

Why is cycling a Public Health issue?

The UK currently faces a health epidemic by way of physical inactivity. In Suffolk, just 3 out of 5 people meet recommended levels of physical activity. This has a knock on effect on our health and wellbeing, economy and education. It is a stark reality that the healthcare costs of physical inactivity in Suffolk are estimated to exceed £14million per year.

The UK Chief Medical Officer recommends that adults do at least 150 minutes per week of moderate physical activity- which would certainly include cycling. The recommendation for children (5-18) is at least 60 minutes every day and preferably more. It is self-reported that 1 in 3 adults in the UK are not doing enough physical activity to meet these guidelines - with the actual figure expected to be substantially less. The guidelines also highlight the need to reduce time spent being sedentary for all age groups. For most people, active travel will be the easiest and most achievable way to reduce sedentary behaviour.

Strategic direction

Suffolk County Council has a strategic direction for cycling in Suffolk. The strategy sets out a vision and aims for cycling in Suffolk, and this is accompanied by an action plan. Suffolk County Council has a Cycle Strategy Group which is accountable for the implementation of the strategy. This strategic direction is then seen to be a work in progress.

Actions

As a County Council, we support and assist in the development of various cycling events throughout the county, as well as promoting those events and providing our own staff with some of the tools to enable cycling to work.

The Suffolk Year of Cycling has been able to offer support and promotion to a great deal of events and actions to date and is currently available as a microsite here:

<http://www.suffolkyearofcycling.co.uk/>

Suffolk has an ambition to become the Most Active County and with this ambition comes a great deal of focus and support to encourage people to be more physically active in Suffolk- be that for participation in team sports, individual sports, physical activity for health, or as active travel. Again, Most Active County has a part in supporting and promoting events taking place within the county and works with Suffolk Sport and our Lifestyle Service providers, LiveWell Suffolk, amongst others, to inspire people in Suffolk to get active. More information on the Most Active County can be found here: <http://www.mostactivecounty.com/>

The cycle2work scheme is a project supported by Suffolk County Council to enable employees to purchase a bike for commuting to work, tax free. This is an offer that has received great take up, is actively promoted to staff within set windows throughout the year, and continues to encourage and support those who wish to cycle to work. We then also offer pool bikes for Council workers to use for work travel, which can be hired free of charge, and have secure bike storage, lockers and showers available for the use of all staff.

Partnerships

Public Health Suffolk work in partnership with the EU ERASMUS project, I Want to Ride my Bicycle; promoting and supporting cycling throughout Europe. The project works to share best practise throughout Europe, particularly in relation to promotional activities and services, shared road use, and interaction between the public, private and voluntary sectors to best support cycling. Public Health's involvement with this project has included a visit to Murcia, Spain to join a workshop event to share knowledge and information. This visit was then reciprocated by Mairita Luse, Project Director, who spent 2 weeks with Public Health Suffolk to experience how we work to support cycling.

Vision

Our vision, as stated in Suffolk's Cycle Strategy, is to increase the number of people cycling in Suffolk, firmly establishing it as a normal form of transport for everyone. This continues to be our vision and we hope to be acting to deliver to this vision.

Next steps

We are well aware that our work around cycling in Suffolk has room for improvement, and would welcome your suggestions as to how, where, and in what way you see these improvements being made. Please feel free to collate a response as a group, or send individual responses to:

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