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Public Engagement Findings

2023/ 2024





Section 1

Executive Summary

- The key things you need to know, without having to read the full report -



Introduction

This report presents the findings of Suffolk County Council's (SCC) public engagement activity between June 2023 and May 2024.

The aim of the engagement was to raise awareness of poor air quality and its impact on health, whilst exploring the actions people already take, or would be willing to take, to reduce pollution where they live to protect their health.

Through the public engagement we also explored what stops people taking from taking action (barriers) and looked at how we could address these barriers through our current and future work.

Summary of key findings

Feedback

People understood that air pollution affects their health but didn't always know how it affects their health.

91% of respondents from 'vulnerable groups' would like more information on air pollution and health to be available and they would like to be able to get this information within a healthcare setting.

Respiratory patients said they are not typically given information about air pollution and how it may trigger their symptoms. They would like this from a healthcare professional during medication reviews / annual checks, and via healthcare settings.

Barriers to walking and cycling more short journeys included personal safety, quality of the roads and perceived lack of information relating to cycle parking and green or flat routes in Suffolk.

What we will do

- ➔ Continue to raise awareness of poor air quality and the range of impacts it has on our health, particularly amongst people more vulnerable to the effects of breathing polluted air.
- ➔ Work with respiratory patients to produce, simple, uniform health advice on air pollution, to empower people to protect their health and manage their conditions. Information to be available in healthcare settings.
- ➔ Offer training, guidance and procedures to help healthcare professionals understand the impacts of air quality and support them to be trusted messengers.
- ➔ We are improving Suffolk's walking and cycling infrastructure with nearly £8million in improvement schemes going live in Ipswich, Felixstowe and Woodbridge. We will continue to promote www.suffolkonboard.com which has information on walking and cycling routes, along with a journey planner.





Summary of key findings

Feedback

Public transport is perceived as unreliable, expensive, too infrequent, or non-existent in some locations for it to be a realistic alternative to car travel.

Electric Vehicles are thought of as too expensive. Other barriers highlighted include people having limited access to charging points and no option to charge at home. In addition some respondents didn't believe them to be environmentally friendly or sustainable due to their batteries.

Idling is a 'habit'. People would like more information about the impact of engine idling and reminders would encourage people to switch off.

Awareness of home burning as a source of pollution is low and people aren't aware of the impact it has on health.

What we will do

£3.7m in funding is being put into developing new and enhanced bus routes in areas that don't have public transport. We will continue to promote www.suffolkonboard.com which hosts a journey planning tool, bus timetables and information on routes and fares.

SCC has secured £6.7m to help develop EV charging across the county. The goal is for all Suffolk households to have a safe, reliable public charge point within 5 to 10 minutes' walk of where they live. In 2025, a Car Club Scheme will launch with 16 electric vehicles across 8 locations available for local residents to book.

Work will continue to roll the refreshed Suffolk Idling Action campaign out across the county to raise awareness of the harms of vehicle idling and the importance of switching off, particularly outside schools.

We will continue to raise awareness of home burning being a source of pollution and the impact it has on our health. Our updated Air Quality Strategy Action Plan will include a focus on indoor air quality, including home burning.



Section 2

Main Report

- Detail and information about the engagement findings with next steps -



Air quality in Suffolk

Air quality across Suffolk is generally good. What is even better is that, like nationally, the pollution levels are falling each year - particularly Nitrogen Dioxide which mainly comes from traffic.

However, at the time of writing this report, there are **seven** areas in Suffolk where pollution levels are higher than they should be. These are called Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and are where the pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) exceeds National Air Quality Objectives (see Appendix 1 for more information on the AQMA's).

Four of the AQMAs are in Ipswich, which also has the highest Particulate Matter levels in Suffolk (8.5 µg/m³), higher than the England average (7.8 µg/m³ ([Fingertips Fine Particulate Matter \(concentrations of PM2.5, 2022\)](#)).

The other **three** AQMAs are located in, Great Barton, Sudbury, and Stratford St Andrew.

Suffolk AQMAs are primarily located in neighbourhoods with higher relative deprivation and greater ethnic diversity compared to the overall Suffolk population. Residents in these areas face increased exposure to air pollution, leading to higher risks of health issues and premature death. Addressing air quality is crucial for promoting equitable health outcomes for all residents.

