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**Gipping Valley  
Division**

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**December 2024  
Report**



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## Council's Warm Homes Suffolk Loans now available

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Suffolk County Council is offering interest-free loans to help make residents' homes warmer, safer and cheaper to run.

Energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, solar panels, batteries, glazing, or heat pumps are possible with loans from £2,000 to £15,000 to be repaid over a maximum of seven years – at 0% interest.

The £3 million project fully opened to homeowners across Suffolk on **1 November 2024**, and applications can now be made at <https://www.lendology.org.uk/warm-homes-suffolk-loan/>

Making homes more energy-efficient helps retain their heat and use less energy, meaning homeowners can save on their energy bills and reduce their carbon emissions. A warm home also has a positive impact on health and well-being.

Money for the loans comes from £3 million of funding received as part of the council's negotiations with the previous government to secure a County Deal.

It was allocated from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to support an energy efficiency and energy generation 0% loan fund for people that cannot access grants currently available to low-income households.

The scheme supports Suffolk's Climate Emergency Plan, by increasing the number of properties which have energy-efficient and low carbon energy measures installed.

An increase in demand for energy efficiency measures will also help support businesses providing those services, meaning jobs, skills development and investment in the green economy.

Suffolk County Council is partnering with Lendology CIC to deliver the interest-free loan scheme. Lendology CIC is an experienced Social Enterprise Lender, managing similar schemes with councils across the country.

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## Suffolk Launches Good Health at Work Programme

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Suffolk County Council has officially launched the Good Health at Work Programme, a new initiative aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the working-age population across Suffolk.

Running initially for 18 months, the programme will provide essential support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), focusing on businesses whose employees are at the highest risk of health inequalities, such as those on low incomes or with long-term health conditions. The programme will be delivered by Get Set UK, a leading people services provider.

SMEs in Suffolk are encouraged to get involved and take advantage of the range of resources now available. Key elements of the programme include:

**An Online Resource Hub** – This hub offers employers access to practical tools, advice, and evidence-based strategies to create healthier workplaces based on good work principles like fair pay, job security, and opportunities for growth.

**An Ambassador Network** – Businesses can join a community of employers committed to promoting good work practices, with opportunities to collaborate and improve their workplace using a self-assessment framework to review their workforce wellbeing practices against a set of six standards. Participants can achieve tiered recognition, starting with a bronze award upon completing the first standard and progressing to silver and gold as they advance.

**A Navigator Service** – Providing one-on-one support, the Navigator Service helps SMEs assess their challenges and strengths, offering tailored advice and guidance to enhance their workplace and improve employee well-being.

Businesses can explore the available resources and learn more about the Good Health at Work Programme by visiting [www.goodhealthatwork.co.uk](http://www.goodhealthatwork.co.uk)

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## Stronger Families Partnership keeps children out of care for the equivalent of 1,000 years

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The Stronger Families Partnership which delivers innovative family therapy has as of 30th September supported 584 children at risk of being taken into care, or who have returned to their families from care, to remain safely with their families.

The Partnership – made up of Bridges Outcomes Partnerships, Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, and Family Psychology Mutual – has cumulatively saved the equivalent of 1,000 years of days in care.

With over 105,000 children in care across the UK, and about one child in care in every 140 in England, too many children are being separated from their family. Research suggests that looked-after children tend to experience significantly poorer life outcomes than other children, affecting areas including mental and physical health, education and socioeconomic circumstance.

As well as limiting life chances, the growing population of children in care is putting local authority resources under increasing pressure; nationally all 151 councils with children's services responsibility overspent on their budgets following growing demand to remove children to care.

Since 2019, 584 families have completed Stronger Families' evidence-based clinical interventions, Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and FFT Child Welfare (FFT CW), remaining out of care for over 365,000 cumulative days as of 30th September 2024.

Stronger Families' approach enables families to address challenging patterns of behaviour and communication in order to build their capacity for sustainable, positive change. The delivery works to prevent family breakdown and give families the tools to cope, so that children can remain safely with their families and experience reduced involvement with children's services.

The programme's tracking process monitors number of care days saved alongside other measurable impacts that go beyond at-risk children to benefit whole families: the 365,000-day milestone saw 93% of children not entering/re-entering care during the tracking period, and a majority reporting improved family functioning.

Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils have taken bold steps to support this innovative and collaborative outcomes-based approach, which champions a more flexible, tailored, data-driven delivery model, and better value for money.

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Keeping these families together is directly linked to cost reductions for the local authorities in both care costs avoided (where children are on a trajectory to care) and immediate cost savings (where children have been reunified with their families). During the initial 18-month tracking period, the delivery saves between £39,000 and £88,000 per family that successfully completes the intervention, in relation to the estimated cost of supporting a child in care – amounting to a total net savings to date of at least £29.4m. When compared to pay-for-inputs approaches, outcomes-based family therapy delivers an average 25% better outcomes for 80% more families at 20%-50% lower cost per family, keeping more children safely out of care.

