Wellbeing in Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham

This report has been produced based on data collected across this area, in collaboration with East Suffolk Council.

August 2025

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Contents

Introduction

The aim of this research is to understand wellbeing among the local population living in the Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham area (defined as IP15, IP16 and IP17). This area in East Suffolk has multiple large Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) currently being built and is therefore undergoing many changes. This report dives deeper into how this impacts the local community and more specifically residents' mental wellbeing.

In 2023, we conducted research in partnership with Suffolk County Council to gain more insight into the mental health of Suffolk's population. One of our focus areas was the Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham area*. We're interested to see how wellbeing in this area has changed over the last two years, and will use the data from our 2023 project as a baseline for comparison.

This research was conducted using our validated mental health measure, the Emotional Needs Audit (ENA), which assesses how well residents are meeting their Emotional and Physical Needs. We have also gathered qualitative data that has given us insight into how the NSIPs are affecting residents' wellbeing, whether this is positively or negatively.

Our research has shown varied results and opinions. The qualitative research has highlighted the impact to those living in close proximity to the sites. Here, there are *"people who are permanently and significantly impacted by infrastructure as opposed to those who are just going to be affected for a few years"* [Resident in Friston]. Therefore, it is important to note that this report shows a generalisation of the area, and the impact of the builds on residents will vary considerably with where they are in the area. For a map of where different energy projects are being built across East Suffolk, see Appendix 6.

* The report for this piece of work can be found at suffolkmind.org.uk/reports

63% of Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham respondents are meeting their needs well overall

57% of residents feel that local energy projects are a barrier to their mental wellbeing to some extent

Average Emotional Need scores in the area have **increased** by **17%** since **2023**

Those aged **45-54** are the least well age group on average

Sleep is the worst met need on average

43% don't feel they as safe and secure as they would like

Close Relationships is the best met need on average

Key Findings

Overall, **62.6%** of IP15, IP16 and IP17 respondents are meeting their needs well.

There are a few needs that are particularly less well met on average, amongst those who live in IP15, IP16 and IP17, as well as some themes as to what was negatively affecting residents' wellbeing, specifically connected to the NSIPs.

The needs include:

1. Sleep – **55%** of respondents are not meeting this need well*

2. Movement – **65%** of respondents are not meeting this need well

3. Security – **67%** of respondents are not meeting this need well

4. Status – **68%** of respondents are not meeting this need well

5. Control – **69%** of respondents are not meeting this need well
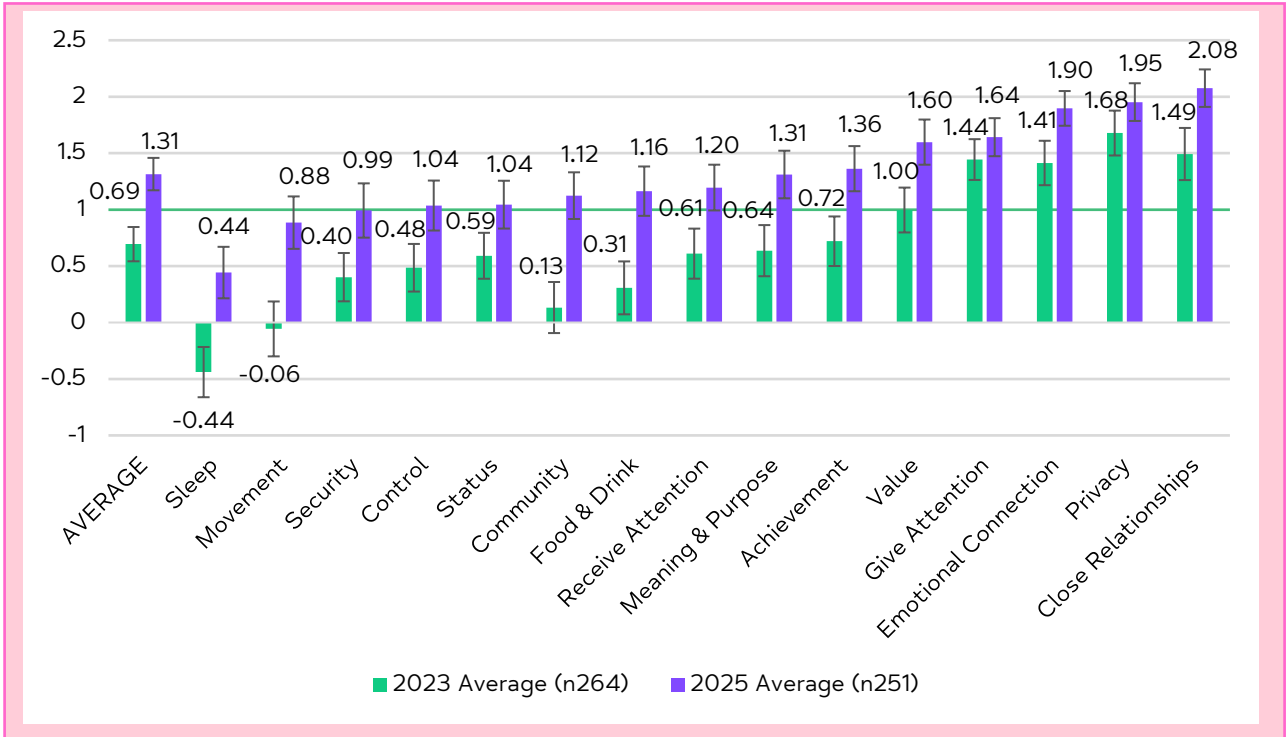
The themes include:

