of 2.7 million over the past decade.<sup>28</sup> The percentage of people who reported a disability increased during this time from 19% to 22%. Nearly one in ten children (8%) reported a disability.

In 2020/21, the Family Resources Survey estimated 9% of children reported a disability.<sup>28</sup> Social or behavioural impairments were the most common category reported among disabled children (37%). Mental health or “Other” were the second most prevalent impairments in children (21%). This would suggest that around 12,260 children under 16 in Suffolk have a disability (based on the 2020 midyear population estimate, rounded to the nearest ten, Table 11).



Table 11: Estimated number of Suffolk children aged under 16 with a reported impairment by impairment type (2020/21)

Type of impairment	Estimated number aged under 16 (Suffolk)*	% Disabled children by impairment type (England)**
Social/behavioural	4,540	37%
Learning	2,450	20%
Mental health	2,570	21%
Stamina/breathing/fatigue	2,330	19%
Mobility	1,840	15%
Other	2,570	21%
Memory	740	6%
Dexterity	1,100	9%
Hearing	610	5%
Vision	610	5%

Source: Department for Work and Pensions. Family Resources Survey<sup>28</sup>

\* Numbers will sum to greater than the total as children can report more than one impairment type, rounded to nearest 10.

\*\* Totals will sum to over 100% as children can report more than one impairment type. A child is defined as “an individual aged under 16, or someone aged 16-19 and not married/in a civil partnership/living with a partner and living with parents (or a responsible adult) and in full-time non-advanced education or in unwaged Government training

The predicted number of young people aged 18-24 with physical and learning disabilities are published on the Projecting Adults Needs and Service Information (PANSI) website.<sup>29</sup> In Suffolk, there were a predicted 1,321 people aged 18-24 with learning disabilities, 519 were predicted to be on the autistic spectrum (Table 12). Both of these numbers are predicted to increase locally between 2022 and 2030.

Table 12: Predicted number of young people aged 18-24 with a disability in Suffolk (2022 and 2030)

Type of disability	2022	2030
Impaired mobility	490	539
Moderate personal care disability	294	323
Serious personal care disability	196	216
Serious visual impairment	32	35
Some hearing loss	882	971
Learning disability	1,321	1,446
Moderate or severe learning disability	309	344
Severe learning disability	102	113
Autistic spectrum disorders	519	572

Source: Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information<sup>29</sup>

## Gypsy, Roma, and Travellers

The umbrella term Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller describes a diverse minority group who come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. They face a range of challenges:<sup>30</sup>

- pupils have the lowest educational attainment of all ethnic groups throughout school
- 42% of English Gypsies are affected by a long term health condition compared with 18% of the general population
- 1 in 5 Gypsy Traveller mothers will experience the loss of a child compared to 1 in a 100 in the non-Traveller community
- many pupils experience bullying

- children leave school at a much earlier age than children in other ethnic groups
- levels of both temporary and permanent exclusions are high
- almost half of Gypsy/Roma students are classed as persistent non-attenders
- after key stage 4 (usually aged 16), a quarter of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children become “NEET” (not in education, employment or training)
- life expectancy is 10 to 12 years less than that of the non-Traveller population.

Information about Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers in Suffolk, especially children and young people, is limited. Data from July 2021 shows there were 365 Traveller caravans in Suffolk.<sup>31</sup> Of these, 110 (30.1%) were based in East Suffolk, 108 (29.6%) were in Mid Suffolk, 82 (22.5%) were in West Suffolk, 64 (17.5%) were in Ipswich, and 1 (0.3%) was in Babergh. There are no figures available on the number of children at the sites. In January 2020, there were also 20 caravans belonging to Travelling Showpeople, 17 of which were in Mid Suffolk (3 in West Suffolk). The largest local authority or registered traveller or travelling showpeople site was West Meadows in Ipswich (42 pitches, 80 caravan capacity).

