



Hidden Needs

Hidden Deprivation and
Community Need in Suffolk
A report to The Suffolk Foundation

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Foreword from The Suffolk Foundation

Back in 2005, the first grant from the newly formed Suffolk Foundation went to the East Anglian Sailing Trust to support sailing for people with disabilities and their carers. Since then, on behalf of our donors and funding partners, £4 million has been awarded to local charities and community groups that are tackling social disadvantage in many forms such as homelessness, rural isolation, domestic violence, addiction, disability, mental ill health or family difficulties. Many of the groups that we support are working at a grassroots level to make Suffolk a better place, often with limited financial resources but always with enormous contributions of goodwill, tenacity and passion.

Suffolk was one of the last counties in the UK to create a community foundation, perhaps because of the mistaken perception that there was 'little or no need'. For those of us involved in those early days, we weren't quite sure what to expect. Certainly, many of us enjoy a wonderful quality of life in this beautiful county but it quickly became apparent through our grant-making that local charities and community groups were identifying deep pockets of need. The scale and nature of that need was harder to quantify as we began the match-maker's job of connecting the generosity of local donors with clearly identified social projects in need of support.

As for the hidden need, the penny dropped for us in 2006 when as members of the Suffolk Strategic Partnership we were party to a county audit commissioned by Suffolk County Council. The State of Suffolk Audit showed that Suffolk was defined as 'average' across a wide range of key statistics despite many people enjoying an exceptionally high quality of life. We began to question whether those averages were masking even greater disadvantage than we had initially anticipated. We knew there was much wealth and affluence in the county and yet we were still defined as 'average' - which begs the question, where exactly is the corresponding deprivation and how is it manifesting itself? This message was picked up by one of our young donors who offered to sponsor anonymously this needs analysis to enable us to understand better the scale and nature of social need in Suffolk to inform our grant-making and help consolidate the mass of information that was in the public domain but not readily accessible.

We welcome the opportunity to share these independent findings as our contribution to Suffolk's combined efforts to move forward in a positive and responsible manner. There are some key themes emerging from the report that will resonate with many readers, and which have already started to influence the Foundation's thinking and grant-making:

- Although Suffolk has many affluent areas, some of the areas that are identified as disadvantaged are amongst some of the most deprived in the UK. This strengthens our voice when we speak to national funders who would perhaps be inclined to overlook Suffolk. 19,000 children under 16 are living below the 'poverty line' - in some areas, this is as high as 1 in 4 children.
- More than 7% of young people aged 16-18 are not in education, training or employment - this is one of the highest rates for rural England and has serious implications for mental wellbeing and economic prospects for both the individuals and their communities.
- The rural nature of Suffolk has clear implications for service provision, particularly for the older population which is set to increase significantly, with a corresponding impact on carers - investment in community infrastructure and outreach services is vital and yet difficult to fund.
- Deprivation is complex and not easily summarised in one set of data. The activities of local voluntary organisations may not match local levels of deprivation, leading to gaps in community capacity where it is perhaps most needed. We need to explore how we work with others to help build stronger communities, from the grassroots up.

Looking at the 2010 edition of deprivation indices, the trend from the last set of comparable data in 2007 suggests there has been an increase in the experience of deprivation in Suffolk relative to rates in England as a whole. More than three times as many areas within Suffolk saw their relative deprivation ranking worsen substantially as saw it improve. This is a worrying trend that needs to be explored.

This Hidden Needs report is not the answer to every question and could never be an exhaustive summary of every social need. However, for us, this report represents a contribution to the continual improvement that we all seek for the county we love and has been designed to influence the Foundation's grant-making and the role we can play as a responsible catalyst for a better Suffolk for all.

Our thanks go to the University of Cambridge for their professional consultation and research, to all the contributors who gave their time and insight, to Suffolk's amazing voluntary and community sector who achieve so much with so little and, of course, to the generosity of our private donor who paid for this research, recognising that 'making a difference' comes in many different shapes and sizes.

Stephen Singleton,
Chief Executive
 May 2011



Executive Summary

Popular notions of poverty and deprivation in Britain often take them to be problems of inner city areas and large housing estates. This detailed review of the evidence on deprivation and hidden need in the communities of Suffolk shows that such a view is far from the whole truth:

- Nearly 78,000 people in the county live in income deprivation at the most minimal living standard provided by welfare benefits, and well below the 'poverty line'. This number represents 11 per cent of the total population, and includes 19,000 children aged under 16, and 24,000 people of retirement age.
- Deprivation and inequality go beyond income poverty and include other forms of disadvantage. As a whole, Suffolk has lower rates of multiple deprivation than England, but it is the second most deprived county in the East of England government region. The deprived circumstances of some Suffolk residents are compounded by geographic and social barriers, creating community need.
- In Ipswich and Lowestoft there are neighbourhoods with very high rates of multiple deprivation that are amongst the 10 per cent worst-off in England. An average of 33 per cent of people living in these areas is income deprived.
- County and district-level rates of deprivation can obscure the numbers of poor households that are living in a less deprived area. These 'hidden' deprived households are likely to be particularly vulnerable when resources are allocated to areas with the highest levels of need.
- Comparing the latest edition of deprivation indices with those from three years earlier show an increase in the experience of deprivation in Suffolk relative to rates in England as a whole. More than three times as many small areas within the county saw their relative ranking worsen as saw it improve, with employment outcomes an important reason for this.
- People in need do not always know what benefits and support they are entitled to, or do not have access to suitable services. Households who are not accessing services they need or claiming benefits that they are entitled to are doubly disadvantaged.
- Having a job does not always raise household income much above the poverty threshold. There is evidence of in-work poverty and under-counting of deprivation by standard measures in some parts of the county, particularly Forest Heath.
- Income deprivation affecting children is particularly concentrated in the larger towns in Suffolk. Across the county, less than half of five year-olds have reached a 'good' level of development. This is one of the worst outcomes in England, and is comparable to highly deprived urban areas.
- Childhood poverty also affects educational attainment: only 43% of low-income pupils claiming free school meals achieved 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C, compared to 69% of pupils overall.

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- More than 7 per cent of young people aged 16 to 18 in Suffolk is not in education, training or employment. This is higher than the national average, and one of the highest rates for rural areas in England.
- The recession has hit youth employment hard, and recovery is slow. Many parts of Suffolk have limited opportunities for young people. Demand and supply of employment opportunities do not always match geographically. In Waveney, for example, there are seven job-seekers for every vacancy advertised in Job Centres.
- Older people are at risk of both economic and social deprivation, especially if they live alone. Over 40 per cent of people aged 75 and over live alone, and in most parts of Suffolk, at least one in ten people of retirement age is living in poverty. The proportion of very elderly people in the population is expected to rise, presenting a challenge to both public and third-sector service providers.
- Much of the county remains highly rural, and access to key services has steadily worsened in rural areas over the past two decades. The distances that residents of many parts of the county must travel to buy groceries, see a GP or post a parcel are amongst the highest in England.
- Migration has caused rapid change in the population composition of some districts, especially Forest Heath and Ipswich. The level of need in Forest Heath is likely to be significantly greater than the income deprivation figures alone suggest, as in-work poverty which is common among migrants is poorly captured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- The current capacity of the local voluntary sector does not appear to match the level of need in parts of the county. Voluntary organisations in Waveney, for example have not secured grants from the Foundation that reflect the size of the population in need, although other grant streams have been available there. Additional support to aspiring organisations may be needed, as may investment in community infrastructure and access.

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