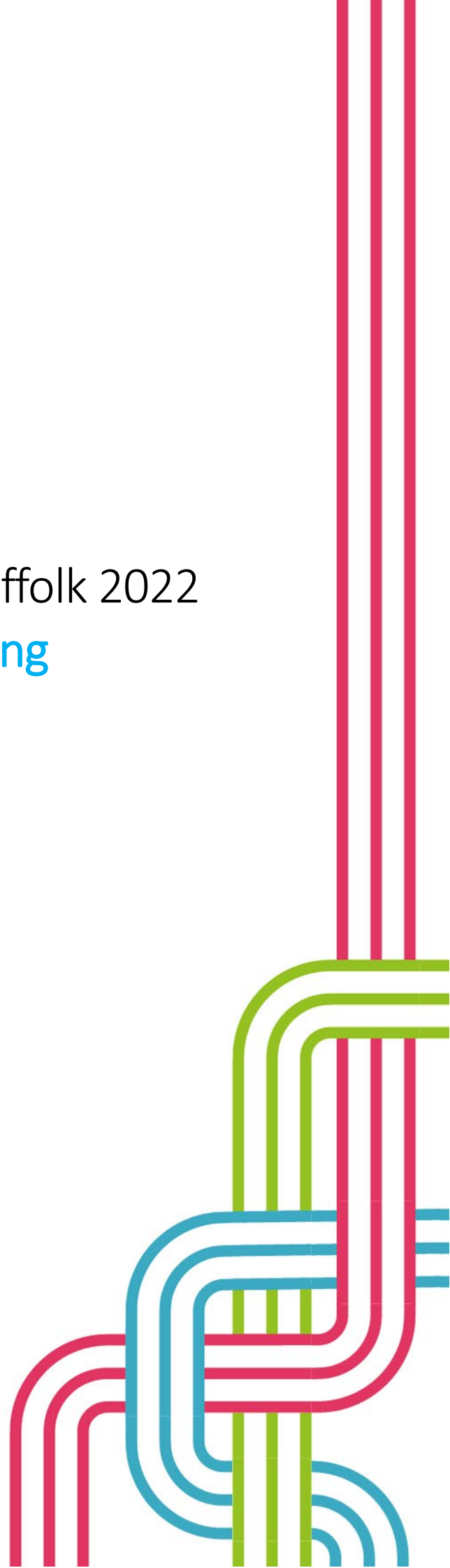


# The State of Children in Suffolk 2022

## Education, Skills and Training



# Education, Skills and Training

## Key points

1. There are nearly 102,000 pupils in state-funded primary and secondary schools in Suffolk in 2020/21. In addition, there are 1,300 pupils under special school provision, and approximately 170 in pupil referral units.
2. In 2018/19, 70.7% of pupils in Suffolk achieved a good level of development by the end of Reception Year (first year of primary school), which is significantly lower (statistically) than the national average of 71.8%. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent data may not be comparable.
3. At the end of Key Stage 2 (last year of primary school), 62% of pupils in Suffolk met the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2018/19, which is significantly lower (statistically) than the national average of 65%. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent data may not be comparable.
4. In 2018/19, 39% of pupils in Suffolk achieved a good pass in English and maths in their GCSEs, whilst 61.9% achieved a standard pass. Both of these are significantly lower (statistically) than the England averages of 43.4% for a good pass and 64.9% for a standard pass. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent data may not be comparable.
5. 76.5% of students in Suffolk achieved at least 2 A-levels in 2018/19 compared with 80% nationally; 8.7% achieved 3 A\*-A grades or better (10.8% in England); 16% achieved AAB grades or better (18.4% in England). 81% of students in Suffolk achieved at least 2 substantial Level 3 qualifications (84.7% nationally). All four measures are significantly lower (statistically) in Suffolk compared with England. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent data may not be comparable.
6. In 2020/21, 4% of 16-18 year olds in Suffolk were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Locally, this means there were 886 children and young people that were NEET in 2020/21.
7. Almost 1 in 4 people in Suffolk (24.8%) had an undergraduate degree or higher compared with 1 in 3 (33.1%) nationally in 2019. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more recent data may not be comparable.
8. In 2020/21, around 2 in 3 16-24 year olds (67.6%) were economically active in Suffolk (59.8% in England), whilst 1 in 3 (32.4%) were economically inactive (40.2% in England). Just over half (53.7%) of 16-24 year olds were in employment in Suffolk in 2020/21, slightly higher than the England average of 51%.
9. Across Suffolk, the greatest levels of deprivation on the Children and Young People sub-domain are around Mildenhall, Newmarket, Haverhill, Glemsford, Sudbury, Bury St Edmunds, Stanton, Stowmarket, Ipswich, Felixstowe, Leiston, Reydon, Bungay, and Lowestoft. Additional hotspots of deprivation on the Adult Skills sub-domain include areas around Hundon, which is close to Haverhill.
10. In 2017, Ipswich, Forest Heath (West Suffolk), Babergh, and Waveney (East Suffolk) were ranked in the worst 20% of local authorities for social mobility, which indicates that people from disadvantaged backgrounds in these areas were least likely to make social progress. This data has not been updated since 2017.

## Why is education, skills and training important in Suffolk?

The provision of good quality education for all, the development of skills, alongside appropriate and widespread training, are essential for improving the health and prosperity of people in Suffolk. They are equally important for creating and sustaining a vibrant local economy with opportunities and jobs for all, especially among those who need them most.

Education has a positive impact on both general health and wider health behaviours such as smoking, drinking, physical activity.<sup>1-2</sup> It has consistently been identified as the key mechanism for overcoming the never-ending cycle of disadvantage and poverty which follows and blights the lives of so many from generation to generation.<sup>3</sup>

The negative impacts of disadvantage are seen, felt and experienced early in life, with differences in educational outcomes between children emerging even before going to school, and widening throughout childhood.<sup>4</sup>

Receiving a good education, developing skills, and being trained provides the opportunities for gaining the qualifications which can make a real difference to life outcomes. Young people with few or no qualifications are three to four times more likely not be in education, employment or training compared to those with higher level qualifications.<sup>5</sup> They are also more likely, in the longer term, to be in poorer quality, less skilled jobs, and to earn lower wages than their more highly skilled peers.

Information presented in this report about children and young people in Suffolk should be used to help improve educational attainment, increase the development of skills and training opportunities, as well as helping reduce differences in health outcomes between those who have the best and poorest health.

## 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the education, skills and training data used in this report, especially the educational attainment data. Due to the three national lockdowns introduced during the last two academic years – 2019/20 and 2020/21 – the majority of children in Suffolk were educated virtually at home, with schools delivering face to face teaching to vulnerable and key worker children only. As a consequence of these lockdowns, national testing and examinations for pupils in primary school (Key Stage 2), secondary school (Key Stage 4) and sixth form and college students (Key Stage 5) were cancelled during the last two academic years. The majority of attainment data used in this report, therefore, is based on the 2018/19 academic year, the last full academic year before the start of the pandemic. Similarly, other data such as the number of young people starting apprenticeships or going to university are likely to have been affected by the pandemic. In these, and other instances, the last full year of data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic has been used.

