



## CABINET

Tuesday, 07 September 2021

<b>Subject</b>	Extension of East Suffolk Youth Employment Service
<b>Report by</b>	Councillor Craig Rivett Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Economic Development  Councillor Letitia Smith Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism
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Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is <b>NOT</b> in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
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## Purpose and high-level overview

### **Purpose of Report:**

Young people aged 16-24 have been affected by the pandemic in ways that are not immediately clear, and the long-term effects on their 'life chances' through employment, education, and training remain largely unknown but are expected to be significant and detrimental.

At the start of the pandemic, young people saw their secondary education disrupted, and as time progressed, their transition into further and higher education is also being affected. For those in work, and at the start of their careers, young people were facing a lack of employment opportunities, redundancy, and furlough. These factors have rarely been seen in peacetime and have contributed to increased uncertainty for young people at a vulnerable period in their lives.

Whilst the economy is recovering following the easing of lockdown restrictions, it remains unbalanced and uncertain. GDP remains below pre-pandemic levels, and supply chains have been shown to be vulnerable to global factors. Labour and material costs have increased, compounding the challenges for businesses that are already vulnerable.

This report considers the issues facing young people in East Suffolk in terms of employment, education and training and proposes a two year extension to the current contract that builds on existing work supported by East Suffolk Council and partners including Suffolk County Council, and provides a comprehensive framework to support young people into employment, education, or training, as well as providing important wellbeing services and support.

### **Options:**

East Suffolk Council, along with Suffolk County Council, and Suffolk Public Sector Leaders, have funded the East Suffolk Youth Employment Service (YES) since November 2019. The funding is due to expire at the end of October 2021, and the service will close.

Young people will face significant challenges over the next two years in terms of accessing sustainable employment, education and training opportunities, many of which are unknown, and perhaps unforeseen.

Options include:

**Option 1:** Do nothing and allow the East Suffolk YES programme to continue to its contractual conclusion at the end of October 2021. This would result in no comprehensive support being provided within the district for young people at risk of being NEET and long-term unemployed,

**Option2:** To agree funding for a one-year extension of enhanced youth employment services in East Suffolk to be delivered by Inspire Suffolk, as described in Appendix A. The second year of extension will be subject to re-procurement rules but it is proposed that the funding be allocated for two years given the long term impacts of economic challenges and fluctuations on young people in East Suffolk.

### **Recommendation:**

That Cabinet approve funding for a further two-year extension to youth employment services in East Suffolk at a cost of £230,267. The first year of the extension will be an

extension to the existing contact with Inspire Suffolk whilst the second year of the extension will need to go out to procurement.

## Corporate Impact Assessment

### **Governance:**

Delivery of the East Suffolk YES is subject to continuous monitoring and review by the East Suffolk Project Officer. Monthly meetings are held with the service provider and monthly, quarterly, and annual reports are reviewed and opportunities for continuous service improvement identified and discussed. All participants aged 16 and 17, are registered with the Suffolk County Council RPA (Raising Participation Age) Service.

### **ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:**

ES Strategic Plan

ES Economic Growth Plan

ES Enabling Communities Strategy

### **Environmental:**

There are no specific environmental implications in relation to this proposal

### **Equalities and Diversity:**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken of this project. This EqIA specifically focusses on the Age and Economic Deprivation Protected Characteristics and identifies that continuing to fund YES will inevitably have a positive impact on the lives of young people in East Suffolk, specifically those who are economically disadvantaged, whilst allowing the funding to cease on October 2021 would have negative impacts on both protected characteristic groups. There may also be positive impacts on young people with disabilities, depending on who accesses the service, if it were to continue.