Of the service, one young person reflected: “The therapist helped us understand each other. Thank you so much for your help, I appreciate it millions. [I] don't know what we'd [have] done without you.”

## OPINION: We've started funding post-Babet changes, now it's time for the Government to step up

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A column by Councillor Paul West, Suffolk County Council's Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding.

This time last year, communities across the country were dealing with the fallout from the destructive effects of Storm Babet. Many parts of rural Suffolk were among some of the worst to be hit.

Now considered to be an unprecedented rain event with a month's worth of rain falling in 24 hours (shortly after a very wet three days in itself) and flooding of more than 900 homes and businesses, Storm Babet was the worst on record in our county's history. The flood water battered our roads, cars and homes – leaving a trail of destruction and challenges for many residents.

Homeowners and businesses who were most seriously affected – some even needing to vacate their homes - have had to start the long and arduous process of rebuilding their lives and livelihoods.

As county council cabinet member with responsibility for our roads and flooding services, I know very well the challenges communities are facing due to the more extreme weather we're seeing and the damage that storms have had on our infrastructure.

Since Storm Babet, Suffolk County Council and its partners have been working to engage with communities, repair roads and clear drains, whilst also ensuring residents and business owners get access to the financial aid made available through the government.

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An added challenge when dealing with a flooding event of this size is that we as the lead flood authority have a duty to carry out Section 19 flood investigations in the communities that have been most adversely affected. In any normal year, I could count on one hand how many flood investigations we carry out. This year however, there are around 50 locations in total.

Shortly after the storm, Suffolk County Council committed an extra £1 million to bolster our floods team, enabling them to carry out this increase in flood investigations. However, it quickly became clear that more money would be needed to carry out the preventative works that were made as recommendations.

These recommendations could include creating flood water retention ponds in land above villages and green spaces within communities to capture water and slow the flow into residential areas. It could also be installing flood doors and non-return valves on drains to stop water entering properties that are particularly at risk of flooding.

We are also making a concerted effort to engage with landowners with advice and guidance, especially those with responsibilities to maintain ditches and streams on their properties. These recommendations are the reason I asked Suffolk County Council's cabinet to agree to commit a further £1.5 million to carry out this important work – an ask that was unanimously supported.

It's a good start, but unfortunately this is nowhere near enough. Our flooding reports have identified that a further £20 million would be needed to complete all the work that's necessary – a figure that the county council just cannot afford. So far, Suffolk County Council has committed more than £13.75 million for work to aid recovery from Storm Babet. But it's unreasonable to assume that councils, who are already financially stretched, should or even could carry the entire cost. That's why the leader of the council and I have written to the flooding minister, Emma Hardy MP, and demanded the government step up and plug the funding gap.

In the meantime, I have instructed our highways and flooding teams to develop a plan to deliver the first phase of works which have been identified in the 10 investigation reports published since Babet.

One of the key areas we are focussing on is the bolstering of Suffolk Highways' resources to deliver more planned and reactive maintenance on the county's roads and footpaths. Extensive highway repairs and maintenance work has already been completed since Storm Babet including more than 111,000 drains cleared and significant road repairs.

Our teams have been working hard to repair the damage it caused, investigate what happened and to help reduce the flood risk in future. These measures take time, preventative flooding work is complex and costly and requires lots of agencies to work together.

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Despite limited resources and budgetary challenges facing all county councils, we have managed to find extra money to tackle flooding and deliver more for our residents. But this challenge is steep and the government must act and provide extra funding to ensure Suffolk's residents don't face uncertainty when these extreme weather events occur.

## Council making net zero gains, but still work to do

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Suffolk County Council continues to bring down its carbon emissions, with significant reductions from council-owned street lighting, vehicles and buildings, but there is still work to do to reach its ambitious target of net zero by 2030.

A new report going to the council's Scrutiny Committee (21 November) reviews progress since the declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019. The reports finds that emissions across the areas within the council's direct control, such as energy consumption in council buildings and vehicles (categorised as Scope 1 & 2 emissions), have fallen by a further 8% over the past year, contributing to a 43% drop since 2019. When taking account of the council's switch to a renewable electricity tariff, this becomes a 75% reduction.

However, when calculating its overall net zero progress, the council also reports on many emissions where it has influence but less direct control. These are known as Scope 3 emissions. These include things like home to school transport, home-working, and staff commuting and travel for work in their own vehicles.

These make up 65% of the council's reported emissions, which the council is currently projecting will reduce by 48% by 2030m showing the scale of the remaining challenge.