Research shows, there is [no safe level of exposure to air pollution](#)– both long-term exposure (over years) and short-term exposure (over hours) to low levels of air pollution can still impact on our health.

This is why it is important that Suffolk County Council works closely with partners to address poor air quality to reduce the health risks.

About our public engagement

- The rationale -

In 2022, SCC carried out an air quality survey to explore what people understood about air quality where they lived. Whilst the survey was open to respondents across Suffolk it was focused mainly in the Ipswich area, since **four** out of Suffolk's **seven** Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) are in Ipswich.

As a result, the post 2022 survey analysis highlighted that **70%**, of the **338** survey respondents, were Ipswich residents with **90%** of respondents British and **64%** over the age of 45. The analysis also identified that respondents with a disability, those with a health condition affected by air pollution, from ethnic minority backgrounds, and those with responsibility for children were underrepresented in the findings.

To address these geographic and demographic gaps and support the delivery of the **SCC Air Quality Strategy** we developed a **public engagement programme** which launched on Clean Air Day in June 23.

The aim was to raise awareness of poor air quality and its impact on health, whilst exploring what action people already take, or would be willing to take, to reduce pollution where they live to protect their health.

Through the public engagement we also explored what stops people taking from taking action (barriers) and looked at how we could address these barriers through our current and future work.



About our public engagement

- The methods -

Over an 11-month period (June 2023 – May 2024) our public engagement, included:

- Touring question sessions (one question asked to as many people as possible in a single location);
- Online polls;
- Attendance at events such as the Summer Mela, the Multicultural Festival and Ipswich Music Festival (A list of events attended can be found in Appendix 2); and
- Targeted meetings/focus groups to speak to people about air quality in Suffolk (A list of meetings can be found in Appendix 2).

The engagement methods were chosen to make it as easy as possible for people to tell us their views and enabled us to speak to a broader demographic than we had done previously.

In May 2024 we paused the public engagement to review the findings, summarised in this report, and will use any relevant insight to inform the update of the Suffolk Air Quality Strategy Action Plan which will be published in Autumn 2024.

Findings will also be shared with our partners to inform their work.

Engagement in numbers

Responses to air quality online polls

2,017

Comments generated on social media

400+

Conversations about air quality and health

500+

Building on responses from the original 2022 survey

338



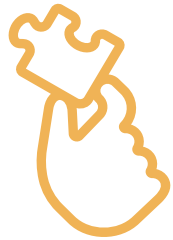
Section 3

Public Engagement Findings

- Relating to awareness and information -

General awareness of pollution and health

Awareness levels in Suffolk of air pollution and its impacts on our health are good.



Fact

Research shows, there is **no safe level of exposure to air pollution**– both long-term exposure (over years) and short-term exposure (over hours) to low levels of air pollution can impact our health.



Feedback

88% (of 508 respondents on the Next Door App) are aware that air pollution can affect our health.

Since our 2022 survey, awareness levels relating to pollution and health have increased by up to **22%**.



SCC Action

We will continue to raise awareness of air pollution and its impact on health to enable people to make informed choices that will lead to cleaner, healthier air for all in Suffolk.

Awareness of *how* pollution affects our health

Although there is a good level of awareness that air pollution impacts our health, our public engagement has highlighted that people don't always know *how* it affects our health.



Fact

Air pollution plays a role in many of the major health challenges of our day and has been linked to a range of health conditions including asthma, stroke and cancer (Royal College of Physicians 2016).



Feedback

Throughout Summer 2023 we spoke to over **200** people about air pollution and health at a series of public events (see Appendix 2):

- **62%** of people connected air pollution to asthma,
- **57%** to coughs and wheezing, and
- **54%** to lung cancer.

Yet in comparison only:

- **27%** connected it to an increased risk of stroke
- **23%** connected it to a higher risk of diabetes, and
- **22%** to low birth weight in babies.



SCC Action

We will continue to raise awareness of poor air quality and the range of impacts it has on our health, particularly amongst groups more vulnerable to the effects of breathing polluted air.

We will continue to seek funding opportunities to enable us to provide accessible air quality information and live pollution data to Suffolk residents to enable them to make informed decisions and protect their health.

Awareness of pollution levels in Suffolk

People still think of air pollution as a big city problem and not something that exists in Suffolk.