## What is the local picture?

### Schools

There are nearly 102,000 pupils in state-funded primary and secondary schools in Suffolk in 2020/21.<sup>6</sup> In addition, there are 1,300 pupils under special school provision, and around 170 in pupil referral units.

In November 2021, there were 324 schools across Suffolk.<sup>7</sup> One (0.3%) was a nursery school, 253 (78.1%) were primary schools, two (0.6%) were middle schools, 44 (13.6%) were secondary schools, two (0.6%) were sixth form schools, 10 (3.1%) were Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), and 12 (3.7%) were special schools. Further education for 16-18 year olds in Suffolk was available at three Further Education colleges, 18 of the secondary schools, and three dedicated sixth form colleges (in Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft).

In recent years, the number of academy schools has risen locally. Excluding special schools and PRUs, 98 primary schools (38.7%) are local authority maintained, and 155 (61.3%) have academy status. Of these academies, two are free schools. After excluding special schools and PRUs, four secondary schools (9.1%) are local authority maintained, whilst 40 (90.9%) have academy status. Of these academies, five are free schools.

As of November 2021, 81.8% of schools in Suffolk were judged as either good or outstanding by Ofsted, which is below the England average of 86.8%.<sup>8</sup> A further 12.6% of Suffolk schools were judged to require improvement (9.8% nationally), whilst 5.7% were judged inadequate (3.4% in England).

### Children Electively Home Educated

Nationally, there has been an increase in children and families electing, or choosing, to home educate. The recent National Home Education Survey shows an increase of 7% in the proportion of pupils being educated at home in England from 2020 to 2021.<sup>9</sup> During the 2020/21 academic year, it is estimated that 115,542 children and young people were being home educated, which represents a 34% increase since 2019/20. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have had a significant impact on this. This increase is reflected in local figures. During the 2019/20 academic year, there were 1,080 pupils being educated at home. This had risen to 1,261 pupils in 2020/21, an increase of almost 17%. Of this, almost 7% of children and young people have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, whilst 48% have or have had early help or social care involvement (an EHC plan sets out the education, healthcare and social care needs of a child or young person for whom extra support is needed in school, beyond which the school can provide).

The Education Act 1996 places a responsibility on parents to make sure that children receive a full-time education, and many parents do this by sending their child to school. Other parents may decide to educate at home. Home education can be a positive choice when it accounts for the needs and wellbeing of the child.

It is important to note, however, that once a child or young person has been taken out of a school to be home educated, they are no longer surrounded by some of the protective factors of school. Currently, the local authority has no legal basis for carrying out checks on the child, unless they believe there is a safeguarding concern. Whilst elective home education will be the right education setting for a number of children, it can be difficult for the local authority to ascertain if the child would benefit from any additional support.

Additionally, as electively home educated children are not on a school roll, parents need to seek out a school or exam centre who is willing to let them take any examinations, such as GCSEs, if this is part of the parents plan of education. There is no requirement for electively home educated children to sit exams. Locally, there is a shortage of schools offering to do this, with only one school accepting home educated pupils. This has the potential to disadvantage those families which lack the capacity or means to overcome this situation, such as being unable to drive to school to sit exams for instance.

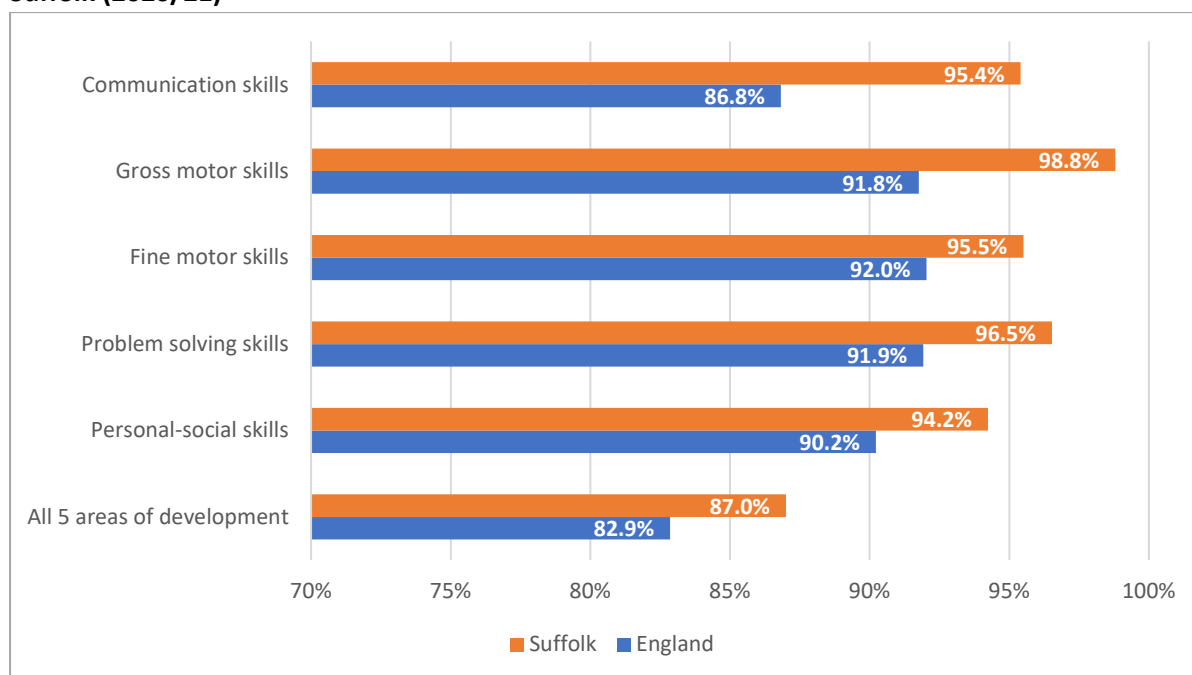
### Child development outcomes at 2 - 2½ years

The foundations of virtually all aspects of human development are established in early childhood. The recently published Marmot Review<sup>10</sup> explains how early childhood experiences shape later life outcomes, such as educational attainment, social and emotional development, work outcomes and income, long-term health and life expectancy.

By the second year of life, differences in child development are evident and will impact children by the time they enter school. If left unsupported, some children are more likely to fail to achieve their full potential. The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) provides a measure of development and allows comparisons to be made between children who are and who are not developing as expected.

In 2020/21, over 9 out of every 10 children aged 2 - 2½ years old in Suffolk achieved their expected level of development on each of the five individual measures of the ASQ, with higher scores than England (figure 1). When the five measures are combined, 87% of children in Suffolk achieved the expected level of development, compared with 82.9% in England. Since 2017/18, this proportion has increased locally from 85% to 87%, whilst nationally it has fallen from 83.3% to 82.9%. Whilst encouraging, the 2020/21 data means that around 640 local children aged 2 - 2½ (out of 4,900) did not achieve their expected levels of development, and therefore remain at risk of potentially not performing as well as other children once they start primary school.