## Sexual orientation

In July 2017, the Government launched a national survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people. The survey was open to anyone who identified as having a minority sexual orientation, gender identity or had variations in sex characteristics. Over 108,000 people responded to the survey. It asked questions about people’s experiences of living in the UK and in accessing public services. The results were published in the Government’s 2018 LGBT Action Plan and highlighted how sexual orientation or gender identity could have a significant impact on physical, mental, and sexual health and wellbeing.<sup>32</sup>

Some of the most important findings from the survey include: 16% of respondents who accessed or tried to access public health services had a negative experience because of their sexual orientation, and at least 38% had a negative experience because of their gender identity; in the last academic year, 21% of respondents in education had experienced a negative reaction involving someone disclosing their LGBT identity without their permission, and 19% involving verbal harassment, insults or other hurtful comments; more than 91% of respondents said the most serious incident they had experienced in the preceding 12 months had not been reported. Evidence also shows that health outcomes are often worse for LGBT people than the rest of the population, and that many LGBT people feel their specific needs are not considered in their care.<sup>33-34</sup>

According to survey work by HealthWatch Suffolk, Suffolk young people who identify as LGBT\*Q+ tend to experience poorer wellbeing.<sup>39</sup>

Estimates from national data suggest that between 19,400 and 23,100 people aged 16 and over in Suffolk are likely to identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other (Table 13). Among 16-24 year olds in Suffolk, there are an estimated 4,190 to 6,050 people who are likely to identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other (Table 14, rounded to 10).

Table 13: Estimates of sexual orientation in people aged 16 and over in Suffolk (2020)

Sexual orientation	England %	Suffolk low estimate	Suffolk high estimate
Heterosexual or straight	93.3%	581,880	584,380
Gay or lesbian	1.6%	9,330	10,630
Bisexual	1.1%	6,250	7,500
Other	0.7%	3,750	5,000
Don't know or refuse	3.3%	19,380	21,880

Source: Office for National Statistics. Sexual orientation<sup>35</sup>

Table 14: Estimates of sexual orientation in people aged 16-24 in Suffolk (2020)

Sexual orientation	England %	Suffolk low estimate	Suffolk high estimate
Heterosexual or straight	88.5%	58,070	59,540
Gay or lesbian	2.6%	1,400	2,060
Bisexual	4.1%	2,330	3,120
Other	1.0%	465	860
Don't know or refuse	3.8%	2,060	2,990

Source: Office for National Statistics. Sexual orientation<sup>35</sup>

\* 16-24 year old estimates are not available for England

## Young carers

A young carer is someone under the age of 18 who looks after a family member or friend who has a physical or mental health condition, or misuses drugs or alcohol.<sup>36</sup> In the UK, there are estimated to be 800,000 young carers aged 5-17 who care for an adult or family member. Just over 1 in 4 young carers (27%) aged 11-15 miss school, attainment levels are poorer, 1 in 3 have mental health issues, and 80% of young carers felt more isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>36-37</sup> Young carers often report feeling tired and under pressure, with many experiencing traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family breakup, losing income, losing their homes, and seeing the effects of an illness or addiction on the person they care for.<sup>37</sup>

Identifying young carers can be difficult as the provision of care often goes unnoticed and is seldom-reported. The care provided is also unpaid. Young carers are defined as children in need and are therefore entitled to support from local children's social care. In 2021, the impact of being a young carer was identified in 418 children social care assessments across Suffolk (7.9% of episodes with assessment factor information), statistically similar to 2020 (7.7%), but statistically significantly higher than England (3.5% in 2021).<sup>13</sup>

## Care leavers

Young people in care have often had difficult lives and have to start living independently much earlier than their peers.<sup>38</sup> Of local children in care, 67% are there because of abuse or neglect,<sup>15</sup> and this is likely to have a significant and lasting impact on their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Young people who have been in care are more likely than their peers to have poor social outcomes in later life. These include higher risks of homelessness,<sup>43</sup> contact with the criminal justice system, becoming a teenage parent, and self-harm.