Since 2019, when it declared a climate emergency, the council's carbon reduction successes include:

- Street and traffic lights down by 57%
- Diesel and petrol vehicles down by 50%
- Gas and oil use in buildings down by 37%
- Staff commuting down by 30%
- Electricity use in buildings down by 25%

Nationally, the council is making impressive strides with its own estate, standing out as one of the three leading county councils in England for reductions on Scope 1 & 2 emissions, according to analysis of published reports.

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## Department for Education welcomes SEND improvements and evidence of impact, but recognises challenges

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The Department for Education (DfE) met with senior leaders from Suffolk County Council and the NHS to review the impact of wide-ranging improvement plans for special educational needs and disabilities services (SEND).

Following the meeting, a letter was sent from the DfE outlining the extent of progress made within SEND services across Suffolk over the past six months.

In summary, it ‘welcomes the improvements and the evidence of impact’ and recognises ‘the considerable challenges that remain to reach the required targets’.

- [SEND Letter from DfE](#)

SEND services in Suffolk are delivered by the Local Area Partnership, made up of Suffolk County Council, the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board and the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board, with the support of schools and colleges.

Key achievements listed within the letter include improvements in the timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs); outstanding academic progress for children participating in the Raising Achievement – Delivering Better Value academic interventions; better coproduction between partners; and a significant reduction of permanent exclusions in primary schools and for children with EHCPs.

The Department for Education also outlined key areas for development including governance and use of data; ensuring that improvement work continues at pace, specifically with regard to timeliness and quality of EHCPs; achieving consistency across all families so that improvement is felt by all; and that the voice of children and young families continue to be heard at the heart of decision making.

The letter recognised that the Local Area Partnership was ‘very open about the areas it felt still needed considerable further improvement to meet the needs of all children and families more effectively and has clear plans in place for driving this’.

The progress meeting with the Department for Education was held on November 4 and reviewed work over six months since the publication of the Priority Action Plan, which was agreed following the Ofsted and CQC inspection in November 2023.

This was the most formal review since the inspection. The next progress meeting will take place in May 2025.

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## EPIC new strategy positions Suffolk at cutting edge of UK economy



Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is set to review ambitious new plans which will position Suffolk as a national leader in sustainable growth and innovation.

Suffolk's Economic Strategy, also known as a Local Growth Plan, has been developed by the Suffolk Business Board in collaboration with businesses, partners and stakeholders across the county.

It seeks to harness Suffolk's unique strengths, including its thriving renewable energy sector and innovative, collaborative business environment, to transform the region into a hub for clean technology, long-term economic prosperity and competitiveness.

By 2045, the strategy sets out to achieve:

- An additional £14billion contribution to the economy, surpassing the average growth rate in England
- 45,000 more people qualified to Level 3 or higher
- 35,000 more people participating in the workforce
- A significant increase in average wages across the region.

At its core is EPIC Suffolk, a framework to guide investments and funding priorities built on four key pillars: **Economic wellbeing**, **Productivity**, **Inclusivity**, and **Clean growth**.

The strategy identifies several key areas for economic growth:

- **High Growth sectors:** Suffolk is already a national leader in clean energy, with offshore wind and nuclear projects at the forefront. The county's agri-food and drink sector is set to grow through sustainable practices and agri-tech innovation, while the county's ports and logistics sector is a critical gateway for UK trade.
- **Emerging and Value Growth sectors:** Suffolk's technology sector also shows strong potential for growth, in areas such as ICT, digital creative industries, life sciences and financial services. Elsewhere, there are opportunities to further improve productivity and job quality in advanced manufacturing, construction, health and social care, and the visitor economy.
- **Tech Convergence:** Suffolk has the potential to become a leader in Tech Convergence, where technologies such as digital, AI, clean tech, robotics and satellite applications intersect and integrate with existing industries, creating an environment ripe for innovation and growth.

To support Suffolk's continued growth, the strategy places a strong emphasis on workforce development and infrastructure. Investments in skills, housing, digital connectivity, and road and rail networks will be critical to meeting the demands of a growing economy and ensuring that the region remains competitive in the global marketplace.

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The strategy is underpinned by a comprehensive investment plan which aims to attract £4 of private investment for every £1 of public funding, including a multimillion-pound pipeline of projects to boost productivity, create jobs and attract new companies to Suffolk.

The Suffolk Business Board was mobilised in May 2024, following the government guidance that the work of the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership should be brought to a close. The Business Board comprises 17 members representing business, education, voluntary sector and local government and is responsible for the economic strategy for Suffolk and steering of former LEP-led functions.

The Economic Strategy will be discussed at the meeting of Suffolk County Council's Cabinet on Tuesday 3 December 2024. Papers for the meeting can be viewed at <https://committeeminutes.suffolk.gov.uk>

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