

Suffolk GPs 'not for profit' federation team up with Visit Suffolk

Attracting new GPs to our county is a real problem and almost all of the GPs in Suffolk have joined together to form a community interest federation to tackle this – and a host of other problems facing primary care.

How can it be hard to find new GPs?

With everything you read in the papers you might think young doctors would be queuing up to work as GPs in Suffolk – but they are not. Many practices are advertising posts but only small numbers of suitable applicants are coming forward. This is happening just as the demand in the county is increasing because one in five Suffolk GPs are over 55.

Furthermore, despite the absence of out of hours work obligations, many GPs are retiring early because of the stresses and strains of the job. This means over the next 10 years a quarter of local GPs will be retiring - plus those who give up early.

A GP's diagnosis

with John Havard



What is the NHS doing nationally to help recruitment?

In Whitehall it must feel like they are at the helm of an oil tanker as changes take an age to make a difference. It takes 10 years to train a GP and so it is not a tap that can be turned on or off easily. I explained last month that three times as many consultant jobs have been created compared to GP jobs over the last decade. So the primary care engines are being turned down just as the demand for more patient care provision in practices not hospital is being racked up. And we are low on fuel because, in the history of the NHS, never has so small a proportion been spent on primary care where 90% of patient consultations take place. So we have every reason to be very concerned about the situation in Suffolk – yet

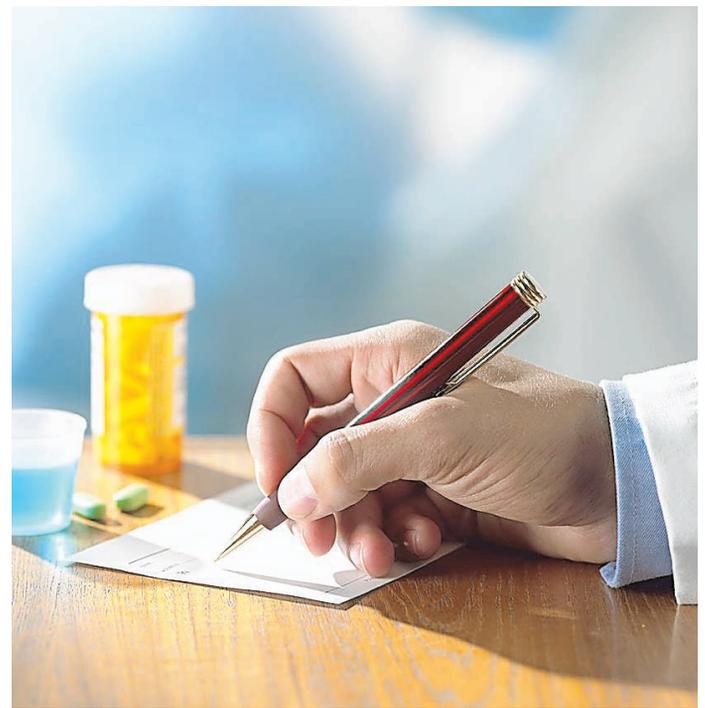
there are areas in the country that fare worse.

What is on the fed's plan?

1. Tempt the bees to the honeypot.
A campaign, along with the 'Visit Suffolk' tourism organisation, to make GPs across the UK aware of the attractions of working in Suffolk. The county finds it difficult to persuade tourists to visit for the first time and GPs are in the same boat. Once they visit they usually like what they find and therefore the challenge is to encourage that first visit. We are doing this by preparing a YouTube film on what it is like to work in Suffolk as a GP - and not forgetting life for spouses and children. The days of advertising for a GP and getting 100 applications are dead and gone and we need to be smarter.

2. Tempt older GPs to carry on working.

The federation has also set up a Locum Chambers to try to retain older GPs and attract new ones. We need to keep the water level up in the Suffolk bath by trying to block the plug-hole as well as turning up the fresh water taps. The Locum



■ Attracting new GPs to Suffolk is a real problem and to tackle this a new federation has been created.

Chambers will not only book GPs of all ages with practices but also do all the administration. Many retired GPs still want to do clinical work but the administrative load that now includes appraisal and revalidation pushes them out of the door. The federation believe that if they can assist in all the paperwork then experienced GPs can be encouraged to fill the gap that is opening up.

3. New services.

They already provide most of the

local ultrasound in east Suffolk from GP premises and lymphoedema nursing service in the west. In the future the federation will be developing other health services in East Anglia. It is about to start running the diabetes service in neighbouring north east Essex and has plenty of ambition for Suffolk. As a 'not for profit' GP owned Community Interest Company, it has the best interests of local residents at heart.

New approach to health and housing

With growing evidence that the quality of housing directly affects people's health, Suffolk's Health and Wellbeing Board is taking an ambitious new approach to tackle the issue of improved housing head-on.

Board chairman Joanna Spicer explains why this is something that must be addressed now and why a countywide approach is vital to securing future housing that is fit for purpose and life.

The idea that the standard of one's home has a bearing on health is by no means revolutionary. Studies have shown that well thought-out accommodation can have a positive impact on people's quality of life.

It's an issue that affects us all, from hard pressed families claiming housing benefit to older people who live in homes that are often uneconomic and not built to meet their needs. In fact, the 2011 Census tells us more than two thirds of people over 80 in Suffolk own their own homes. The concern is many of these



■ Joanna Spicer and MP Dr Dan Poulter.

properties are inadequate and will become an obstacle as people age.

As much as £35,000 in care costs could be saved each year, per household, if the right steps are taken to make the home fit for purpose by making adaptations, and using advances in technology to help people navigate day-to-day tasks with greater ease. Innovative home-monitoring systems are revolutionising the way people remain independent.

I met representatives from the private and public sector, plus independent landlords to focus on the

links between people's health and housing. Dr Dan Poulter, MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, was our keynote speaker. He brought an insight into what is being achieved at government level, including funding for bringing together health and social care professions. He echoed the need for us to do more to set the standard for better quality homes to keep people well for longer.

But this won't be without its challenges. As a largely rural county, we must also consider how people access services and local transport. With Suffolk house prices on the rise again, and estimated to be many times the average salary, affordability is another key issue. To succeed, we must commit to working together on our shared objective to improve the standard of housing, and the wellbeing of Suffolk residents. We must influence housing developers to think ahead when building new homes that consider people's longer term health needs.

STRESS BUSTER DAY

Opportunity for you to release stress, tension and anxiety in a most enjoyable way, Laughter guaranteed!

Using various techniques we will inspire you to shed some unwanted baggage and be closer to your authentic self, more able to listen to and follow your heart. We will encourage you to soften, relax and to breathe deeply.



PRACTICAL WORKSHOP 9am – 4pm

with Alison Basil and Valerie Chater

Wednesday March 19th 2014

or Saturday November 1st 2014

at Seckford Hall Hotel, Woodbridge

Includes comprehensive Hand Out
Information detailing methods and exercises
just experienced for your self-use.

"It feels as though the TFT has facilitated big shifts.
My back is improving significantly. Amazing! Life changing."
(Clare, Woodbridge)



"I just got one last thing, I urge all of you, all of you, to enjoy your life, the precious moments you have. To spend each day with some laughter and some thought, to get you're emotions going."
(Jim Valvano)

Contact Val 07775 600230
val.chater@btconnect.com ■ www.tftval.co.uk