

February 2024 report for the Thredling Division from Cllr Matthew Hicks

One Network

This is a quick reminder about the website one.network. It is a free-to-view website, with large-ranging sources of roadworks and traffic disruption information in the UK. The one.network map enables highway authorities to communicate authoritative up-to-date information about roadworks, events and other activities on the highway. Users can register for email alerts about upcoming roadworks affecting their area. This is particularly useful for informing residents on future works.

Suffolk DVD counterfeiter receives suspended sentence

A man who made thousands of pounds from pirating DVDs of films and TV shows has been given a suspended prison sentence following a case brought by Suffolk County Council's Trading Standards team. John Williams received a 16-month term, suspended for two years, plus a fine of £7,500 after pleading guilty to two offences related to the sale, supply and manufacture of counterfeit DVDs. Williams, 72, of Pot Kiln Road, Great Cornard, Suffolk, was also ordered by Ipswich Crown Court to pay a Proceeds of Crime Order of £77,182, as the criminal benefit he made from the sales of counterfeit discs, plus pay prosecution costs of £42,870. Suffolk Trading Standards began investigating after receiving a report of fake cult and classic DVDs being sold online. More than 40,000 copied DVDs were seized from his home in October 2021 along with computers, disc burners, a colour photocopier with print outs of DVD box paper insert sleeves, and address label stickers. Williams pleaded guilty to one offence under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1998 and one under the Trademark Act 1994. Anyone wanting to report the sale of illegal goods should contact Trading Standards via Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

Fake university website shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards

A website for a fake university aiming to scam money from overseas students has been shut down by Suffolk Trading Standards. Calling itself the College of Suffolk, the website claimed the university had been founded in 1990 and was located on Queen Street in Ipswich. Quoting yearly fees ranging from £3,500 to £8,900, it claimed to offer courses in acting, musical theatre, dance and performance. The site used images of the real University of Suffolk and even had a page promoting the county, saying how it was home to its own breed of horses, breweries and famous celebrities such as singer Ed Sheeran. A foreword by college 'President' Dr Stephen Spinks talked of how it provides "exciting learning opportunities in business, human resources, accountancy, finance, musician (sic) and art – all critical areas for the world of work." It is the second time such a fake college has been foiled by Trading Standards – an identical scam using the same name and information was closed down in 2019. The website was being run from Hong Kong and while Suffolk Trading Standards have had no reports of victims in the UK there may be some overseas. A degree from a British college or university is an enticing prospect for an overseas student and those behind this scam were trying to exploit that. Thankfully the vigilance of Suffolk Trading Standards has prevented this website from trying to pick up where it would appear to have previously left off and will not be conning people into paying for non-existent courses. Trading Standards says anyone considering applying for a college course can beat degree fraud through the Higher Education Degree Datacheck (HEDD) website <https://hedd.ac.uk/> where people can check whether a university or college is an official degree awarding body by using the look-up service

Degree fraud can be reported to the HEDD fraud team on 020 8148 2400.

If you have concerns about a website, please report it to Trading Standards via 0808 223 1133.

Suffolk local area partnership commits to urgent improvements to SEND services and apologises to families

The partnership responsible for overseeing and delivering services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Suffolk have apologised to families and commits to urgent action to strengthen and accelerate improvement plans following an inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. Ofsted and CQC Inspection Report finds significant concerns with SEND services The Local Area Partnership promise urgent action to accelerate and strengthen improvement plans Senior leaders offer joint apology to Suffolk families The inspection, which took place in November, highlighted that 'there are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns' about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership which delivers SEND services is made up of Suffolk County Council, the NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB. The inspection report, published January 30th, identifies two priority actions as follows:

1. The partnership should work more collaboratively and effectively to improve strategic planning. This needs to deliver systems with measurable impact that will create better experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
2. Leaders should cooperate to take urgent action to improve the timeliness and quality of the statutory Education Health Care plan process, Education Health Care plan needs assessments and Education Health Care plans and annual reviews. This should ensure that plans meaningfully capture the views and aspirations of children and young people with SEND and their families, so that they get the right support at the right time.

The local area partnership is now implementing a number of urgent actions. These include the proposed investment of £4.4 million into SEND services next year by Suffolk County Council and the establishment of a Suffolk SEND Improvement Board, which will be chaired by an Independent Chair, to oversee the improvement plan and actions needed. A new SEND Strategy is also in the process of being co-produced with parents and carers to set the strategic direction. We accept that our improvement work has not yet had the positive impact on the experience of children and young people with SEND and their families in Suffolk. This is not good enough and I apologise to children and young people and their families. We accept the findings of the report and we must now go further and faster as a partnership to deliver the urgent improvements needed. Our SEND staff work with passion and conviction every day to make children's lives better and it is important to recognise this and thank them for their ongoing hard work and commitment. We understand the challenges that colleagues face and that is why SCC will continue to work with senior leaders from the NHS to strengthen changes to make a difference. As a result of this inspection, a monitoring inspection will be carried out within approximately 18 months. The local area partnership is now required to prepare and submit a priority action plan to address the identified areas for priority action.

Significant pieces of reform include:

Investment of more than £55 million to create more than 1,250 additional places in specialist and mainstream schools

Creation of specialist SEND support teams and training for all Suffolk schools to support them to meet the additional needs of children in mainstream schools

Proposed investment of £4.4m in 2024/25 and £3.4m in 2025/26 to expand our statutory SEND teams and secure sufficient educational psychology resource to improve the quality and timeliness of Education Health and Care assessments and reviews

The ICB has invested £700,000 in recurring funding in the voluntary and community sector to provide support for families waiting for these diagnoses, as well as co-producing a new parent resource pack as part of the Suffolk Local Offer

Matthew Hicks - County Councillor for the Thredling Division

Tel : 01728 628176 Mob : 07824 474741 E-mail : matthew.hicks@suffolk.gov.uk