

Next round of new SEND places agreed by Cabinet

On October 11th the Council's Cabinet agreed a new wave of funding to continue its programme to provide places for children and young people with SEND.

The £3million agreement marks the start of Phase 3 of the Capital Programme to create three additional specialist units providing 42 additional places for students with special educational needs and disabilities. This follows Phase 1 of the programme which created 825 new places across Suffolk and Phase 2, which was signed off in June 2022, and will create up to 73 new places.

So far, £45million has been allocated by Suffolk County Council to deliver the new places for Phase 1 and Phase 2 - £15million of which has been provided by the Department for Education.

In addition, Cabinet also agreed to support the Department for Education's High Needs Provision Capital Funding (HNPCF) for 2023/24 of £7million to be spent on the development of units attached to mainstream schools to support students with social, emotional and mental health problems and speech, language and communication needs. This will create up to 168 new spaces, and is an addition to previous funding agreed from the Department for Education in 2022/23 for up to 78 new places.

Launch of 'Childhood' – short film to raise awareness of the need for foster carers

In a ground-breaking national collaboration, 56 Local Authorities across England have worked together to create a short film to raise awareness of fostering.

It is aimed at finding more people who may be interested in becoming foster carers and providing nurturing, positive homes for children and young people across the country who need them.

The new film, simply called 'Childhood', highlights the impact of neglect on children, particularly brothers and sisters who may be left at times to try and care for each other. It shows the journey of 'Sophie' and 'Charlie' who are in a very difficult home situation where their needs are not being met, to being nurtured and supported through foster care to attend school and be able to enjoy their hobbies and interests. In other words, have a childhood.

Being prepared for winter matters to Suffolk County Council

As the days get shorter and temperatures continue to drop, it certainly feels like winter is on the way.

November marks the start of the council's new Winter Matters campaign, a campaign packed full of tips and advice to help you and your loved ones look after your money, health, wellbeing and safety during the colder months.

As we do with so much of our work, the council has partnered with organisations and services from across the county who are already providing support for people in Suffolk, such as the Rural Coffee Caravan and Community Action Suffolk, to ensure we can help those who need it most. I would like to offer them my thanks for their help with this campaign.

Of course, every year Suffolk County Council helps families and communities with essential services, whether it be by gritting icy roads, commissioning social care support, or attending fires, but this year especially we are asking that people make their own preparations to

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enable them to have a happy and healthy winter. It would take too long for me to list all the various parts of this campaign, but I wanted to highlight just a few.

Winter marks the start of the flu season, and of course the shadow of COVID hasn't gone away. Protect yourself and those you care about by getting the flu and covid vaccines as soon as you are eligible.

Vaccination is still the best defence against these serious and potentially life-threatening illnesses, and I am delighted that more than 173,000 people in Suffolk have already had their autumn COVID booster vaccine.

Don't forget, when notified you can book your COVID vaccination appointment or find a walk-in clinic near you by visiting <https://sneevaccine.org.uk>.

We can all play our part in helping to slow the spread of viruses this winter by washing or sanitising our hands regularly. Anyone feeling unwell should ideally stay at home to protect others if they can. If you're ill and have to leave the house, please consider keeping your distance from people or wearing a face covering if you must get close to them.

As well as looking after our health, it's important for us to prioritise wellbeing this winter, with ongoing increases to the Cost of Living being a source of stress for many.

I know this is especially true when it comes to energy bills. Whilst Government has stepped in to help cap the average cost of energy, additional help is at hand from Warm Homes Suffolk, which provides support on making homes more energy efficient and cheaper to heat.

The service can offer assistance with fuel payments, discuss energy efficiency improvements, help you access grants to pay for insulation, and assess your eligibility for contributions towards the cost of repairs or replacements if your boiler or heater stops working.

If high energy bills are preventing you from putting the heating on, or you know anyone who may need extra help heating their home, please contact Warm Homes Suffolk on **03456 037 686**.

Further guidance on national and local support with household costs, including food and essentials, is available on our website. <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/community-and-safety/communities/healthier/cost-of-living-support> to find out what help you could be entitled to, as well as tips and advice for saving money.

Could you help a Ukrainian family in need?

Suffolk County Council is asking anyone with spare space to consider signing up to host a Ukrainian family.

Some Ukrainian guests, who arrived in the UK via the Homes for Ukraine scheme, have now been with their sponsors for six months.

Sponsors of the Homes for Ukraine scheme originally signed up to host guests for at least six months, with the option for those who are willing and able to continue beyond this. Not all hosts are able to continue to offer accommodation to guests beyond six months and some of those guests are not yet ready to move on to private rented accommodation. The county is now in need of new hosts to offer them a safe haven while the war in Ukraine continues.

The council is looking for a wide range of homes for single people, mothers with children, and larger families. Areas in particular need of new hosts are Bury St Edmunds, Felixstowe, Haverhill, Ipswich and Lowestoft.

Self-contained accommodation is particularly helpful, for instance an annexe, holiday let or second home.

It is now possible to register with Suffolk County Council if you are interested in hosting a Ukrainian family – visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/ukraine to find out more.

In partnership with the County Council, Community Action Suffolk are holding a number of drop-in sessions over the coming weeks, for potential new hosts to find out more about hosting a Ukrainian family.

There will be opportunities to ask questions and understand more about what is involved, including what makes a suitable property, what checks they will need to undertake and more information about the matching process.

The events are aimed at anyone who is interested in hosting Ukrainian guests, either in their own home or a separate property that they own.