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# Weekend GP cover returning to county

### But Ipswich will be the only 'hub' for new out-of-hours service

**Matt Bunn**  
Health correspondent  
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Evening and weekend GP services could return to Suffolk as early as this summer, it can be revealed today.

However, a reduction in anticipated

funding means just one centre will initially open to patients.

Health bosses announced yesterday that a Suffolk GP Federation bid to improve out-of-hours access has been awarded more than £2million, which will

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## Town joy as Jonny rejoins



Photograph: PAGEPIX LTD

Full story - from Back Page

## 'Smart' tickets to be unveiled

Season ticket holders on Abellio Greater Anglia trains are set to be among the first in the country to get a new plastic "smart ticket" later this year.

The company is introducing the tickets on its three main lines into London.

■ Full story: Page 7

## Minister gives view on roads

Transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin got a first-hand look at the problems facing villagers on the A12 in Suffolk.

Speaking yesterday in Ipswich, he said he hoped to be able to give county councils the opportunity to invest more in important roads.

■ Full story: Page 4

## Sixth form to be academy

One, the largest sixth form in Ipswich, is to form an academy with West Suffolk College in Bury St Edmunds. It means the sixth form will become an academy in September - giving it more power to control its budget and staff pay.

■ Full story: Page 2



## The Bacton Bears

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## Weekend general practitioner cover is returning to county

■ From Page 1

help create a "hub" in Ipswich offering a range of health services and housing local GPs. Health minister and Suffolk MP Dan Poulter last night labelled the move "a step in the right direction", saying it would hugely benefit patients.

The award is lower than the estimated £10m that was hoped for and would have led to the creation of 10 strategically-placed hubs across the county, but it has still been largely welcomed.

David Pannell, chief executive of the GP Federation, said: "We are really pleased and really excited that all of our hard work has come off and NHS England has given us just over £2m, which is really good news for the patients of Suffolk."

A spokesman for the Ipswich and East Suffolk and West Suffolk CCGs said: "Both our CCGs have supported the Suffolk GP Federation in this bid for

funding and the award is great news for patient care."

The Ipswich centre will provide GP and nursing services, mental health support, drug and alcohol services and district nursing. Its location is not yet known.

It will operate from 6.30pm on weekdays when GP surgeries generally close for the day – until about 8-9pm and it would open from 9am-9pm on weekends and bank holidays.

Appointments will be made through the NHS helpline number 111. Dr Poulter has said the new service is a "really positive development" and that it will benefit a range of people, including those with long-term conditions.

He added: "It is going to mean that patients have GPs working on the ground who they know and who understand their care needs."

Health bosses have pledged to keep a close eye on the Ipswich hub and if it is a success, a

further out-of-hours centre could open in Bury St Edmunds.

Alan Murray, Suffolk County Council cabinet member for health and adult care, said it is "a little disappointing" that the full amount that was hoped for has not come to fruition, but added: "People do need to see their GPs and doctors and not rush off to hospital at the first moment so to improve the triage mechanism and get patients to see someone they can trust, it will help."

The money announced today has come from the Prime Minister's Challenge Fund.

Making the announcement, health secretary Jeremy Hunt said: "In Ipswich, over £2million will allow over 390,000 patients across 41 GP practices to access urgent care services in the evenings and at weekends from a "super hub".

People with long-term conditions like diabetes will receive better support, staff will be better trained and people will

be able to use modern technology to receive care."

Tony Rollo, chairman of patients' watchdog Healthwatch Suffolk, added: "Many people have talked to us about problems with access to primary care services in the county and we know that it is one of the greatest challenges for our local commissioners to address.

"In some areas of the county, such issues are a significant source of frustration for people who are finding it difficult to get an appointment when they need one most.

"It is pleasing therefore that some funding is finding its way to benefit 39,000 patients in the county with a specific purpose of improving access to our local services."

■ Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG chairman and GP Dr Mark Shenton talks about his practice and the future of primary care on Pages 10&11.

## Sixth form links up with West Suffolk College to create trust

**Matt Hunter**  
Education correspondent  
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West Suffolk College is forming a partnership with the biggest sixth form in Ipswich in a move that brings together two of the county's "strongest" education providers.

The Bury St Edmunds college is forming Suffolk Academy Trust with One, formerly Suffolk One, at a time when the sixth form is in the middle of a major overhaul of its finances.

It means the sixth form will become an academy in September – giving it independence from Suffolk County Council and more power to control its budget and staff pay.

Last night a spokesman for the sixth form said the partnership would help secure its long term finances.

It was announced last month that 30 members of staff would lose their jobs at One to help save £2million.