1. **Perceived poor communication:** Residents' communication with NSIP developers has been limited. Therefore, some are feeling like they are not informed or involved in important decisions that are affecting them.

2. **Environmental destruction:** The change and loss of habitats and green spaces in the local area has impacted local residents' wellbeing and physical health.

3. **Insecurity about the long term:** Residents are feeling insecure about what impact the NSIPs will have on their lives and the local area. A key area of insecurity is what the financial impact will be.

4. **Increased anxiety and stress:** Residents are worrying about many aspects of the NSIP builds – from their housing situation to the local environment rapidly changing. This has resulted in some not meeting their Emotional & Physical Needs.

* We define a need as being 'well met' when it has a score of 1 or more, out of a scale of -3 to 3. For more information on our methodology, please refer to Appendix 1.

For more information on our Emotional Needs & Resources approach, see the summary of the needs in Appendix 2, or visit our website.
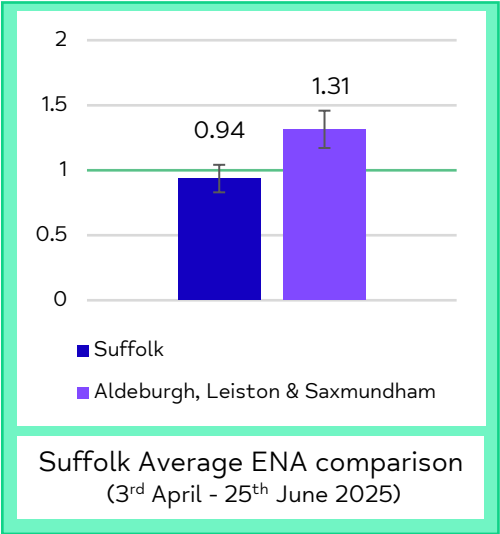
Wellbeing in Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham

Legend: ■ 2023 Average (n264) ■ 2025 Average (n251)

Need	2023	2025
AVERAGE	0.69	1.31
Sleep	-0.44	0.44
Movement	-0.06	0.88
Security	0.40	0.99
Control	0.48	1.04
Status	0.59	1.04
Community	0.13	1.12
Food & Drink	0.31	1.16
Receive Attention	0.61	1.20
Meaning & Purpose	0.64	1.31
Achievement	0.72	1.36
Value	1.00	1.60
Give Attention	1.44	1.64
Emotional Connection	1.41	1.90
Privacy	1.68	1.95
Close Relationships	1.49	2.08

Here we have Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham's average results from the Emotional Needs Audit. The Emotional and Physical Needs are along the bottom on the x axis, arranged from least to best met on average from left to right, with the average of all needs combined on the far left. How well the needs are met is shown on the y axis – here the averages land between -1 and 2.5 (a view of the results on the full scale can be found in Appendix 4).