**Figure 1 Percentage of children aged 2 - 2½ who achieve the expected level of development in Suffolk (2020/21)**



Source: Office for Health Improvement and Disparities: Child development outcomes<sup>11</sup>

In England, lower levels of child development – or inequalities – are seen among many different groups, including.<sup>12</sup>

- Asian and Black children
- children living in more deprived areas
- looked-after children
- children with a known disability
- children who have ever been vulnerable
- children who have ever had a child protection plan
- children who would prefer a language other than English
- children who have moved twice or more

Across Suffolk, there are likely to be many young children who fall into one or more of these groups, and are likely to require additional support, both within and outside of the home. It is important to ensure their levels of development are encouraged, supported and promoted as much as possible.

### 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 substantially poorer educational outcomes than their wealthier peers.<sup>13</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 12.5% (in the spring term) of 2015/16 to 15.6% in 2019/20.<sup>14</sup> Among state-funded secondary school children, this proportion increased from 10% to 13.1%. Latest figures for the 2020/21 autumn term show that 18.4% of primary school children in Suffolk were eligible for free school meals, which equates to around 10,400 pupils. This proportion was 15.2% in secondary school pupils, which is around 6,900 pupils. These proportions have also increased nationally over time, and in 2020/21, 20.2% of primary school children were eligible for free school meals, whilst 18.2% of secondary school pupils were eligible.

### School readiness

Children are considered ready for school if, by the end of Reception (their first year of primary school), they achieve a good level of development. This means they have achieved the expected levels of learning in personal, social and emotional development, physical development, communication and language, mathematics and literacy.

In 2012/13, just under half of children in Suffolk (49%) were considered ready for school by the end of Reception, compared with nearly 52% in England (table 1). Since then, this proportion has increased steadily, both locally and nationally. By 2018/19, over 70% of children in Suffolk were ready for school. Whilst encouraging, the proportion of Suffolk children ready for school at the end of Reception in 2018/19 was significantly lower (statistically) than the national average – 70.7% versus 71.8%. The 2018/19 data also shows that 3 out of 10 local children – 2,300 out of 7,900 – were not ready for school. For boys in Suffolk, this gap is even bigger – 4 out of 10 were not ready for school compared with 2 out of 10 for girls. More recent data on development by the end of Reception is not available due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 1 Percentage of pupils achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception in Suffolk (2012/13 to 2018/19)**

Year	All		Boys		Girls	
	Suffolk	England	Suffolk	England	Suffolk	England
2012/13	49.0	51.7	41.4	43.9	56.8	59.9
2013/14	58.9	60.4	51.1	52.4	66.7	68.7
2014/15	67.6	66.3	60.4	58.6	75.2	74.3
2015/16	70.2	69.3	62.7	62.1	78.0	76.8
2016/17	71.1	70.7	64.2	64.0	78.4	77.7
2017/18	71.5	71.5	64.9	65.0	78.2	78.4
2018/19	70.7	71.8	62.7	65.5	79.2	78.4

Source: Public Health England. Child and Maternal Health Profile<sup>15</sup>

Red/Amber/Green colours show whether the figures in Suffolk are worse/similar/better (statistically) compared to England

### Progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

Between the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2) and the end of primary school (Key Stage 2, Year 6), the progress pupils make across a range of subjects is measured. These measures are used for holding schools accountable, with progress for individual pupils being used to calculate the schools overall progress scores. A score below zero indicates worse progress than England, and a higher score indicates better progress.

Since 2015/16, progress scores for pupils in Suffolk between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have remained below the average for England.<sup>16</sup> In 2018/19, it was -0.7 for reading, -0.6 for writing, and was -0.9 for maths. Compared with 151 local authorities in England (where one is best), Suffolk was ranked 133<sup>rd</sup> for reading, 125<sup>th</sup> for writing, and 140<sup>th</sup> for maths.<sup>17</sup>

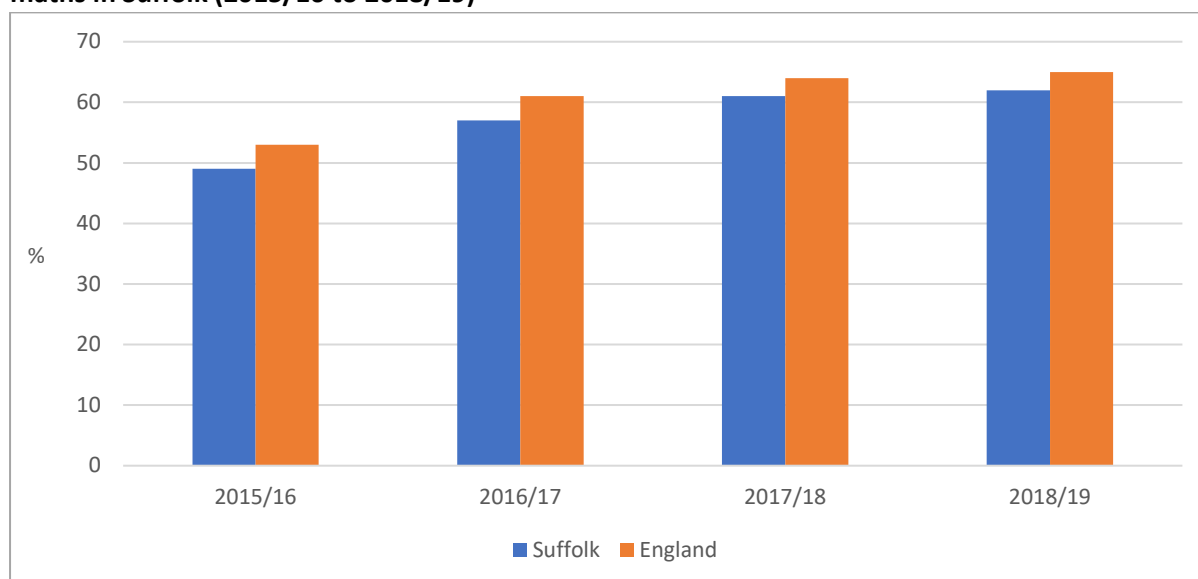
### Attainment at end of Key Stage 2

Key Stage 2 covers four years of education in primary school – Years, 3, 4, 5 and 6 – with children typically aged 7-11 years old. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils take national curriculum assessments (more commonly known as SATs) in reading, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and maths. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, SATS during the past two academic years – 2019/20 and 2020/21 – have been cancelled and replaced with teacher assessment grades. As these grades may not be comparable with earlier years, they have not been reported here.

The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and maths in Suffolk in 2018/19 was 62%, which is significantly lower (statistically) compared with the England average of 65% (figure 2). This means that of the 8,000 pupils who finished primary school in Suffolk that year, around 5,000 met the expected standards across all three subjects, whilst 3,000 did not. Although the proportion of local pupils achieving the expected standards remain below the national average, this proportion has increased in Suffolk since 2015/16, reducing the attainment gap between Suffolk and England.

Within Suffolk, the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standards in reading, writing and maths in 2018/19 were higher in local authority (LA) maintained schools compared with academies – 65% versus 60%.<sup>18</sup> The proportion in LA maintained schools is the same as the national average.

**Figure 2 Percentage of Key Stage 2 pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in Suffolk (2015/16 to 2018/19)**



Source: Department for Education. Key Stage 2 Statistics<sup>16</sup>

### Differences in Key Stage 2 attainment

Data from the ASQ, Reception and Key Stage 2 reveals some encouraging trends locally, with a number of attainment measures either improving, comparable with or above national averages. However, differences in educational outcomes – or inequalities – persist across a number of different groups in Suffolk (table 2). For instance, under half (46.9%) of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, compared with 62% of all pupils. Across all the selected groups, levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 were poorer in Suffolk compared with England.