Of the 175 care leavers aged 17-18 in Suffolk in 2020/21, 96.0% were in suitable accommodation, which is significantly higher than England (90.7% Table 15) and not significantly different to 2020 (87.5% Suffolk). Since 2017/18, this proportion has increased locally from 91%. Among the 436 care leavers aged 19-21 years old, 86.7% were in suitable accommodation, statistically similar to England

(87.7%), and not significantly different to 2020 (87.3%). 88.7% of care leavers aged 19-21 were in suitable accommodation in Suffolk's statistical neighbours.

Table 15: Accommodation considered suitable for care leavers (2021)

Age band	Suffolk: In suitable accommodation	Suffolk total	Suffolk %	England%
Care leavers aged 17-18	168	175	96.0%	90.7%
Care leavers aged 19-21	378	436	86.7%	87.7%

Source: Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

\* Numbers and percentages for Suffolk have been suppressed and not reported

70.8% of the 175 care leavers aged 17-18 in Suffolk were in education, employment, or training in 2021, which is statistically similar to England (65.0%, Table 16a), and significantly better than 2020 (51.0%).<sup>15</sup> For Suffolk's statistical neighbours, the 2021 percentage was 50.4%.<sup>1</sup>

Among the 440 care leavers aged 19-21, 48.6% were in education, employment, or training, statistically similar to England (52.0%, Table 16b). The percentage was 50.4% for Suffolk's statistical neighbours. The Suffolk percentage was not significantly changed from 2020 (51.8%). 44.3% were **not** in education, employment, or training (NEET), statistically similar to England (40.8%), and to 2020 (43.1%). For Suffolk's statistical neighbours 43.0% were "NEET."<sup>1</sup>

Table 16a: Activity status for care leavers aged 17-18 in Suffolk (2021)

Activity status	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	England %
In education, employment, or training	124	70.8%	65.0%
Not in education, employment, or training	49	28.0%	29.7%
No information	2	1.1%	53.8%
Total	175		

Source: Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

Table 16b: Activity status for care leavers aged 19-21 in Suffolk (2021)

Activity status	Suffolk number	Suffolk %	England %
In education, employment, or training	214	48.6%	52.0%
Not in education, employment, or training	195	44.3%	40.8%
No information	31	7.0%	7.2%
Total	440		

Source: Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

Among care leavers aged 19-21 in Suffolk, independent living was the main type of accommodation recorded (30.4%), statistically similar to England (35.5%, Table 17). This was followed by semi-independent, transitional accommodation (17.0%), statistically similar to England (17.4%), and living with parents or relatives (11.8%, statistically similar to England 11.0%). The following types of accommodation had numbers that were zero or suppressed for Suffolk in both age groups and so are not included in the table: bed and breakfast, deported, emergency accommodation, gone abroad, no fixed abode/homeless, ordinary lodgings, residence not known.

Semi-independent and transitional accommodation was the main type of accommodation recorded for care leavers aged 17-18 in Suffolk in 2021 – 40.0% (Table 17), significantly higher than England (31.3%). This was followed by living with parents or relatives (17.7%, statistically similar to England 13.6%) and living with former foster carers (17.1%, statistically similar to England 13.6%).

Table 17: Type of accommodation for care leavers aged 17-21 in Suffolk (2020/21)

Type of accommodation	17-18 year olds Number	17-18 year olds %	19-21 year olds Number	19-21 year olds %
Community home	10	5.7%	17	3.8%
Foyers	*	*	8	1.8%
In custody	*	*	12	2.7%
Independent living	12	6.9%	134	30.4%
Other accommodation	*	*	18	4.1%
Semi-independent, transitional accommodation	70	40.0%	75	17.0%
Supported lodgings	16	9.1%	39	8.9%
Total information not known	*	*	30	6.8%
With former foster carers	30	17.1%	39	8.9%
With parents or relatives	31	17.7%	52	11.8%
Total	175		440	

Source: Department for Education. Looked after children in England including adoption<sup>15</sup>

\* Numbers and percentages for Suffolk are zero, or have been suppressed and not reported

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