### **Financial:**

To extend the ES YES programme for a further two years will result in a cost to ESC of £230,267. In the Budget and MTFS report to Full Council on 24 February 2021 it was reported that for 2021/22 only, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) have agreed that their share of pooling benefit from the Suffolk Business Rates Pool will be distributed to the pool members using the same methodology as for the normal distribution. In addition, in the MTFS it was indicated that there was an option to transfer what would have been the SPSL element into a more specific community-focussed earmarked reserve. The preferred option in this report fits this criterion. Pending realisation of this SPSL share, it is proposed that this option be initially funded from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve that currently contains accumulated Pooling Benefit.

### **Human Resources:**

There are no direct Human Resources implications for East Suffolk Council as the programme is delivered through a third-party organisation. However, if the project were to cease in October 2021, the result would be the loss of 2-3 posts currently employed by Inspire Suffolk.

### **ICT:**

There are no direct ICT implications for East Suffolk Council. Delivery of the current programme is currently mainly online and in future there is likely to be a blended approach depending on the needs of each young person.

**Legal:**

An agreement to extend Inspire Suffolk’s current delivery of the YES programme will require a new/ extended contract to be agreed between the two parties.

**Risk:**

The proposal to extend the YES programme provided by Inspire Suffolk clearly sets out the proposed outcomes, outputs and benefits. Risk is consistently evaluated by Inspire Suffolk in delivering the programme and their whole delivery model was successfully adapted in light of Covid-19. Key risks include inability to reach the intended number of beneficiaries, the inability to secure training or employment for young people on the programme due to the legacy of Covid-19 and the impact of future lockdowns.

**External Consultees:**

Embedded within the planned improvements to the service, East Suffolk Council will consult directly with young people and businesses to ensure that the service meets the needs of all participants. Currently, results from customer satisfaction surveys are presented to ESC by the service provider.

## Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
<b>T01</b>	<b>Growing our Economy</b>		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T02</b>	<b>Enabling our Communities</b>		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T03</b>	<b>Maintaining Financial Sustainability</b>		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T04</b>	<b>Delivering Digital Transformation</b>		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T05</b>	<b>Caring for our Environment</b>		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>XXX</b>	<b>Governance</b>		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**How does this proposal support the priorities selected?**

**Build the right environment for East Suffolk**

Ensuring that ES has an appropriately skilled workforce will be vital in making sure that the economic growth, which is taking place and is due to take place across the District in coming years, benefits the resident population as much as possible. This aligns strongly with the Council's inclusive growth objectives.

**Attract and stimulate inward investment**

The YES initiative will increase the economically active population within the District and provide appropriately skilled people related to East Suffolk's key growth sectors, which in turn will provide a boost to business investment.

**Business Partnerships**

The YES initiative involves collaboration with businesses in the district to ensure there are a flow of opportunities that 'graduates' from the programme can take advantage of. This partnership with local businesses is crucial to ensuring the success of the initiative and in turn provides employers with much sought after labour.

**Skills and training**

The YES programme supports young people to access education and training and a key part of this will be the development of their digital skills. This in turn will support local economic growth since digital/ tech is a key economic growth sector for East Suffolk.

**Community Partnerships**

Through an exercise undertaken by the Community Partnership Board at its June 2021 meeting, a number of priorities were identified in terms of the impact of Covid in East Suffolk, including young people's aspirations and opportunities. This is also a priority for three of the individual Community Partnerships.

**Taking Positive Action on What Matters Most**

This priority is about using data as the basis for identifying and addressing need. The impact of the pandemic on young people, particularly in coastal communities, has been identified through various studies at both national and Suffolk level and is therefore a clear priority.