Unless these differential outcomes are addressed, it is likely that large numbers of pupils in Suffolk will enter secondary schools without the necessary skills and abilities to achieve their full potential.

**Table 2 Percentage of Key Stage 2 pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths by selected groups in Suffolk (2018/19)**

Group	Suffolk	England
Disadvantaged pupils	46.9	51.3
Free school meals	43.9	47.3
All SEND*	18.5	22.3
SEND support pupils	21.1	25.3
Pupils with a SEND statement or EHC plan**	6.9	9.2
First language other than English	57.7	63.9
All boys	57.3	60.2
All girls	66.7	69.8
<b>All pupils</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>65.0</b>

Source: Department for Education. Key Stage 2 Statistics<sup>16</sup>

\* SEND = special educational needs and disabilities

\*\* EHC plan = education, health and care plan (an EHC plan sets out the education, healthcare and social care needs of a child or young person for whom extra support is needed in school, beyond which the school can provide)



## Progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4

Between the end of Key Stage 2 (last year in primary school – Year 6) and the end of secondary school (Key Stage 4 – Year 11), the progress pupils make across eight key subjects is measured. The Progress 8 score shows whether pupils have performed to expectation (based on a measure using Key Stage 2 English and maths as a baseline). This gives an indication of whether pupils in a school have made above or below progress compared to similar pupils in other schools.

The Progress 8 score for pupils in Suffolk in 2018/19 was -0.02. This indicates that local pupils were making more progress than similar pupils across England, where the national average Progress 8 score was -0.03.<sup>17</sup> Compared with 151 local authorities in England (where one is best), Suffolk was ranked 67<sup>th</sup> on their Progress 8 score.

## Attainment at end of Key Stage 4

Key Stage 4 covers two years of education in secondary school – Years 10 and 11 – with children typically aged 14-16 years old. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils sit their GCSE examinations. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, GCSE exams were cancelled in 2019/20 and 2020/21, and were replaced with a combination of centre and teacher assessment grades. As these grades may not be comparable with earlier years, they have not been reported here.

The main measure of attainment used nationally is the percentage of pupils achieving a grade 5-9 in English and maths, known as a ‘good pass’. Other attainment measures include the percentage of pupils achieving a grade 4-9 in English and maths, known as a ‘standard pass’, and a summary measure of attainment across eight subjects known as Attainment 8.

In 2018/19, the Key Stage 4 attainment scores in Suffolk were significantly lower (statistically) than the England averages for all three measures of attainment (table 3). Around 4 out of 10 pupils (39%) achieved a good pass in English and maths locally, whilst 6 out of 10 (61.9%) achieved a standard pass. Within Suffolk, this means that around 4,300 pupils achieved a standard pass in these two subjects (a standard pass of 4-9 is broadly equivalent to the old \*A-C GCSE), whilst 2,700 did not. The attainment gap between Suffolk and England widened between 2017/18 and 2018/19 across all three attainment measures.

Within Suffolk, attainment scores in 2018/19 were higher across all three measures in LA maintained schools compared with academies: grade 5-9 pass in English and maths (43% versus 38%); grade 4-9 pass in English and maths (66% versus 61%); Attainment 8 (46.1 versus 44.7).<sup>18</sup> Over the past two academic years, attainment scores have increased in LA maintained schools across all three measures, whilst they have fallen in academies.

**Table 3 Measures of attainment (percentage) for Key Stage 4 pupils in Suffolk (2017/18 to 2018/19)**

Year	Grade 5-9 English & maths		Grade 4-9 English & maths		Attainment 8	
	Suffolk	England	Suffolk	England	Suffolk	England
2017/18	41.3	43.5	64.0	64.4	45.5	46.6
2018/19	39.0	43.4	61.9	64.9	44.9	46.8

Source: Department for Education. Key Stage 4 performance<sup>19-20</sup>

## Differences in Key Stage 4 attainment

The inequalities in educational outcomes seen at the end of Key Stage 2 were evident once more at the end of Key Stage 4 (table 4). For instance, around 1 in 5 local pupils (20.5%) from disadvantaged backgrounds achieved a good pass in English and maths, compared with 39% of all pupils. Across all the selected groups, levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 were poorer in Suffolk compared with England

**Table 4 Measures of attainment (percentage) for Key Stage 4 pupils by selected groups in Suffolk (2018/19)**

Group	GCSE 9-5	GCSE 9-4	Attainment 8
Disadvantaged pupils	20.5	40.7	34.6
Free school meals	17.8	35.9	32.6
SEND* support pupils	11.3	25.1	30.8
Pupils with a SEND statement or EHC plan*	4.4	12.0	14.8
First language other than English	37.7	56.3	44.8
All boys	35.4	57.4	42.3
All girls	42.8	66.5	47.5
<b>All pupils</b>	<b>39.0</b>	<b>61.9</b>	<b>44.9</b>

Source: Department for Education. Key Stage 4 performance<sup>20</sup>

\* SEND = special educational needs and disabilities

\*\* EHC plan = education, health and care plan (an EHC plan sets out the education, healthcare and social care needs of a child or young person for whom extra support is needed in school, beyond which the school can provide)

## Exclusions from school

Exclusion refers to when pupils are removed from their school's premises, either temporarily or permanently. There are two official types of school exclusion: a fixed-period (or fixed-term) exclusion is when a pupil is temporarily removed or suspended from school; a permanent exclusion is when a child is expelled from school.<sup>21</sup> Being excluded from school, even for a short period of time, can have a detrimental impact on a pupils educational attainment and, moving forward, can affect their future opportunities in life.

Between the academic years 2016/17 and 2018/19, the number of fixed-period exclusions increased in Suffolk schools from 4,562 to 6,056 (table 5). The number (and rate of exclusions) also increased nationally. Between these years, the number of fixed-period exclusions in state-funded primary schools in Suffolk remained largely unchanged, with 1,741 exclusions in 2016/17 compared with 1,820 in 2018/19 (the rate of exclusions increased slightly from 3.01 to 3.14). For local state-funded secondary schools, the number of fixed-period exclusions increased from 2,783 to 4,067, with the rate of exclusions increasing from 6.54 to 9.40.

The number of permanent exclusions remained largely unchanged during this time locally, as they did nationally. In state-funded primary schools in Suffolk, there were 24 permanent exclusions in 2016/17 and 21 in 2018/19 (the rate of exclusions remained unchanged at 0.04). In state-funded secondary schools in Suffolk, there were 69 permanent exclusions in 2016/17 compared with 85 in 2018/19 (the rate of exclusions increased from 0.16 to 0.20). Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two academic years, more recent data on exclusions may not be comparable and have not been reported here.