Fact

At the time of writing this report there are **7** AQMAs in Suffolk where the pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) exceeds National Objectives. Approximately **747** Suffolk residents live within them, **613** of these are in Ipswich.

There are thousands more people living, working or studying by busy congested roads that are exposed to health altering air pollution every day.

(See Appendix 1 for information on the AQMA's).



Feedback

In a poll on the Next Door App (October 2023) of **654** Suffolk residents, only **27%** of people thought air pollution was a problem where they lived.

This was echoed in conversations in our touring question sessions (see over leaf).

Similarly in a poll run by the Ipswich Star at the start of 2023 **67%** of respondents (89 respondents in total) living within an AQMA had no idea they were living in a high pollution area.



SCC Action

Scientific evidence suggests that there is no safe level of air pollution and that even low levels of pollution can impact our health. Evidence also shows that **transport-related pollution can impact indoor air quality**.

Therefore, it is important that we continue to address transport-related pollution, particularly for those living closest to busy roads who will continue to be disproportionately affected.

We will continue raising awareness of air pollution in Suffolk, particularly in high pollution areas and amongst vulnerable groups more susceptible to the effects.

Feedback snapshot

Bury Saint Edmunds Library January 2024

Bury St Edmunds had an AQMA from April 2018 until March 2024

“I remember the London smog's - then it was bad, you used to have to wear a mask and your face would be black when you took it off. It's much better now.”

“Pollution isn't anywhere near as bad here as it is other places.”

“I only really worry about pollution when I go to places like London or to visit my daughter in Birmingham.”

Air pollution and health information for vulnerable people

In the [Chief Medical Officers 2022 Annual Report](#) on air quality, groups more vulnerable to the effects of pollution are defined as: pregnant women, children, older people, those with a pre-existing health condition, those living in deprived areas and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.



Fact

In early 2024 we conducted targeted engagement focused on groups more vulnerable to the effects of air pollution and spoke to **77** people.

See Appendix 2 for further information.



Feedback

91% from these vulnerable groups would like more information about air pollution and health, and would like it from a healthcare setting.

From the respiratory patients we spoke to (**18** with conditions ranging from asthma to COPD) only **1** person reported being given information about poor air quality from their GP, despite air pollution being an evidenced trigger for respiratory conditions (Royal College of Physicians 2016).



Feedback

All individuals with confirmed respiratory conditions said they would like **more information** about air pollution, and how it may trigger their symptoms or make their condition worse.

They would like this information to come from a healthcare professional during medication reviews / annual check-ups, and via materials accessed in a **healthcare setting** such as a GP Practice, Dentist or Pharmacy.

Air pollution and health information for vulnerable people



In the [Chief Medical Officers Report 2022](#) it was recommended that the public should be provided with information about variations in the quality of the air they breathe, the effect of pollutants on health, likely pollution sources, and actions to reduce their own emissions and exposure to air pollution.

SCC Action

- Based on the conversations that have taken place through the public engagement and the recommendations in the Chief Medical Officers Annual Report, we will work with our health partners to address the gaps in information about air quality and health in healthcare settings.
- We will work with our health partners on training, guidance and procedures to help healthcare professionals understand the impacts of air quality and support them to be trusted messengers.
- We will work with our health partners and respiratory patients to produce simple, uniform health advice on air pollution, to empower the public and patients to protect their health and manage conditions. This information will be available from healthcare settings and via health professionals.
- We are exploring opportunities to have information included in other programmes of work and resources delivered by partners, for example the [Warm Homes Healthy People](#) and [Asthma Friendly Schools](#) programmes.