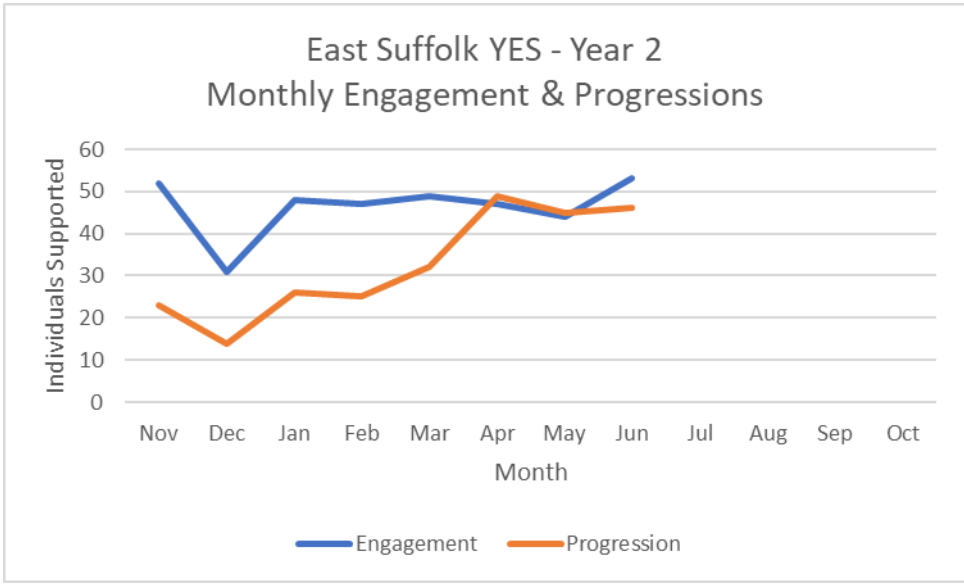
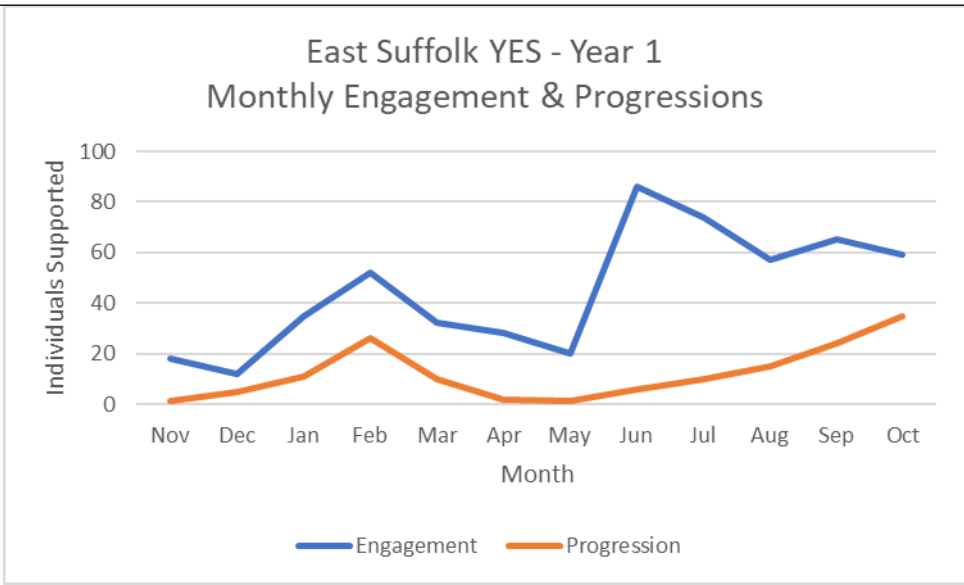
**Maximising Health, Wellbeing and Safety in our District**

The focus of this priority is on enabling everyone to lead healthy, active, fulfilling and safe lives. The YES service clearly contributes to this in that it enables young people to achieve

their potential and live a fulfilling life.

## Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	<p>In October 2019, East Suffolk Council commissioned Inspire Suffolk to deliver the East Suffolk Youth Employment Service (YES). The service was introduced to provide district wide support to young people aged 16-24 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The YES programme is delivered in collaboration with a wide range of local partners such as DWP, the Early HELP and Social Care teams at SCC, East Coast College, Suffolk New College, Access Community trust and a range of other training providers. This level of engagement and collaboration with other organisations allows the programme to maximise its reach to the client group and also ensure there are strong links to the wide variety of support available.</p>
1.2	<p>Utilising two experienced Employment Coaches, operating from premises in Lowestoft, Leiston, and Felixstowe, young people have been provided with the support and interventions required to meet their immediate life goals. In addition, an Employer Engagement Advisor worked with businesses to identify employment opportunities for participants in the service.</p>
1.3	<p>The advent of Covid-19 in March 2020 meant that all face-to-face provision had to end and the local 'drop in' centres were required to close. At this point young people were being severely affected by the pandemic. Their secondary education was being disrupted, and as time progressed, their transition into further and higher education was also being affected. For those in work, and at the start of their careers, young people were facing a lack of employment opportunities, redundancy, and furlough.</p>
1.4	<p>Inspire Suffolk evolved the East Suffolk YES programme into a digital service, launching a dedicated website, introducing a digital classroom, and training platforms. Face to face coaching was replaced with video conferencing, and standard telephony.</p>
1.5	<p>The East Suffolk Yes programme has, up to the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, engaged with, and supported 909 young people aged 16-24 in East Suffolk. Of these, 406 have progressed into a positive outcome comprising of employment, education, and/or training. Further information about the definitions of 'engagement' and 'progression' is provided below.</p> <p>The following charts illustrate the programme delivery over time and against a backdrop of the covid 19 pandemic.</p>



**Notes**

1. Engagement refers to individuals who register for the YES service and participate (Participant) in the programme of support.
2. Progression refers to a Participant who secures a positive outcome which is defined as Employment, Education, and/or Training.
3. It is interesting to note the value of the ES YES programme in engaging with young people following the first lockdown in March of Year 1.
4. Progressions for young people closely align with the closing and re-opening of the economy due to consequent lockdowns in Years 1 & 2.

1.6 The second year of the East Suffolk Youth Employment Services will end on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2021 and the service will close unless a decision is made to extend the service for a further period of time.

1.7 A Continuation of Services Proposal has been prepared by Inspire Suffolk for an additional two years of service provision. However, the initial procurement for the service was undertaken on a 2 + 1 basis and therefore if the service is to be extended for a further year it is likely to have to be re-procured in 2022 for the

period from October 2022 onwards.

## 2 Current position

2.1 The easing of social distancing measures has led to an increase in economic activity across all sectors, coupled with a decline in UK unemployment to levels which are close to pre-pandemic levels.

2.2 However, the picture for young people is complex. 'Youth Employment Statistics' published by the House of Commons Library in July 2021 shows, unsurprisingly, that there was a large fall in employment for young people aged 16-24 at the start of the pandemic. This was then followed by a rise in unemployment.

2.3 Rolling forward to the period March-May 2021, unemployment levels for young people have fallen back towards pre-pandemic levels but still stand at 13.5% compared to 4.8% across the whole population. Also, more young people are economically inactive, standing 10% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

2.4 As of May 2021, of those young people who are employed nationally, some 322,400 jobs held by those aged 24 or under were on furlough, representing some 10% of eligible jobs, a greater proportion of jobs than in the overall population.

2.5 The data paints a picture of elevated unemployment levels for young people, coupled with an increase in economic inactivity since the start of the pandemic. It is sensible to assume that the situation in East Suffolk reflects the national picture for young people.

2.6 In East Suffolk, the unemployment rate for the whole population is 5.6% (Dec 2020), the figure is 4.0% for Suffolk, and 4.8% nationally.

2.7 The following table show the number of young people aged 16-24 in East Suffolk, claiming Universal Credit, and looking for work.

<b>Young People Looking for Work (Benefits Claimants)</b>	<b>Count</b>
Aged 16 - 24 (East Suffolk)	2,053
Aged 16 - 24 (Lowestoft)	1,138
Aged 16 - 24 (Market Towns)	692
Aged 16 - 24 (Felixstowe)	223
<b>Source: DWP June 2021</b>	

According to Suffolk County Council data, 4.6% of 16-18 year olds in East Suffolk are not in education, employment, or training.