Alan Whittaker, One's principal, said in a statement released by the sixth form and the college: "An academy order has been issued for Suffolk One to become an academy as part of the newly formed Suffolk Academy Trust.

"Suffolk Academy Trust brings together two of the strongest educational organisations in the county with complementary strengths to provide sustained high quality education in Suffolk.

"Further work by the school, trust and local authority will take place with a view to the school



■ Alan Whittaker, One principal.

Photo: CONTRIBUTED

being able to open as an academy on September 1."

As well as saving £2million in the next academic year, the sixth form has been working to pay off a £2m loan from Suffolk County Council.

A spokesman for the authority said: "The funding situation for all post-16 providers is a very challenging one and it is important for Suffolk One to continue with its current round of cost efficiencies to ensure that they are on a sound financial footing for the future.

"This new partnership will provide a more secure future for

Suffolk One in the longer term.

"As with any start up institution in their early years, Suffolk One does have some debt that it will need to repay in time.

"All partners involved have worked together to develop an agreed plan to manage this situation while at the same time enable Suffolk One to continue to offer high quality programmes for local young people."

Ipswich MP, Ben Gummer, said he was "delighted" by the partnership. "It's an excellent result for which I have worked very hard and I am delighted that Suffolk One is becoming an acad-

“The funding situation for all post-16 providers is a very challenging one and it is important for Suffolk One to continue with its current round of cost efficiencies to ensure that they are on a sound financial footing for the future

County council spokesman

emy with such a strong sponsor," he added.

"This deal provides a very firm foundation for the school to build on its considerable success, it provides opportunities for One to broaden its provision of courses in our county town."

Discussion about One becoming an academy first started in 2011, Mr Whittaker added.

"This is a positive move to secure the independent future of the sixth form thus allowing us to progress," he said.

"It will also allow us to maintain our extremely high standards and the decision has been taken in the best interests of all concerned."

Yesterday the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) announced it had balloted its 30 members at the sixth form. If the vote is a success strike action will take place in the summer term.

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## Welcome start, but more NHS centres needed

It's been a long time coming, but this summer Ipswich will get a glimpse of the future of primary care, as it's called in medical jargon.

It's common sense that we need to be able to see GPs (or a nurse, or get support for mental health or alcohol problems, and more) outside the 8.30am to 6pm norm on weekdays, say. Services outside this core period can be patchy. Which is why so many people turn to hospital casualty departments out of hours, even though many really shouldn't.

These are open 24/7 and patients know they'll be seen, even if they have to wait. The trouble is, many of their ailments are not emergencies and take up time and expertise meant for serious cases.

That's not the only issue. Many of us find it hard to get a prompt appointment with our GP. And the usual business hours of surgeries do not dovetail comfortably with the shape of the modern world. The demands of work make routine daytime appointments inconvenient for a lot of people.

The new "health hub" in Ipswich will show the way, with later opening in the evenings and through the weekend. It's logical and vital. Shame there's so far only enough money for one centre and not the 10 asked for (and, make no mistake, needed). Suffolk requires a lot more cash. We trust it's coming.

## Only a minority

It seems astonishing that in 2015 the Government should be prompted to issue advice to parents about leaving children at home without adult supervision.

We accept the law is not specific about a "safe" age for a youngster to be left, and there are "grey areas" that demand a judgment call by parents. Most mums and dads are well-equipped to do so, are happy to make that decision, and generally get it right.

It's the selfish and irresponsible we should worry about – those who deem it acceptable to leave a young child to fend for himself; who even leave a baby unattended. Those who will not take responsibility should understand the likely consequences of their actions.

## A welcome return

There will be a great deal of excitement among Ipswich Town fans over the return of Jonny Williams for a third loan spell.

Williams is just the kind of creative midfielder player the team has been lacking this season, and supporters will be hoping that his arrival will provide a real spark for the last seven games.

He will make his debut in the crucial Good Friday game against Bournemouth, who are currently top of the Championship. Welcome back, Jonny!

## Thought for the day

**JOHN 19 V 6 & 7:** Pilate said: "I find Jesus not guilty". They replied: "By our laws he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God".

# Blaming immigration is not helpful in population debate

Sir, – I would like to respond to the interesting and provocative letter by S G Smith, "Will our politicians address issue of population growth?" (EADT, March 21) directly and honestly. The author of the letter actually provides part of the answer him/herself in the second paragraph: education.

Well educated and well informed people will make sensible decisions and tend to opt for smaller families. The other part of the answer is living standards: if people have a good, balanced diet and the security of a welfare safety net and free health care they won't need to rely on large families to provide for their needs in old age.