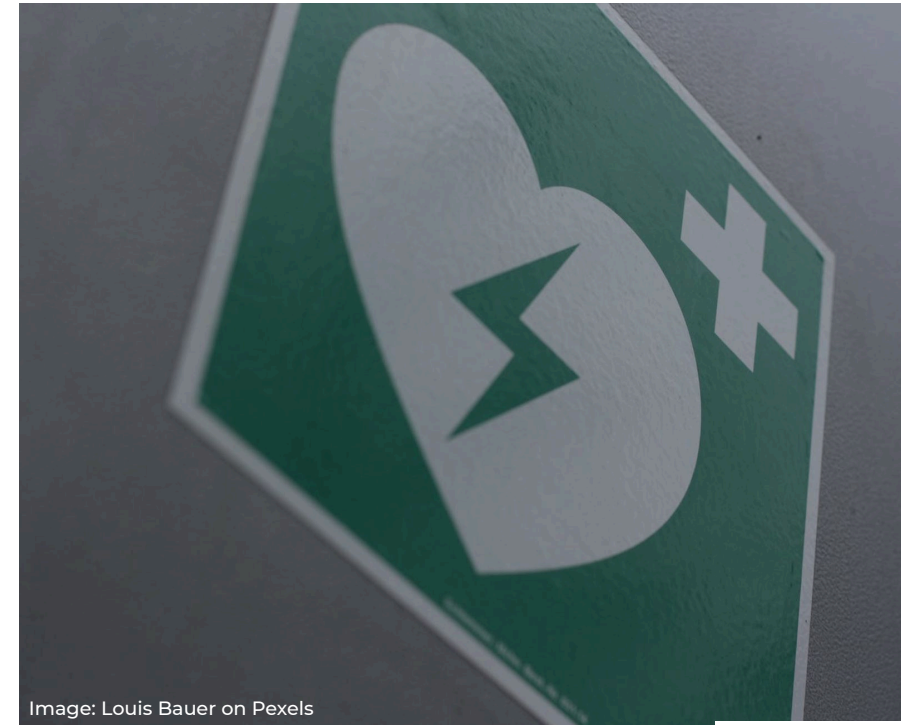


Image: Louis Bauer on Pexels

Feedback snapshot

Castle Hill Community Centre Focus Group and Haverhill Library Session December 2023

“You can never have enough information about something like this [poor air quality].”

“We live next to a busy road and my mum was on a ventilator, we never at any point, received any information about air quality and how it can affect your breathing and I know it would have been useful.”

“When you are trying to get people to think about something they can't see like pollution, the only thing that helps is information. For me, I need to know there is a problem and then know what I can do to help.”

Awareness of air quality alert services

Alerts are an important tool for helping people, particularly those with health conditions, to manage their symptoms on days when air pollution is high.



Fact

Air quality alerts are issued by the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on days pollution levels are high. The information can be found on the Met Office or DEFRA websites. In some parts of the UK you can sign up to receive air pollution alerts directly to your phone or email but this service is not currently available in Suffolk.

DEFRA also host an online pollution forecast which tells you whether pollution is going to be low, moderate, high or very high up to 5 days in advance. The aim is to help people understand pollution levels with recommended actions and health advice.

Asthma and Lung UK in their [Alerting the Nation](#) report found **80%** of people with lung conditions didn't use the government's air pollution alerts.



Feedback

In a poll of **290** people on the Next Door App in November 2023 only **6%** of respondents said they used air pollution alerts.

51% (of the 290 respondents) said they weren't aware of air pollution alerts but would consider using them now they knew.

When we asked this same question in our focus group sessions to individuals with respiratory conditions (**18** in total), **11%** used daily pollution alerts but struggled to interpret the information or know what action to take as a result.

Those in the group that didn't look at pollution alerts said the main reason they hadn't was because they weren't aware of them or didn't have access to a mobile phone/ computer to be able to check them.



Action

In September 2023, we submitted a bid to DEFRA for funding for **15** air pollution monitors which linked to a website enabling people to see what the pollution levels were like near them. The website also had an **alert service** that residents could sign up to receive daily pollution levels, high pollution alerts and accompanying information and health advice.

SCC was successful with the bid but the funding to all local authorities was subsequently withdrawn by the Air Quality Minister in March 2024.

SCC will continue to look for alternative sources of funding to deliver the project and enable local people to have accessible, **Suffolk specific** air quality and health information..



“ I look at the pollution alerts occasionally but I don't really know what it means, it say's low, medium, high but what does that actually mean and how will it affect me.”

Breathe Easy Group Participant. May 23



Section 4

Public Engagement Findings

- Relating to barriers to change -

Through the 2023 / 2024 engagement, we have been speaking to people about action they already take, or would be willing to take, to reduce air pollution where they live, and exploring any associated barriers to taking up these actions. Actions ranged from walking and cycling more short journeys through to burning cleaner fuels at home.

Barriers to walking and cycling short journeys

In Suffolk (2022/23 data), approximately **40,000** car journeys are made every day that are **under one mile** in length.

If these were made on foot or bicycle, there would be **15 million less** car journeys per year on Suffolk roads.

