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# Osborne's Suffolk sweetener

£4m pre-election handouts in marginal Tory seats  
**Budget 2015 analysis and reaction - Pages 6-10**



## Missing cat turns up in Wenhaston after EIGHT years - Page 3

# GPs feeling pressure of recruitment crisis

Suffolk surgeries urged to look at ways of promoting general practice

The number of family doctors operating in Suffolk is continuing to fall as GP practices feel the bite of a national recruitment crisis - and experts are warning there will be no quick fix.

Health officials heard yesterday how the pressure is being felt by GPs on the frontline and that it is vital systems are put in place to boost numbers in the county.

There are believed to be a raft of reasons behind the recruitment problem, one of which is that working in

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hospitals is currently seen as more attractive than general practice to students.

But at a time when people are living longer and are in need of primary care, health bosses have said it is important the trend is rectified.

John Havard, senior partner at Saxmundham Health, said the work

of GPs needs to be promoted and that initiatives such as joining up with marketing groups to showcase what Suffolk has to offer can help the situation.

He added: "There is a recruitment crisis, we know that, and we know there is a danger with older GPs leaving that it will leave the younger ones with an even bigger load.

"As GPs we have got to learn about promoting and selling ourselves, because it used to be so popular:

"We have got to sell it and show people this is a very rewarding career. We can't just expect people to do it."

There is also concern that Suffolk's GPs will not be replaced when the current crop retire.

New figures show the average age of GPs working in the Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG area is just under 47, but the proportion of practitioners

## Judge's mercy for fall burglar

A burglar who nearly died after falling from an Ipswich store during a break-in has been spared punishment due to the extent of his injuries. Eddie Walker, 42, pleaded guilty to stealing £284.45 from a safe at Hawkshead in the Buttermarket.

■ Full story: Page 2

## Investment call to Sizewell

Members of Suffolk County Council are today expected to add their voices to calls for the developers of Sizewell C to invest in the local economy.

■ Full story: Page 15

■ Turn to Page 2

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Why I loathe spoilers

# Brain-injured shop burglar spared prison term by judge

A burglar who nearly died after falling from an Ipswich store during a break-in has been spared punishment due to the extent of his injuries.

South East Suffolk Magistrates' Court heard serial offender Eddie Walker, of Luther Road, Ipswich, sustained life-changing injuries as a result of plunging from a window at Hawkshead in the Buttermarket at around 4am on December 10.

The 42-year-old, who walked into court with the aid of a walking stick, pleaded guilty to stealing £284.45 from a safe at

**“He's suffered dramatically life-changing injuries. His life at one stage was in jeopardy**

Deputy District Judge Richard Hagwood

the outdoor clothing shop.

Despite having more than 30 previous convictions – many of which were for dishonesty offences, Walker was not jailed or given probation due to the effects of the brain-damage he sustained.

Deputy District Judge Richard Hagwood told Walker's solicitor John Hughes: “The prison system would struggle to deal with somebody like this.

“The Probation Service or any supervisor of a community sentence would struggle to adhere to it, as he would struggle.

“He has suffered as a result of his own criminality. That's what

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the evidence points to. Had he not had a fall he would have been a successful safebreaker and burglar. He's suffered dramatically life-changing injuries.

“His life at one stage was in jeopardy.

“I will take the exceptionally unique course to compensate the victim of his crime rather than take out punishment on him.”

Earlier prosecutor David Bryant told the court that police and the keyholder of Hawkshead were called after the shop's burglar alarm was activated.

They discovered Walker, formerly of Leopold Road, Felixstowe, lying on the concrete at the rear of the store with life-threatening head injuries.