The green line shows where we define a need to be 'well met' – a score of 1 or more. At a glance, we can see that needs are well met by Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham on average, with an overall average score of 1.31. Similarly, 12 of the 15 needs are well met overall. This is significantly better than the overall Suffolk average over the same time frame, where the average is 0.94 and only 6 needs are well met overall (see graph to the right).

On an individual level, we deem someone to be meeting their needs well overall if they have an average score of 1 or more. 62.60% (n157) of Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham respondents are meeting their needs well overall. Therefore, 63% are classed as being in wellbeing. This is significantly better than both the 2023 results in this area, and the 2025 results over Suffolk as a whole, where 42.80% and 54.30% of respondents, respectively, were meeting their needs well.

	value
Suffolk	0.94
Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham	1.31

Legend: ■ Suffolk ■ Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham

Suffolk Average ENA comparison
(3rd April - 25th June 2025)

Compared to the data collection in 2023, most needs are statistically significantly better met (i.e., the error bars do not overlap) – the exceptions being Giving Attention and Privacy. However, in the last two years, wellbeing has increased across Suffolk as a whole. In most cases, the increase we see here is not statistically significant in comparison to the proportional increase we would expect to see, based on the increase in wellbeing across the whole county. The exceptions are in the needs for Sleep, Movement, Food & Drink and Community. This means that for these four needs, we can understand that the increase in how well they are met is statistically significant.

Whilst looking at this data shows a positive step in how well needs are met, there are still areas to be aware of. Notably, our qualitative data shows a slightly different perspective.

To what extent are Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects affecting residents' mental health?
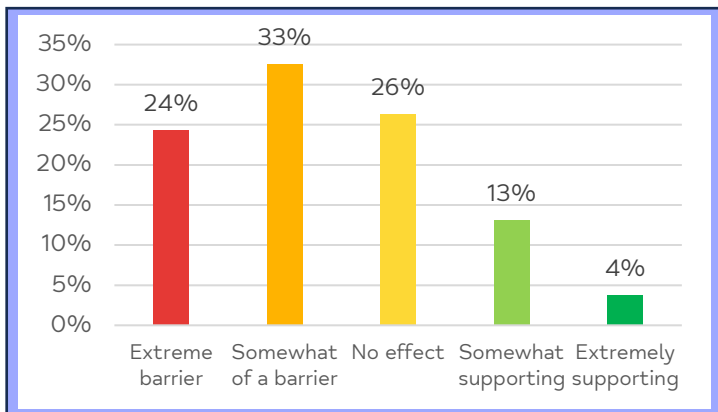
57% of residents felt the NSIPs were a barrier to their mental wellbeing to some extent.

We asked respondents how the NSIPs are affecting their mental health. These four themes surfaced in the data. The majority of respondents feel that the NSIPs pose a barrier to their mental health, particularly in IP15 where the percentage is slightly higher (71%).

Poor communication:
Perceived poor communication between the construction companies and the local community was a common theme that came across in the data that we gathered. Local residents reported feeling underinformed, underrepresented and excluded from important decisions that are affecting them. With the numerous potential energy project plans, it is difficult to stay engaged and know what is going on in the area.

"Information is hard to get at times"

When there is communication, residents have expressed that *"there is a distinct lack of empathy for local communities"* who are affected daily by the builds. The community are feeling that they are not being involved enough in decisions. A case study respondent described the consultation process as a *"tick box exercise"* where they thought it would be a chance to share their views but instead felt *"completely ignored"*. Additionally, unlike the developers, the community have limited resources with a lack of time and expertise for the consultation process to feel legitimate. Therefore, for residents this feels like there isn't a real way to get their feelings heard and contribute to decisions.

The perceived poor communication has made residents feel *"frustrated"*, *"hopeless"* and *"powerless"*, which can disrupt our emotional needs for Security, Control and Status.

A case study respondent who lives close to the substation build explained how they were told different things by different people. For example, they were assured that there was a dust management protocol put in place. However, the resident expressed that the dust was *"unbearable. We literally couldn't breathe, Your eyes were scratching."* Upon asking a worker on site what dust management there was, they were told *"there isn't any"*. The resident had to lodge an official complaint for the site to be shut down again.