Feedback

In a poll of **565** respondents on the Next Door App, walking and cycling short journeys, under one mile, was the action the largest percentage of respondents (**41%**) said they did already or would be willing to do to make the air cleaner where they live.

When talking to people about the barriers to them walking and cycling more short journeys some common themes emerged around:

Road safety,

The quality of the **infrastructure**, and

A desire for more **information** on routes to help people make informed decisions.

More detail on each of these barriers is highlighted in the forthcoming pages.



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What you said about safety

The perceived safety of walking and cycling came up a number of times through the engagement as a barrier to walking and cycling more short journeys.

Anecdotal feedback was that in Suffolk towns the roads are **busy** and overrun with cars which can make cycling **feel daunting** and **unsafe**.

More rurally, cycling on country roads which **lack street lighting** and don't have much **space** for vehicles passing is also perceived as dangerous.

Individuals that did cycle regularly commented on the condition of the roads with **potholes a concern**.

People reported feeling happy walking when they could but personal safety, particularly amongst females, was raised as an issue with some people not feeling comfortable **walking alone in the dark**.

The perceived condition and **maintenance of the pavements** themselves was also discussed as a barrier to walking more (more information on the next page).



Feedback snapshot

Summer Mela; Multicultural Day; Ipswich Music Festival, Summer 2023

“The roads are too busy and it makes cycling in Ipswich feel dangerous. Cars seem to be the priority.”

“Potholes make cycling difficult and dangerous in some places.”

“Cyclists need safe, suitable provision.”

“I don't mind walking in the Summer but in the Winter when it's dark I don't feel confident walking around alone, I just want to get home.”

“Overgrown hedges and verges need cutting back to create more space for pedestrians.”

“Repair the pavements to make them safer and more comfortable to walk on. Ban pavement parking so pedestrians have space.”



What you said about infrastructure

People would like cycling to be made easier with more cycle lanes to enable cyclists to have space on the roads and more hire cycles for easy travel for people who don't have their own bike.

What you said about information

People said having more information on walking and cycling routes would be useful. Not leisure routes but practical routes to work or school or to get around where they live. People would like information on green routes, low pollution routes and flat routes to help them make informed decisions about travel.

Feedback snapshot

Summer Mela; Multicultural Day; Ipswich Music Festival, Summer 2023

“More information about cycle parking and lower pollution routes would be useful. Also information on flat routes as there are lots of hills in Suffolk and I can't do hills.”

“We need more cycle lanes if we want more people cycling.”

“Provide hire cycles and scooters.”



Walking and cycling SCC action



We are working to deliver improved walking and cycling infrastructure with nearly £8million in improvement schemes going live in Ipswich, Felixstowe and Woodbridge.

More information about these improvements can be found here: [Improvements for walking, cycling and wheeling - Suffolk County Council](#).

We will continue to promote the [Suffolk on Board Website](#) which has information on walking and cycling routes and a journey planner.

We will also share the feedback relating to barriers to walking and cycling with the relevant teams across the Council and appropriate partners to inform active travel infrastructure schemes across Suffolk.

Barriers to using public transport

According to data from the [National Transport Survey](#), there has been a sharp decline in public transport use nationally in recent years.



Fact

Bus use has declined by **63%** since 2002 and train use by **17%** over the same time period.



Feedback

Public transport was a recurring theme throughout the engagement, with the majority of people describing it as **unreliable**, **expensive**, **too infrequent**, or **non-existent** where they live for it to be a realistic alternative to car travel.

Only **13%** of 565 respondents on the Next Door App, said they currently used, or would be willing to use, public transport for travel to make the air cleaner.



Action

New and enhanced bus routes are being developed in areas that currently don't have public transport. These will be funded from **£3.7m** Bus Service Improvement Plan money awarded to SCC in March 2024. More information about bus service improvements can be found here: [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\) - Suffolkonboard](#)

Planning journeys by bus is now easier with [Suffolk on Board](#) hosting a journey planning tool, bus timetables and information on routes and fares. We will continue to promote Suffolk on Board to help people plan more sustainable travel.

Feedback snapshot

Next Door App Poll; Haverhill and Bury St Edmunds Library Sessions. Nov/ Dec 2023

“You can’t get to Sudbury or Newmarket anymore on the bus from Haverhill and it takes ages to get into Cambridge so it’s no wonder everyone is in their cars.”