**Table 5 Number of fixed-period and permanent exclusions from schools\* in Suffolk (2016/17 to 2018/19)**

Type of exclusion	Suffolk			England		
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Fixed-period exclusions	4,562	5,369	6,056	381,864	410,753	438,265
Fixed-period rate**	4.50	5.28	5.91	4.76	5.08	5.36
Permanent exclusions	93	98	106	7,719	7,905	7,894
Permanent rate**	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10

Source: Department for Education. Permanent and fixed-period exclusions<sup>22</sup>

\* Includes special schools, state-funded primary and state-funded secondary schools

\*\* Rates are based on the number of exclusions as a proportion of the overall school population

The top three reasons recorded for a pupil being excluded from school in Suffolk in 2018/19 included persistent disruptive behaviour (30.8% of exclusions), other reasons (20%) and physical assault against pupils (15.6%). These three reasons accounted for around 2 out of every 3 exclusions.

### 16-18 year olds

Once children finish secondary school, they can do one of the following three things up to the age of 18: stay in full-time education, for example, at sixth form or college; start an apprenticeship or traineeship; spend 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering, while being in part-time education or training.<sup>23</sup>

The proportion of 16-18 year olds in education or training in Suffolk has increased in recent years from 89.5% in 2016/17 to 92.3% in 2020/21. This is comparable with the England average of 93.2%.<sup>17</sup> Among local 16-18 year olds, 84.1% were in full-time education (87.4% nationally), 5.6% on an apprenticeship (3.8% nationally), whilst 2.5% (compared with 2% nationally) were in other education and training.<sup>24</sup>

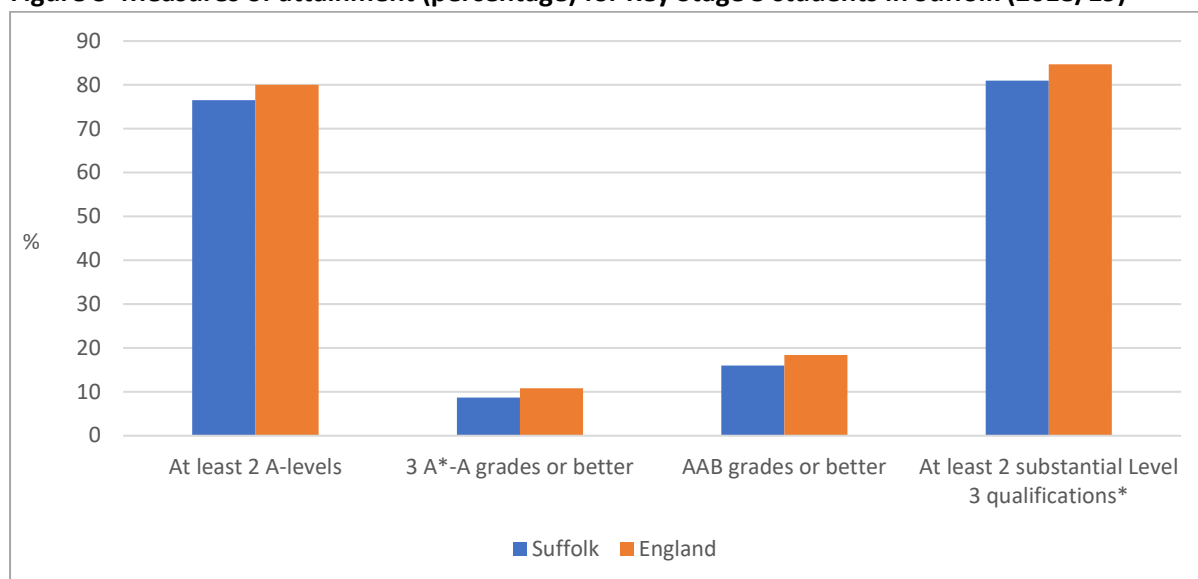
### Key Stage 5 attainment

Key Stage 5 covers the two years of education for students aged 16-18. During this time, students in Suffolk will typically be studying A-levels, vocational or technical qualifications. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these examinations were cancelled in 2019/20 and 2020/21 and replaced with teacher assessment grades. As these grades may not be comparable with earlier years, they have not been reported here.

Just over three quarters of students (76.5%) achieved at least 2 A-levels in Suffolk in 2018/19, which is lower than the national average of 80% (figure 3). Around 1 in 10 students locally (8.7%) achieved 3 A\*-A grades or better in their A-levels compared with 10.8% in England, whilst 16% of students in Suffolk achieved AAB grades or better in their A-levels compared with 18.4% nationally. Just over 8 out of 10 students (81%) in Suffolk achieved at least 2 substantial Level 3 qualifications compared with 84.7% in England. All four measures of attainment are significantly lower (statistically) in Suffolk compared with England.

The proportion of students in Suffolk achieving at least 2 A-levels has fallen since 2016/17 from 78.9% to 76.5% (nationally it increased from 75.4% to 80%). The proportion of local students achieving 3 A\*-A grades or better or AAB grades for their A-levels, or at least 2 substantial Level 3 qualifications, have remained largely unchanged.

**Figure 3 Measures of attainment (percentage) for Key Stage 5 students in Suffolk (2018/19)**



Source: Department for Education. Statistics: 16 to 19 attainment<sup>25</sup>

\* Substantial level 3 qualifications are defined as qualifications that are at least the size of an A-level (180 guided learning hours per year), such as a BTEC subsidiary diploma level 3; if a qualification is equal in size to 2 A-levels it is counted as 2 substantial level 3 qualifications

## Apprenticeships

For many 16-18 year olds, apprenticeships offer an alternative to studying at sixth form or college. There are apprenticeships for over 1,500 job roles in England, allowing young people to gain experience and skills through on-the-job training.<sup>26</sup> Apprenticeships are not just limited to students aged 16-18. Higher and degree apprenticeships are available allowing older groups the opportunity to gain university level qualifications while working. For employers, there are many benefits to employing apprentices, including upskilling existing staff, reducing staff turnover, improving productivity.<sup>27</sup>

Since 2017/18, the proportion of 16-18 year olds starting an apprenticeship has fallen in Suffolk from 8.2% to 5.6% (table 6). The recent fall between 2019/20 and 2020/21 will in large part be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is worth noting that over the past four years, the proportion of 16-18 year olds starting apprenticeships in Suffolk has been higher than the England average.

**Table 6 Number of 16-18 year olds starting\* an apprenticeship in Suffolk (2017/18 to 2020/21)**

Year	Month			3 month average	%	
	December	January	February		Suffolk	England
2017/18	1,097	1,129	1,143	1,123	8.2	5.9
2018/19	1,028	1,088	1,117	1,078	7.9	5.5
2019/20	916	983	995	965	7.7	5.1
2020/21	719	728	837	761	5.6	3.8