"I moved to Suffolk for a slower, more peaceful way of life to improve my wellbeing and these projects are destroying that"

"I am also very concerned about the traffic and pollution – noise, light and air – and the damage this may cause to all of us, particularly children and vulnerable elderly people"

Environmental destruction:
The environmental destruction in the local area is another element of how the NSIPs are negatively affecting residents' wellbeing. With these builds, respondents have said that the access to green spaces and the beach has been reduced and restricted. Additionally, the loss of trees and habitats has upset many residents: *"Seeing the wholesale destruction of the natural environment is traumatising"*

The environmental destruction has meant that the area that many have lived in for years is rapidly changing. Many moved to Suffolk for peace and tranquillity and feel that this is now lost.

Respondents have also highlighted that as a result of the NSIPs, the pollution levels are increasing, including air, traffic, noise and light. This has affected their mental wellbeing and has given them concerns for their physical health too.

The reduction of greenspace, the changing landscape and the destruction of the environment and habitats can impact our emotional and physical needs – such as our need for Movement, Achievement and even Community.

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Insecurity about long term:
The sense of insecurity in the long term is affecting some individuals' wellbeing where they are not only concerned over the future for their local area but also their personal situations. Residents have expressed this uncertainty which has led to some respondents feeling an "*increasing level of anxiety about the future*". There is a sense of unknown of what will happen when the builds are complete. For example, some are worried about the hum or buzz from the substations, "*The real anxiety for me is this 'hum'*", of which they won't know until its complete.

There is also insecurity about the long term on an individual level. This is mainly the financial impact, particularly around residents housing situations. With some feeling like they are "*trapped*" as they cannot afford to move away and therefore cannot leave the environment that is causing a negative effect on their wellbeing. The unknown about the future can be "*unsettling*" for residents which may affect their needs for Security and Control.

General wellbeing effects:
The NSIPs have affected residents' mental wellbeing and physical health. We are all on the Mental Health Continuum – and we move along it depending on how we cope with the challenges of life and the stresses that it creates. If we are unable to meet our emotional needs we will experience stress – which is the crossover point between wellbeing and mental ill-health.

Some respondents are reporting that the NSIPs are contributing to their experience of stress and anxiety, whether this is directly or indirectly. Some are experiencing anxiety specifically due to the NSIP builds as they are uncertain of what the impact will be on their lives. Some are experiencing anxiety indirectly such as climate anxiety over the environmental destruction or driving anxiety as there is increased traffic congestion from the construction. There are some residents moving further along the Mental Health Continuum towards extreme mental ill-health and are experiencing suicidal thoughts. A case study respondent opened up to us about how their partner was experiencing suicidal thoughts as a "*direct result*" of the NSIP builds.

> "*I have never had any real struggles with my mental health and wellbeing during my life, but the impact of the multiple energy projects locally has not only impacted on my mental health, but also on my physical health*"

Other wellbeing effects were mentioned such as a lack of sleep due to the NSIP builds with construction noise and anxiety contributing to this. Sleep is one of our physical needs, and not meeting this need is an important indicator of when people are starting to move down the Mental Health Continuum.

26% of residents felt the NSIPs did not affect their mental wellbeing

17% of residents felt the NSIPs supported their mental wellbeing to some extent.

There were some positive comments about the local energy projects bringing work opportunities and good business.

Just over a quarter of respondents stated that the NSIPs do not affect their mental wellbeing. If we look at how this differs with locations, there is a larger proportion of IP16 stating that they are not affected by NSIPs (39%) compared to IP15 and IP17.

Additionally, 37% of those who feel that the NSIPs support their mental wellbeing moved to the area for employment on a local energy project.

> "*The projects will provide jobs in the local area. This gives me more opportunities for employment*"

Furthermore, 95% of those who feel that the NSIPs support their wellbeing are meeting all their emotional needs, with an average ENA score of 1.65. The difference between those who are affected by NSIPs and those who are not is significant. Perhaps this highlights the major impact that the NSIPs can have on different people. There is a clear pattern that those who are negatively impacted by the builds are less likely to be meeting their emotional needs – specifically 15 times less likely to be meeting their needs than those who say it supports their wellbeing.