2.8 Whilst the economy is returning to pre-covid levels, there remains uncertainty as to how it will develop over time. Many job opportunities for young people are within the hospitality, leisure, and social care sector and are low wage, fixed-term contracts with limited training and career progression. Primary employment destinations for young people through the ES YES service in recent months include



	Hospitality, Healthcare, Catering and Construction.
2.9	The Job Retention Scheme (JRS) is due to end on the 30 <sup>th</sup> of September 2021, and it is unclear how businesses will respond. Young people are particularly vulnerable to redundancy. The Government's Kickstart Scheme provides six months of employment for young people who are claiming Universal Credit; however, it remains too early to determine how successful the uptake of the scheme has been or how many young people will remain in long term employment.

### 3 How to address current situation

3.1	Inspire Suffolk was asked to prepare a two-year proposal that would build on the success of the existing YES programme and ensure continuity of service through a period of extreme uncertainty for young people in East Suffolk.
3.2	The proposed service for 2021-2023 will blend the original face to face delivery model with the best of the virtual, online service model. This approach will increase accessibility, ensuring that young people facing barriers such as rurality or anxiety will receive the same dedicated bespoke support as other young people less affected by these issues.
3.3	East Suffolk will be comprised of three zones (North, South, and Central) serviced by three employment coaches, who will develop localised expertise, professional networks, and even more personalised support for young people.
3.4	Physical hubs will be available in Lowestoft and Felixstowe to provide a 'drop in' facility and a venue for face-to-face coaching and development activities. Peripatetic services will also ensure all localities are accessible to the service.
3.5	Every young person participating in the YES service will receive a bespoke roadmap, or customer journey, comprising planned coaching and training interventions designed to upskill, encourage, and support a young person into a successful outcome defined as sustained employment, education, and/or training.
3.6	Utilising a career skills matrix focussing on four key pillars, individual progress will be monitored in relation to four key areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Network: Peer connections, professional network, knowledge of digital networking.</li> <li>• Wellbeing: Housing, emotional wellbeing &amp; mental health, physical health.</li> <li>• Employability: previous work experience, knowledge of interview processes, how to write CVs etc.</li> <li>• Future Plans: clear goals to strive towards, 'next-step' identified, career ambitions.</li> </ul>
3.7	In June 2020, a pilot wellbeing service was introduced by Inspire Suffolk for young people on their support programmes. Participants in the YES programme were able to access a qualified psychotherapist for one-to-one counselling and psychotherapy support. The success of the pilot service means that this service will be expanded and continue to form an integral part of the East Suffolk YES

	programme of support.
3.8	To secure the best possible employment opportunities, an Employment Engagement Advisor will continue to develop close links with employers from a broad range of sectors to try to maximise the employment opportunities available to young people participating in the programme.

#### 4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1	The reason for recommending a two-year extension to the ES YES programme is to address the continuing challenges facing a significant number of young people wanting to access employment, education, and training opportunities. The proposal from Inspire Suffolk will also implement lessons learned during the previous two years of delivery.
4.2	The next 12 to 24 months will remain a period of uncertainty for the economy, and for those who are dependent upon it for employment opportunities, particularly young people and therefore the ambition is to continue beyond October 2022 which would be the end of Year 3 of the project.
4.3	The withdrawal of the JRS (see 2.8) will be a key test of the resilience of the local business sector in the coming months and it is sensible to have additional support in place for those young people who need it.

## Appendices

### Appendices:

None

### Background reference papers:

Date	Type	Available From
15/07/2021	Youth Employment Statistics	<a href="#">House of Commons Library</a>
05/08/2021	East Suffolk – Area Report	<a href="#">Suffolk Observatory</a>
05/08/2021	Equality Impact Analysis	Simon Charlesworth