“The bus I catch is way too old to be considered environmentally friendly. So how can you ask us car users to change without the buses setting the standard.”

“I would love to use the bus, except we don’t have one – there were three when we moved here 10 years ago now there isn’t a route that serves this village at all.”

“Better public transport should be provided as a service to enhance the safe and sustainable movement of people, and to be seen as a better option than driving.”

Barriers to switching to an electric vehicle (EV)

SCC has secured **£6.7m** to help develop EV charging across the county, after two successful bids to the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund.



Fact

By 2030, **80%** of new cars and **70%** of new vans sold in Great Britain will be zero emission – rising to **100%** in 2035. In Suffolk, EV ownership has increased steadily from **under 1,000** vehicles in 2015 to over **7,000** vehicles in 2022, in-line with the national trend.



Feedback

11% (of 565 Next Door App respondents) have already or would consider switching to an electric vehicle, but for the majority of people, comments centred around EVs being too expensive, limited access to charging points, having no option to charge at home, and not believing them to be an environmentally friendly or sustainable alternative due to their batteries.



SCC Action

In 2023, **100** charge points were installed across **31** Suffolk locations. SCC, through its Plug In Suffolk project, will install more community charging hubs as well as hundreds of on-street public charge points, so that people without a driveway or garage can charge electric vehicles reliably, easily, and close to their homes. The goal is for all Suffolk households to have a safe, reliable public charge point within 5 to 10 minutes' walk of where they live. For more information visit: [Plug In Suffolk - Suffolk County Council](#) In 2025, SCC will be launching a Plug In Suffolk Car Club Scheme with **16** electric vehicles across **8** locations available for local residents to book by the minute, hour or day. Planned locations include Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, Newmarket, Sudbury, Needham Market, Stowmarket, Lowestoft and Woodbridge.

Feedback snapshot

Next Door App Poll; Nov 2023

“Electric cars are not affordable.”

“Supposing I was considering a move to electric and don't have a tonne of free cash, how would I go about it? Last I heard the Government support for subsidising chargers at home had ended.”

“Maybe you might like to send one of your children down the mine to get cobalt to run your amazing electric car.”

Barriers to no idling

Idling refers to leaving a vehicle engine running when the car is no longer moving, for example when parked up or stuck in non moving traffic.



Fact

Evidence shows that idling engines produce up to twice the emissions of a moving vehicle.

Vehicle idling is particularly prominent outside schools and impacts on children's developing organs.

Research by Kings College London has shown that small easy changes to driving habits, such as switching the engine off whilst stationary, can cut pollution by up to **30%** and the effects are immediate.



Engagement Feedback

21% (of 565 Next Door App respondents) said they already switched their engine off when stationary or would be willing to do so to make the air cleaner and healthier.

When we spoke to people at events about whether they switch their engines off:

49% (of 89 respondents) said they switch off their engine some or all of the time.

One of the biggest barriers that came up through these conversations is that when people are idling their engines it is **not an intentional action**, people describe it as just something they have always done – a **habit**, and not something they think about.

Barriers to no idling (continued)



Engagement Feedback (cont)

Through conversations with those that did switch off, a large proportion had cars with start / stop technology and so their engines turn off automatically. .

We know from informal conversations at events that people **are concerned** about idling cars particularly outside their homes and their children's schools, however even those concerned said they **sometimes forget** to switch their engine off when stationary.

In the evaluation of the Idling Action Campaign, which ran across **31** London Council's, one of the most common reasons people gave for idling was **'habit'** inline with our own findings.

Research undertaken by Council's in other parts of the country has highlighted a number of reasons people give for idling, including **not wanting to damage their car batteries** and wanting to **have the air con/ heaters on**.



SCC Action

In March 2024, SCC relaunched the **Suffolk Idling Action Campaign** with new materials and strengthened health messaging.

Based on national research we addressed common idling myths and facts in the campaign material.

Work will continue to roll the campaign out across the county to raise awareness of the harms of vehicle idling and the importance of switching off, particularly outside schools.

At the time of writing this report, there are **14** Suffolk schools signed up to the campaign. Banners have also gone up at **all Recycling Centres** across Suffolk.

We will continue to promote the campaign to get more schools and businesses signed up. With higher visibility the campaign should **act as a prompt to remind people** to switch off their engines.