I agree that the present population of the UK is larger than, ideally, it should be but immigrant bashing is not helpful in this debate. S G Smith talks of "getting a sensible level of control of immigration" but, as a foreigner myself from darkest Welsh-speaking Wales, I have no paranoia about people who speak a different language. My wife – another immigrant from Mexico – works for the NHS as a clinical cardiologist and has never gone in for benefit scrounging. Many of my best friends are "foreigners", but I also find the "indigenous" Suffolk people extremely friendly and welcoming.

In the Green Party we believe in working towards the principle of freedom of movement. If at some point in the future, my wife and I were to make a decision to relocate to India, Spain or Mexico, why should that present a problem? Why shouldn't dynamic, well educated people from India, Spain, Mexico or any other country have the freedom to settle here?

S G Smith talks of the housing challenge and invokes the situation of the North American continent in 1805. If only we could re-write history! The genocide and environmental destruction that happened after that date is a textbook lesson in how not to do things. If only the "civilised" European settlers had learned from the wisdom of the native Americans. Instead they proceeded to slaughter the bison almost to the point of extinction and created deforestation on an unprecedented scale. In the immortal words of Black Elk, elder of the Oglala Sioux nation and proto-environmentalist, "A people's dream died and the sacred tree is dead."

Why not tackle the housing challenge by planting the acorn of Black Elk's sacred tree here in Suffolk? We need radical and imaginative solutions to provide homes both in towns and in rural areas. We need to look at some of the building methods employed

## Hospice needs to raise £11,000 every day



■ St Nicholas Hospice Care in Bury St Edmunds.

Photo: GREGG BROWN

Sir, – Firstly, on behalf of everyone at St Nicholas Hospice Care, I would like to thank you for your consistent press coverage. It is never taken for granted and we are grateful for your positive promotion of hospice care and our ongoing funding needs.

More specifically, I would like to clarify your article published about the NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group's (WSCCG) agreement to St Nicholas Hospice Care (Grant for hospice care, EADT, March 17), announcing its commitment to continuing with our annual grant for the next four years.

Although this is undoubtedly an encouraging commitment

from WSCCG towards our work, it should not be viewed as additional or new money raised for the charity. What is new about this is that this agreement is one of the first of its kind between a clinical commissioning group and a hospice.

It is important for people to know that in addition to this grant we still need to raise £11,000 every day of the year to provide our expanding services, which care for the West Suffolk and Thetford communities.

As you can imagine, this is a huge challenge and we are keen to make it clear that the £1.1 million we will be receiving from the NHS West Suffolk Clinical Commissioners still

leaves us with a huge gap to fill – our NHS funding covers under a quarter of our actual funding requirements. Following publication of the article we have been congratulated by some of our supporters. It is apparent many supporters who fundraise or use our shops throughout the year to help us might mistakenly believe the £1.1 million is new funding. I hope this clarifies the funding agreement and we would appreciate anything you can do to make this clear in any future articles.

**KEVIN CLEMENTS,**  
Director of fundraising and marketing, St Nicholas Hospice Care.

by Native Americans and by our Celtic and Anglo Saxon ancestors that have the lightest possible impact upon the environment.

We should be considering the use of cob, rammed earth and adobe techniques. We should prioritise the use of natural, native materials: timber, earth and straw bales. Along our estuaries we should consider building houses raised on platforms (similar to the ancient crannog dwellings of the Celtic era) in order to cope with tidal surges and floods. We should also do away with the petty bureaucracy which restricts the freedom of those who choose to live in boats, caravans or, indeed, Native American style teepees.

**RHODRI GRIFFITHS,**  
Green Party Parliamentary candidate for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich.

## Dodging pot-holes is so frustrating

Sir, – Having just read your article about pot-holes, I thought I should draw your attention to an area of the A14 on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds.

The area to which I refer is the bend immediately before the countdown markers for the Sainsbury's slip road westbound. This area underwent work when the Rookery crossroads were formed and twice within the first few years after it opened it was subject to subsidence issues. Having driven that same stretch of road a few times in the past few weeks it is apparent that the road surface is again experiencing problems with pot-holes getting noticeably

bigger, deeper and increasing in numbers.

This is a main trunk route and is subject to heavy lorries day and night, yet still the situation continues with whatever the underlying problem is.

When are the council going to get a grip on this issue?

Maybe the foreign lorries using this as their main route to and from a vital port should be asked to contribute towards its upkeep, as it's unlikely that cars are contributing as much to the damage as HGVs.

As the driver of a relatively new car it frustrates me immensely to have to keep dodging pot-holes or worse still ending up in them and cringing at the likely damage being caused!

**LESLEY BROWN,**  
Elmswell.