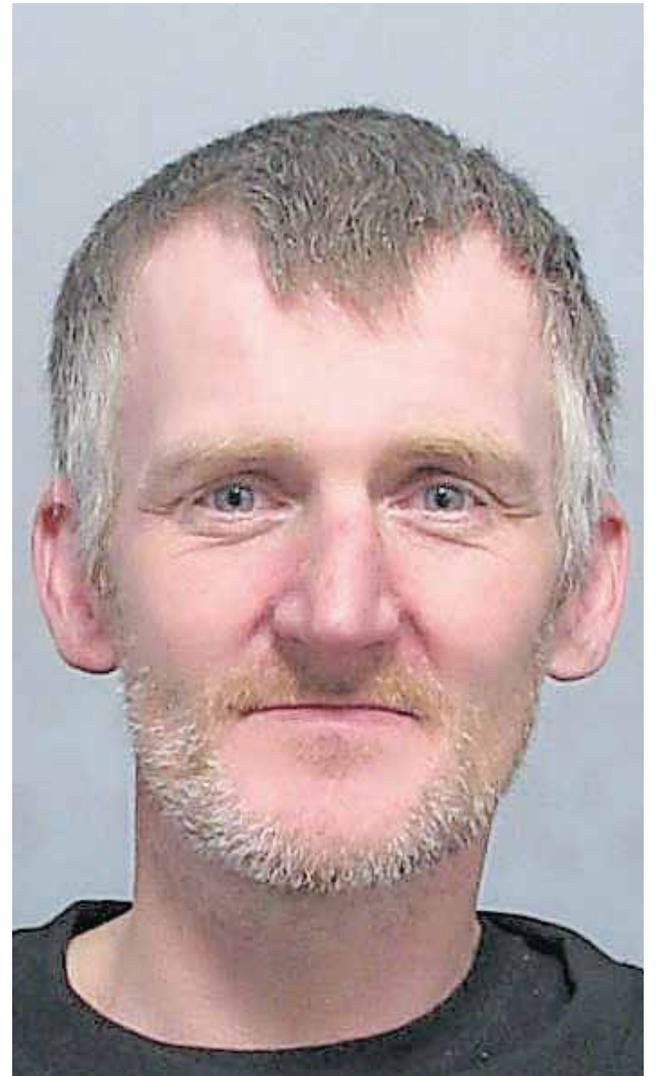
Mr Bryant said a crowbar was nearby.

On a first floor window sill there was £284.45 in cash. Inside the shop a safe had been opened using a crowbar. The cash had been in the safe, which had been damaged.

A replacement would cost £400, the court heard.

Walker was taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge for treatment and remained in hospital for two months. He then discharged himself.

Walker – who also admitted being in breach of two conditional discharges at the time – was ordered to pay £400 compensation and £85 costs. The money will be deducted from his benefits.



■ Eddie Walker, above, plunged from a window during a break-in at the Hawkshead store, left, in the Buttermarket, Ipswich. He now walks with the aid of a stick as a result of the injuries he sustained

In December 2012 Walker was jailed for 20 weeks after breaking into Premier Estate Stores in

Bramford Lane, Ipswich while drunk and stealing a till, a charity box, and cash.

# Suffolk's GPs feel pressure of recruitment crisis

■ From Page 1

below the age of 35 is just 9%. The West Suffolk CCG area is faring better, with an average age of just under 45 and 17% of GPs aged under 35.

Many would-be GPs are thought to be put off traditional practice working by the heavy workload. On average, doctors currently working in general practices will see about 30 patients a day, in addition to visits, phone calls with patients and administration work.

One of the methods being put into practice to counteract the issue is “upskilling” other members of staff who can carry out tasks that might otherwise fall to doctors.

The use of technology and online bookings has also been mooted as a potential fix, but the need for personnel is still the most important addition that is needed.

Dr Giles Stevens, a GP and West Suffolk CCG lead for the Haverhill locality, said: “It is very hard work – there is a shortage

of GPs nationally and that is biting locally.

“The days are long and difficult and we are under-manned. The bottom line for me is there aren't enough GPs coming through and that creates a whole range of problems.”

Dr Stevens added that he believes the situation is retrievable but that it will not happen overnight, given the amount of time it takes to train people.

The issue was discussed yesterday by the county council's health scrutiny committee

following a report by Healthwatch Suffolk into access to GP services. High patient satisfaction rates were also noted during the meeting.

Tony Rollo, chairman of Healthwatch Suffolk, said: “It is pleasing and must be noted that, in our ongoing survey regarding patient experiences of GP practices in Suffolk, a majority of people are positive about the overall service provided by practices but it is clear improvements could be made to enhance patient experience in some areas.”