Source: Suffolk County Council. Children and Young People<sup>7</sup>

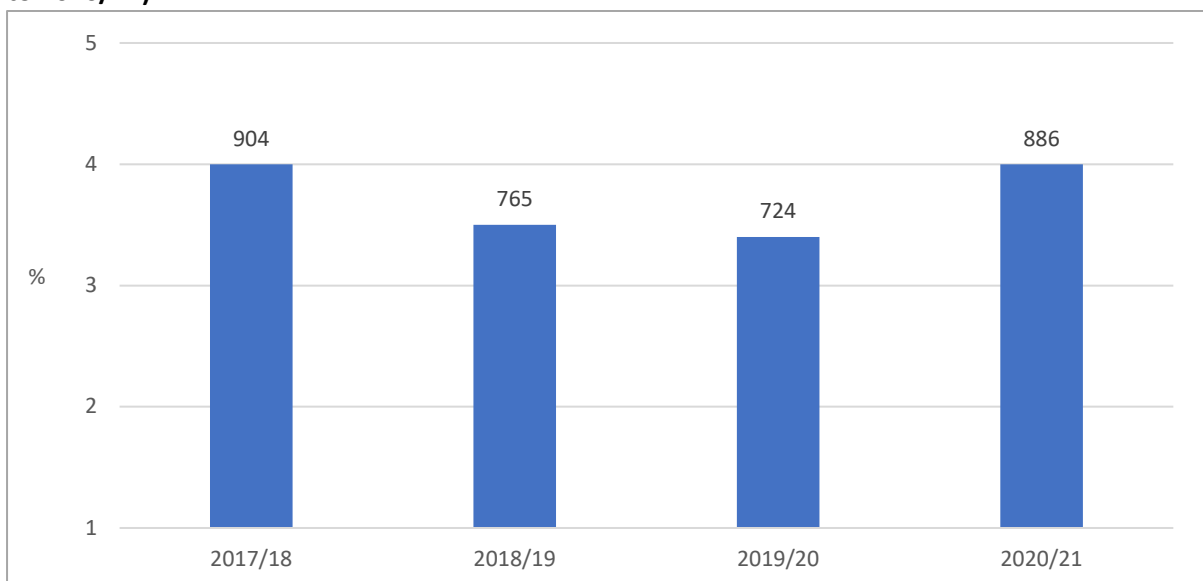
\* Due to fluctuations in the numbers of 16-18 year olds starting apprenticeships throughout the year, figures are based on the 3-month average of December to February

## Young people who are not in education, employment or training

Young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are at greater risk of experiencing poorer physical and mental health. This is in part due to an increased likelihood of unemployment, low wages, or low quality work later on in life.<sup>28</sup> Being NEET can also have an impact on unhealthy behaviours and involvement in crime.

Between the academic years 2017/18 and 2020/21, the proportion of 16-18 year olds in Suffolk who were not in education, employment or training remained unchanged at 4% (figure 4). Locally, this means there were 886 children and young people that were NEET in 2020/21.

**Figure 4 Number of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training in Suffolk (2017/18 to 2020/21)**

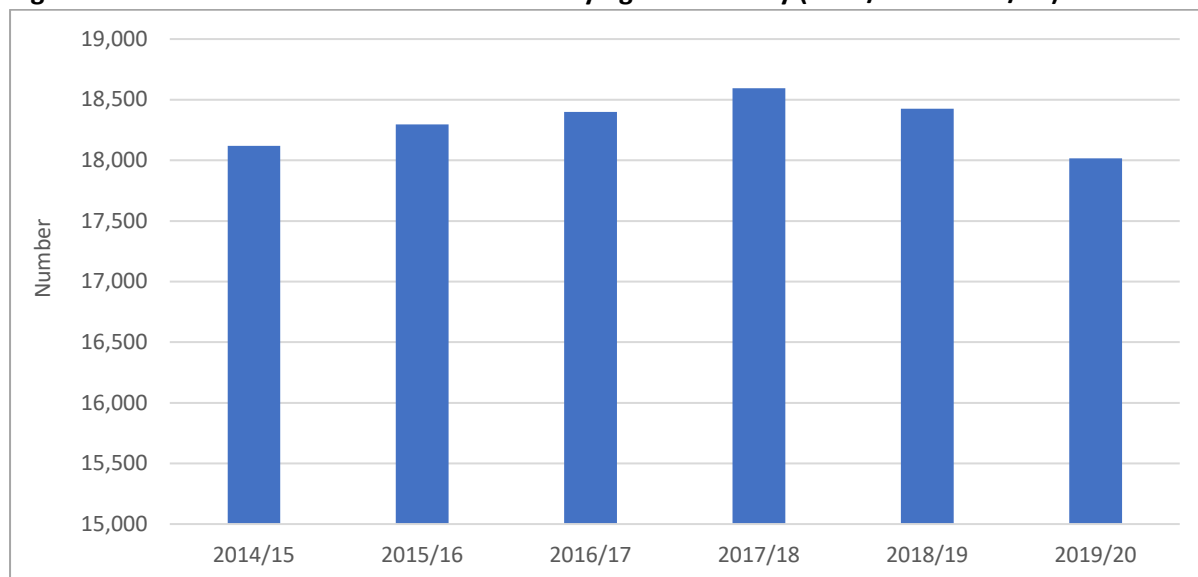


Source: Suffolk County Council. Health, Wellbeing and Children's Services<sup>29</sup>

## University study

Between 2014/15 and 2017/18, the numbers of students from Suffolk studying at university (either as undergraduates or postgraduates) increased from 18,120 to 18,595 (figure 5). Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, numbers fell slightly (a fall of 170). There were 410 fewer students studying at university in 2019/20 compared with the previous year, a reduction of 2.2%. The COVID-19 pandemic could have had an impact on the numbers of students during the 2019/20 academic year.

**Figure 5 Number of students from Suffolk studying at university (2014/15 to 2019/20)**

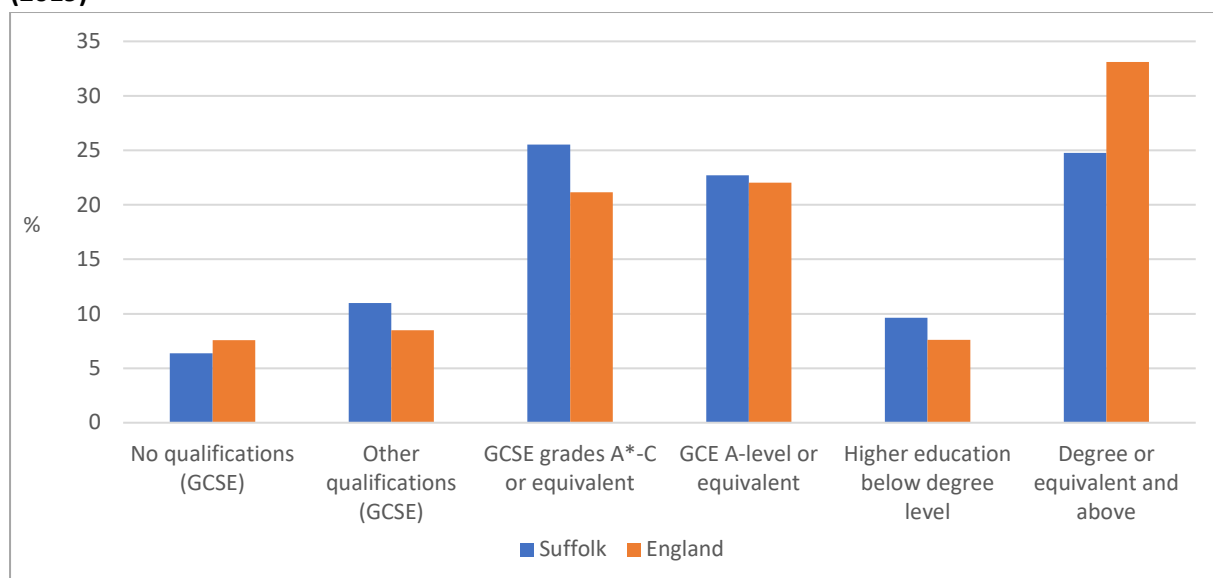


Source: The Higher Education Statistics Agency<sup>30</sup>

### Highest qualification

The highest qualification people living in Suffolk had in 2019 was GCSEs (25.5%; figure 6). A similar proportion (24.8%) had an undergraduate degree or higher (24.8%), or A-levels (22.7%). 11% of local people had other qualifications, 9.6% held a higher qualification below degree level, and 6.4% had no qualifications. Compared with England, fewer people in Suffolk held a degree (24.8% versus 33.1%).