Feedback snapshot

Next Door App Poll; Nov 2023

“I live in a ground floor flat which is only 12 feet from the road. People sit with their engines running outside for up to half an hour as they are waiting to collect their children from school. The fumes from these vehicles permeate the flat.”

“There should be more information available about how much pollution comes from idling cars, I don't think people realise.”

“My Car has i-stop so the engine temporarily switches off when I stop at lights etc.”

Barriers to using seasoned 'Ready to Burn' wood and smokeless fuels *if* burning at home



In a move away from transport related air pollution questions, we used one of our online polls to explore views on home burning also referred to as domestic burning. Home burning relates to the burning of solid fuels such as wood or coal to heat your home or to cook with and includes open fires and stoves.

Fact

Lighting fires in our homes is the single biggest source of harmful small particle air pollution in the UK. PM2.5 emissions from domestic burning accounted for **43%** of total PM2.5 emissions in 2019. Over the past ten years, the amount of harmful small particle air pollution caused by domestic burning has more than doubled, while the pollution caused by vehicles is decreasing.

Most people who burn at home live in towns and cities and are from more affluent households– yet everyone, including the most vulnerable, experiences the consequences in neighbouring homes and communities. According to national data only **8%** of those burning indoors have no alternative source of heating.

In 2021 DEFRA introduced legislation to phase out sales of bagged coal and wet wood - two of the most polluting fuels. A 'Burn Better' campaign was also launched to raise awareness of home burning as a source of pollution and to encourage those that do burn to switch to dry 'Ready to Burn' wood and smokeless fuels.

Information source: DEFRA Research Report - Burning in UK Homes and Gardens



Image: Navid Saboori on Unsplash

Barriers to using seasoned 'Ready to Burn' wood and smokeless fuels *if* burning at home



Feedback

Only **12%** (of 565 respondents on the Next Door App poll) said they already use, or would consider using, 'Ready to Burn' wood and smokeless fuels *if* burning at home.

Awareness levels in Suffolk of household burning as a source of air pollution have been low in the past. In SCC's 2022 air pollution survey, only **8%** of respondents identified home burning as a source of pollution compared to **89%** who identified transport as a source.

From our findings, coupled with national data, it is likely that there is still low public awareness of the contribution of home burning to air pollution and the subsequent health risks.

National [evidence](#) suggests that burning at home is associated with 'natural' lifestyles and Government campaigns to 'Burn Better' are reinforcing the norm that it is ok to burn as long as it is done well. The same research found that burners and non-burners keen on using a wood burning stove at home carried strong emotional associations with wood burning. As such, responses from these groups were often very defensive, with lots of cynicism around the intention of messages, suspicion of agendas, and defensive reactions to messages seen to be aiming to discourage wood burning.

Barriers to using seasoned 'Ready to Burn' wood and smokeless fuels *if* burning at home



SCC Action

SCC's action on domestic burning is in line with the national approach. We are not asking individuals to not burn at home as we know for some people this is their primary source of heat. Rather, we are asking people to ensure they burn cleaner fuels such as Ready to Burn wood and smokeless fuel.

Awareness levels of home burning being a source of pollution and the subsequent health impacts are low, therefore there is a need for **clear and consistent messaging** around home burning and **on-going awareness raising** of the health impacts.

Currently Ipswich Borough Council is conducting a DEFRA funded study into pollution levels caused by home burning and is developing evidenced based messaging based on their findings which they will share with SCC and partners in due course. We will use this evidence and messaging to inform our work on indoor air quality.

The updated Suffolk Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan will include a **focus on indoor air quality**, including home burning. It will involve forging closer links with other programmes of work including Warm Homes Healthy People to ensure people are getting the support they need to heat their homes.

Partner Engagement

In addition to the programme of public engagement, we have been working closely with our Suffolk partners to raise awareness of the health impacts of air pollution, encouraging partners to take action within their organisations. Engagement has included discussions, presentations and workshops with:

- 1 | Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (Annual Expo)
- 2 | Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Partnership
- 3 | Suffolk and North East Essex Alliances - Ipswich, East and West
- 4 | The Suffolk Health and Wellbeing Board
- 5 | Growth Highways and Infrastructure Travel Behaviour Change Group
- 6 | SCC's Carbon Negative Nature Positive Champions Group
- 7 | Beat the Streets Steering Group
- 8 | Ipswich Air Quality Steering Group
- 9 | Suffolk Air Quality Group
- 10 | Active Suffolk



As a result of conversations with partners, various opportunities have been identified in relation to reducing mileage associated with healthcare visits and day to day business operations. Discussions are ongoing to ensure progress with actions and to continue to identify opportunities.



