

# The Suffolk Observatory

## KEY DATA ALL IN ONE PLACE: AIDING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND DECISION- MAKING

### About LIKE!

Local governments, citizens, universities and SMEs have joined forces to co-create smarter, more efficient and more innovative services through 9 transnational pilot projects covering 3 core themes:



Suffolk County Council and its local partners had access to a wide variety of local and national data sets in a previous version of the Suffolk Observatory. The problem was that often the data was in quite a raw format and needed a lot of manual manipulation for it to become readable and understandable by non-technical people. Data was synthesised into very long "needs assessment" documents (sometimes over 100 pages); these documents contained a lot of useful information but weren't read by most people, least of all the decision-makers that shape local policy. This meant that the Suffolk Observatory needed an update.

### Relations to Workpackages

This pilot highlights two key areas of the LIKE! project, the creation of effective and efficient dashboards, as well as turning data into meaningful information that helps decision-makers.

### Local partners

Suffolk County Council  
Babergh District Council  
Mid Suffolk District Council  
St Edmundsbury Borough Council  
Forest Health District Council  
Waveney District Council  
Suffolk Coastal District Council  
Ipswich Borough Council  
Suffolk Constabulary (Police)

Suffolk Observatory website:  
[www.suffolkobservatory.info](http://www.suffolkobservatory.info)

Suffolk Observatory website:  
[natacha.bines@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:natacha.bines@suffolk.gov.uk)

This case study is produced by Alastair Macartney

## The Problem

Suffolk County Council and its local partners collect large amounts of data about the services they deliver, local demographics, and trends. Alongside this, there are a large number of national datasets available to the partners. What the partners wanted was a way of bringing the data together in one place to get a holistic view of the county of Suffolk. The first iteration of the Suffolk Observatory did just that; the website brought the various data sets together so that they could be viewed and analysed. Although this was a big step, the data was still very much in a raw format and was mostly of use to technical analysts. The major business problem facing the partners was that the data needed to be more accessible to a wider audience – specifically policy makers, strategists and decision makers. These people needed to see the data summarised in ways that were useful to them. Thus, it was decided that the Suffolk Observatory needed to be revamped to improve both the user experience and the audience.

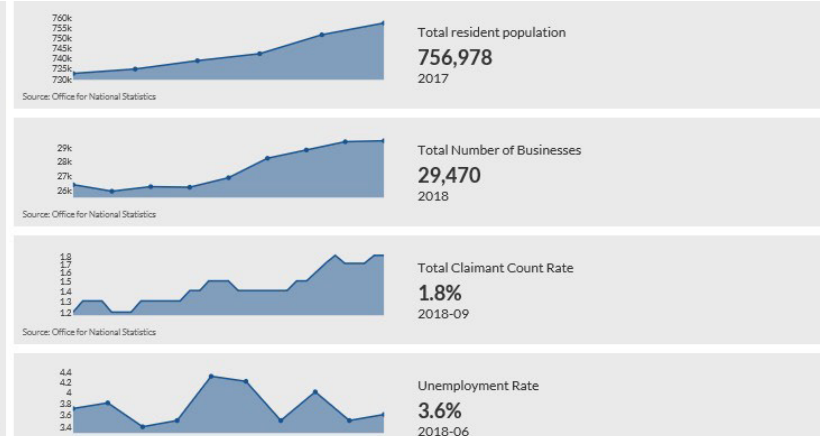
## What we did

The local partners formed a Steering Group to decide the requirements of the new site. Most importantly, it was felt that the underlying data needed to be modelled in such a way that place-based information could be obtained. In deciding where best to deploy public services (and, by definition, public taxes and money), being able to see “data on a place” was considered a key requirement. It was also felt that the data should be modelled so that it could be “sliced and diced” in any number of ways (such as by population, economy) and also be viewed by themes (such as crime, deprivation, health, social care etc.). The new Suffolk Observatory has this data modelled “under the bonnet”, turns the data into information and allows the information to be viewed Through any “thematic lens”.

### Quick Ward Profile

Enter a post code or click on a ward on the map below to view an overview profile

Search by postcode







## What does the new Suffolk observatory look like?

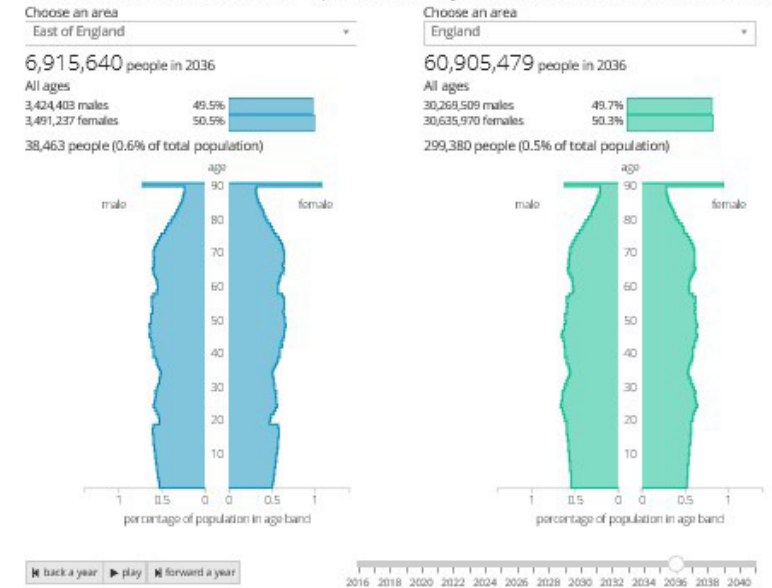
The information held by the Suffolk Observatory can be viewed in a number of ways, such as:

- data tables
- As graphs
- As pie charts
- As infographics
- As “widgets”

Data is also available in the more traditional raw format, but this means that the site isn't just used by data analysts. People who are looking for information about the area they live in can see the indicators and information about their town, village or parish. Politicians can use the data to see what the trends are in their constituencies, and council strategists and policy developers can use the data as a guide to what the effect is of applying certain policies in certain areas.

The data is also starting to be used in a predictive way to forecast (with bounds) what might happen in the future if current policies do not change. Some of the data held in the Suffolk Observatory has been used in a project to determine what the population of Suffolk might look like in twenty years' time.

## 2016-based Subnational Population Projections, mid-2016 to mid-2041



The Suffolk observatory has produced some quite alarming results:

- The Suffolk population as a whole is expected to grow by **7%** by the year 2030, however
- The number of people in Suffolk who are over 75 years old is expected to grow by **65%** by 2030

This has obvious ramifications for the way the Council provisions care for older people and so, knowing this, new strategies and policies can be devised that look at early help and prevention for older people.