**Figure 6 Highest level of qualification (percentage) by working age adults (16-64 years) in Suffolk (2019)**



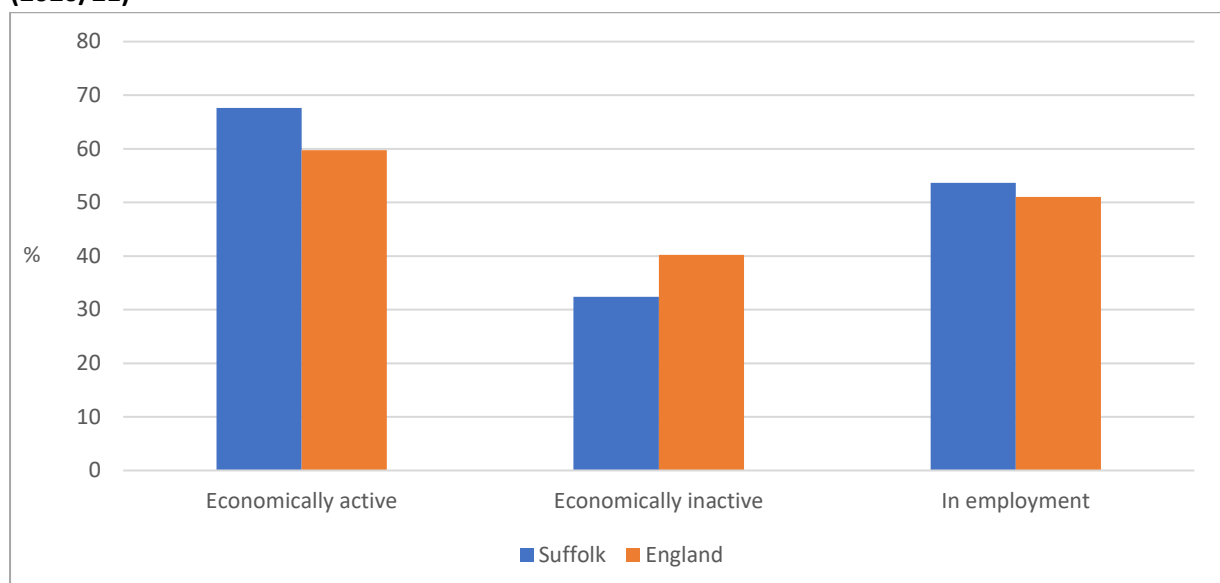
Source: Office for National Statistics. NOMIS. Annual Population Survey<sup>31</sup>

## Economic activity and employment

In 2006, the UK Government commissioned an independent review of the evidence on the relationship between work, health and wellbeing.<sup>32</sup> The authors reported a strong evidence base showing that work is generally good for physical and mental health and wellbeing. Worklessness is associated with poorer physical and mental health and wellbeing. Work can be therapeutic and can reverse the adverse health effects of unemployment. That is true for healthy people of working age, including those with disabilities, common health problems, and those in receipt of welfare benefits. Overall, the beneficial effects of work outweigh the risks of work, and are greater than the harmful effects of long-term unemployment or prolonged sickness absence. The report authors concluded that work is generally good for health and wellbeing.

In 2020/21, around 2 in 3 16-24 year olds (67.6%) were economically active in Suffolk (59.8% in England), whilst 1 in 3 (32.4%) were economically inactive (40.2% in England; figure 7). There has been little change in these proportions, both locally and nationally, over the past three years. Just over half (53.7%) of 16-24 year olds were in employment in Suffolk in 2020/21, slightly higher than the England average of 51%. Since 2018/19, this proportion has fallen locally from 62.2% and nationally from 53.7%.

**Figure 7 Economic activity and employment (percentage) among adults aged 16-24 in Suffolk (2020/21)**



Source: Office for National Statistics. NOMIS. Annual Population Survey<sup>31</sup>

## Education, skills and training deprivation

The 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation in England and provides a way of comparing deprivation using seven domains: income, employment, health and disability, education, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the living environment.<sup>33</sup> Relative deprivation does not tell us how many people are affected by deprivation, but it shows how deprived an area is relative to other areas, and can be used for identifying the most deprived areas within England.

The Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain of the IMD measures the lack of educational attainment and skills in a local population. The indicators used to measure this domain of



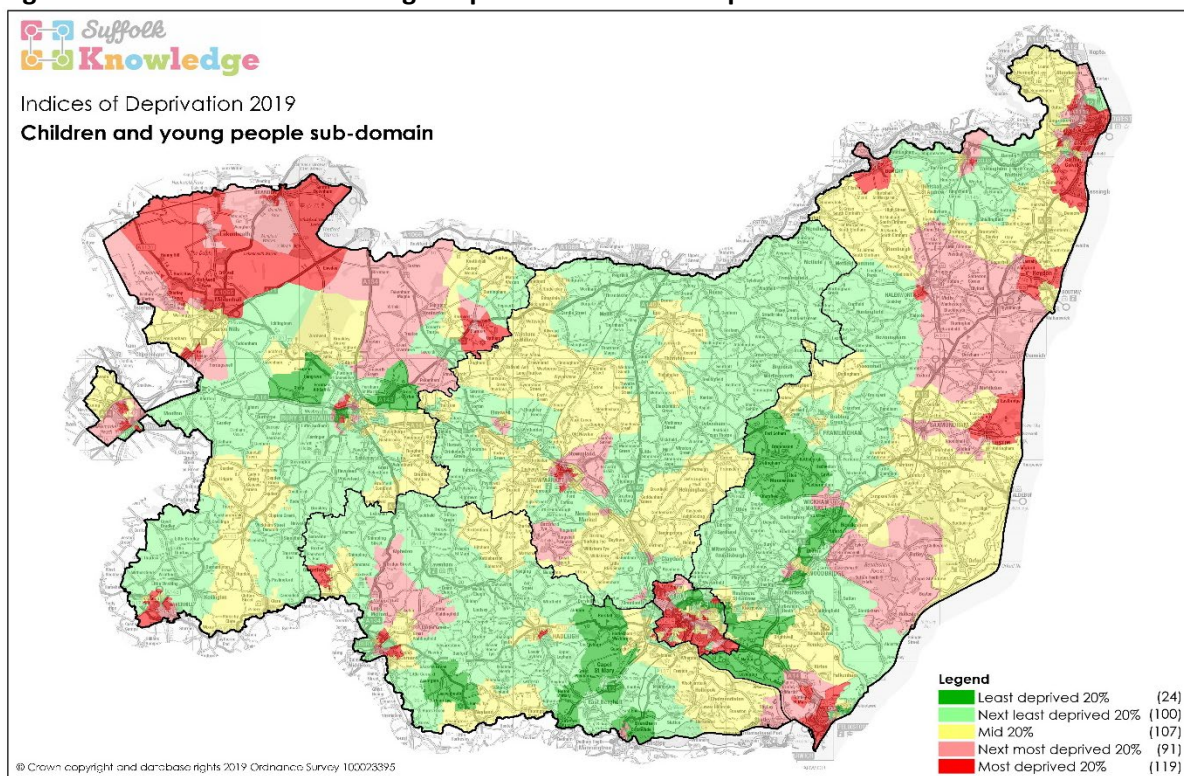
deprivation fall into two sub-domains: one relating to children and young people and one relating to adult skills.