Recommendations

- 📖 There is still work to be done to make people aware of the range of health impacts associated with breathing polluted air. We will continue to raise awareness of poor air quality and the impact it has on our health, particularly amongst groups more vulnerable to the effects of breathing polluted air.
- 📖 Whilst we have had some success in broadening out our engagement geographically and demographically, there are still people underrepresented in our findings, including pregnant women, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with a disability. Where, and if, resource allows we will continue to target demographics not fully represented in the engagement to date, to identify information, support and resource gaps and work with partners to address these going forward.
- 📖 Work has begun to build on the partnerships we have developed over the past 12 months. We are working more closely with our health partners including within respiratory health to make it easier for people to access information on air quality and health and this will be a focus of our future work.
- 📖 We will use our experience to inform and develop our ongoing work to reduce transport-related emissions associated with organisational logistics and staff commuting and continue to engage with vulnerable groups and partners. This will be reflected in the forthcoming revised SCC Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan.
- 📖 Finally, we will continue to seek funding opportunities to enable us to provide accessible air quality information and live pollution data to Suffolk residents to enable them to make informed decisions which will ultimately lead to cleaner air and protect their health.



Section 5

Appendices

- Additional detail -

Appendix 1: Air Quality Management Areas

Due to the revocation of the Sicklesmere AQMA in Bury St Edmunds at the start of 2024, there are now 7 Air Quality Management Areas in Suffolk (Sept 2024). However, 2 of these are likely to be revoked within the next 6 – 12 months.

- **Babergh and Mid Suffolk**

Cross Street Sudbury AQMA.

- **East Suffolk**

The Suffolk Coastal District Council AQMA No. 3: Four residential properties within Long Row, Main Road (A12) in Stratford St Andrew. **Due for revocation, consultation to start Autumn 2024.**

- **Ipswich**

Ipswich AQMA No.1 - Encompassing the land in and around the junction of Norwich Road, Chevallier Street and Valley Road, this area extends along Chevallier Street to the junction with Providence Lane. **Due for revocation, consultation to start Autumn 2024.**

Ipswich AQMA No. 2 - From the junction with Peel Street, extending along Crown Street, St Margarets Street and St Helens Street to the junction with Palmerston Road, and from St Margarets Street extending up Woodbridge Road to just beyond the junction with Argyle Street.

Ipswich AQMA No. 3 - Encompassing the land in and around College Street, Key Street, Salthouse Street, Fore Street, Star Lane, Neptune Square and Grimwade Street.

Ipswich AQMA No. 5 - Incorporating the land in or around St. Matthews Street / Norwich Road between the Civic Drive roundabout and Bramford Road

- **West Suffolk**

Great Barton AQMA.

Appendix 2: Engagement Meetings and Events



Events

Needham Market Walking and Cycling Festival, April 2023
Clean Air Day, A mile for my min walk, June 2023
Indian Summer Mela, July 2023
Ipswich Music Day, July 2023
The One Big Multicultural Festival, July 2023
Sudbury Family Fun Day, August 2023
Ipswich Family Fun Day, August 2023
Ipswich Family Fun Day, August 2023
Inspire Inclusion Event, Ipswich, March 2024



Meetings, focus groups and touring questions

Bury St Edmunds Breathe Easy Group, April 2023
Endeavour House, Ipswich June 2023
Be Well Bus, Ipswich, November 2023
Bury St Edmunds Air Quality Group, November 2023
Haverhill Library to coincide with two drop-in socials for the over 65's, December 2023
Focus group at Castle Hill Community Centre close to one of the Ipswich AQMAs, December 2023
Hardwicke House Surgery Patient Participation Group, Sudbury, January 2024
Bury St Edmunds Library to coincide with parent and toddler groups, January 2024
The Limes School Pupil Parliament (Lowestoft), January 2024
Barack Lane Patient Participation Group, June 2024
Be Well Bus, Ipswich AQMA, June 2024