These two sub-domains are designed to reflect the ‘flow’ and ‘stock’ of educational disadvantage within an area. The Children and Young People sub-domain measures the attainment of qualifications and associated measures (‘flow’), while the Adult Skills sub-domain measures the lack of qualifications in the working age adult population (‘stock’).

Across Suffolk, the greatest levels of deprivation on the Children and Young People sub-domain were around Mildenhall, Newmarket, Haverhill, Glemsford, Sudbury, Bury St Edmunds, Stanton, Stowmarket, Ipswich, Felixstowe, Leiston, Reydon, Bungay, and Lowestoft (figure 8). Additional hotspots of deprivation on the Adult Skills sub-domain include areas around Hundon, which is close to Haverhill (figure 9).

Although many of the most deprived areas in Suffolk, on both sub-domains, are concentrated in towns and other urban areas, pockets of rural deprivation, often masked by areas of relative affluence, are likely to exist. As these areas are difficult to identify, it may mean some children and young people, along with adults, do not receive the same levels of services and interventions that larger and more noticeable areas would.

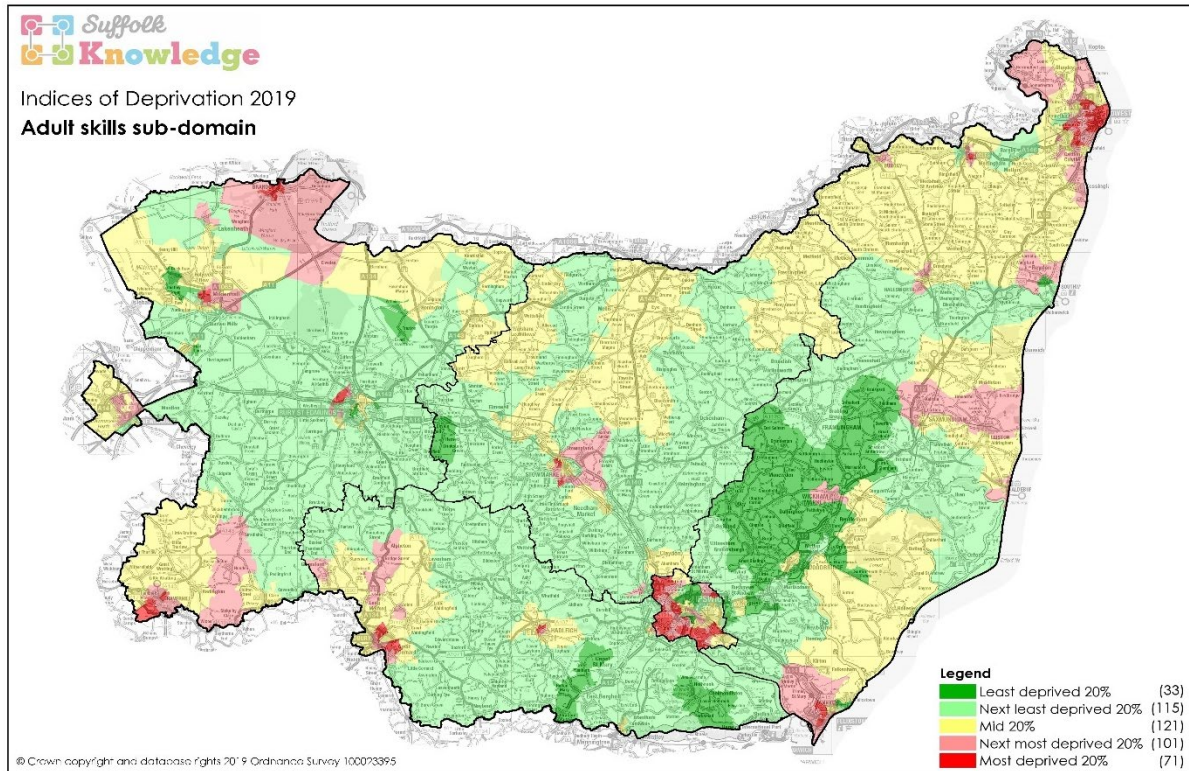
**Figure 8 2019 Children and Young People sub-domain of deprivation in Suffolk**



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. English Indices of Deprivation<sup>33</sup>



**Figure 9 2019 Adult Skills sub-domain of deprivation in Suffolk**



Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. English Indices of Deprivation<sup>33</sup>

## Social mobility

Social mobility is about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to build a good life for themselves regardless of their family background. In a socially mobile society, everyone has a fair chance of reaching their potential.<sup>34</sup> In 2017, the Social Mobility Commission published a Social Mobility Index which assessed the education, employability and housing prospects of people living in England.<sup>35</sup> The Index highlighted where people from disadvantaged backgrounds were most and least likely to make social progress.

Whilst the 2017 Index has not been updated (and is based on the old pre-2019 local authority boundaries), the Index provides valuable insights into those areas of Suffolk where people from disadvantaged backgrounds are likely to make the least social progress.

In 2017, Ipswich, Forest Heath (West Suffolk), Babergh, and Waveney (East Suffolk) were ranked in the worst 20% of local authorities for social mobility, which indicates that people from disadvantaged backgrounds in these areas were least likely to make social progress (table 7). Compared with 324 other local authorities in England, Waveney was ranked the 11<sup>th</sup> worst on the Social Mobility Index.

In addition to the overall Social Mobility Index ranking, individual rankings are given for different life stages: early years, schools, youth and adulthood. It is clear from these rankings that social mobility gaps often open up at an early age, persist into schooling and continue into adulthood across the different areas of Suffolk.

**Table 7 Social Mobility Index rankings in Suffolk (2017)**

Local Authority		Social Mobility Index ranking (1 = best, 324 = worst)				
Pre-2019	Post-2019	Overall*	Early Years	Schools	Youth	Adulthood
Mid Suffolk	Mid Suffolk	80	107	133	62	164
Suffolk Coastal	East Suffolk	116	245	152	92	66
St Edmundsbury	West Suffolk	209	254	106	132	276
Ipswich	Ipswich	261	201	297	109	261
Forest Heath	West Suffolk	264	196	155	182	318
Babergh	Babergh	270	135	256	282	259
Waveney	East Suffolk	314	157	317	204	306

Source: Social Mobility Commission: Social Mobility Index<sup>35</sup>

\* Cold spots (in blue) are ranked in the worst 20% of local authorities for social mobility

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