> "*I am living outside of the main construction projects, so little affect on my life*"

Other positive comments were from those favouring the energy projects for the benefits they will bring such as renewable energy or a low carbon footprint. For example, "*I believe that society must change to move forward and what's happening here in Suffolk is moving forward. The electricity infrastructure projects don't disturb me at all*". Some also added that they feel it is "*essential*" and a "*necessity*" for the future.
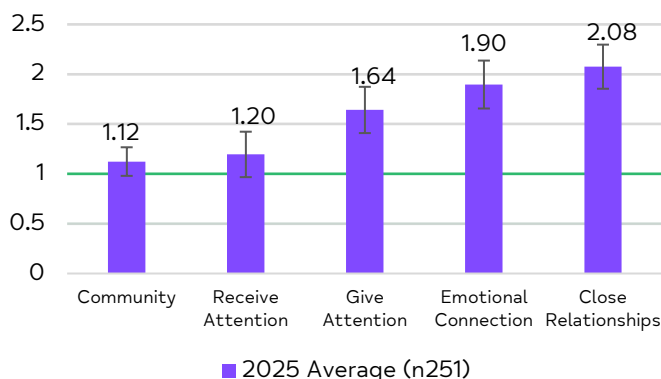
Interpersonal Relationship Needs

The interpersonal relationship needs have the highest average score out of the other need groups. We can see that the need for Close Relationships is very well met on average, with a score of 2.08 (on a scale of -3 to 3), showing that people are feeling accepted for who they are by at least one person. Overall, Close Relationships is the best met need out of the fifteen for IP15, IP16 & IP17. We asked those who are meeting this need well (i.e. scoring 2 or 3) to identify any supporting factors that help them to do so. 73% (n32) cited that their relationships are a supporting factor.

Emotional Connection also scores highly on average, being a well met need with a score of 1.90. This suggests that respondents are feeling connected in small, intimate groups. The need for Emotional Connection has the highest percentage (89%) of people meeting this need well (having a score of over 1), compared to all the other needs.

It's helpful to compare these two needs to Community, as this reflects the difference between feeling connected in smaller groups compared with bigger groups. Despite the need for Community having a well met average score of 1.12, it scores the lowest out of the other social needs. This suggests that people aren't feeling as well connected in larger, less intimate settings. It is positive to note that the need for Community shows the biggest increase (32%) in average need scores compared to the data in the area in 2023, and is one of the only needs with a statistically significant increase in that timeframe.

Giving Attention is another well met need on average, with a score of 1.64. For both this area and Suffolk average, Giving Attention scores higher than Receiving Attention. This shows that people feel they give others more attention than they receive back. However, Receiving Attention still has a well met score of 1.20.

2025 Average (n251)

Chart values: Community 1.12, Receive Attention 1.20, Give Attention 1.64, Emotional Connection 1.90, Close Relationships 2.08

"The devastating effects of the energy projects on our community has resulted in a depletion of community mood"

How are the NSIP builds affecting the Interpersonal Relationship needs?

Community:

Feeling accepted in a community supports good mental health and wellbeing. Local residents can confide in each other over the changes in the area. However, over time, some have said that the NSIPs have become a constant conversation within the community which is making some residents feel overwhelmed as *"sometimes I feel that it is the only topic of conversation locally and it's difficult to focus on anything else"*. One case study respondent stated that "*I don't want to talk about it... I want to get away... it's exhausting*" and that is has led them to become *"more and more isolated"*. Normally our community helps us feel less isolated but, in this case, it is driving individuals apart. Perhaps, the NSIPs are posing a barrier to a happy and connected community.

Attention:

The NSIPs have also taken a toll on the need for Attention. The projects have been ongoing for years with a respondent sharing that *"for the last eight years the threat of these developments has dominated my life"*. We have a finite capacity for attention, so, when something takes up too much of our attention, it means that less attention is available to give to other things that really matter to us like our relationships, interests or hobbies. The multiple NSIPs in the area has also meant that there are constant updates and new proposals that demand attention. This is illustrated by a respondent: "*The number of energy projects is overwhelming. Having to keep on objecting is overwhelming too. That does impact our mental health."*

Emotional connection:

Some have explained how the NSIPs are negatively affecting themselves or their loved ones. When we are not meeting our needs well, it can interfere with our relationships. As previously mentioned, a respondent told us that their partner is having suicidal thoughts, with the NSIP builds having a significant impact on their mental wellbeing. This worrying insight shows how these builds are significantly affecting individuals, families and communities.

SECURITY   CONTROL   PRIVACY
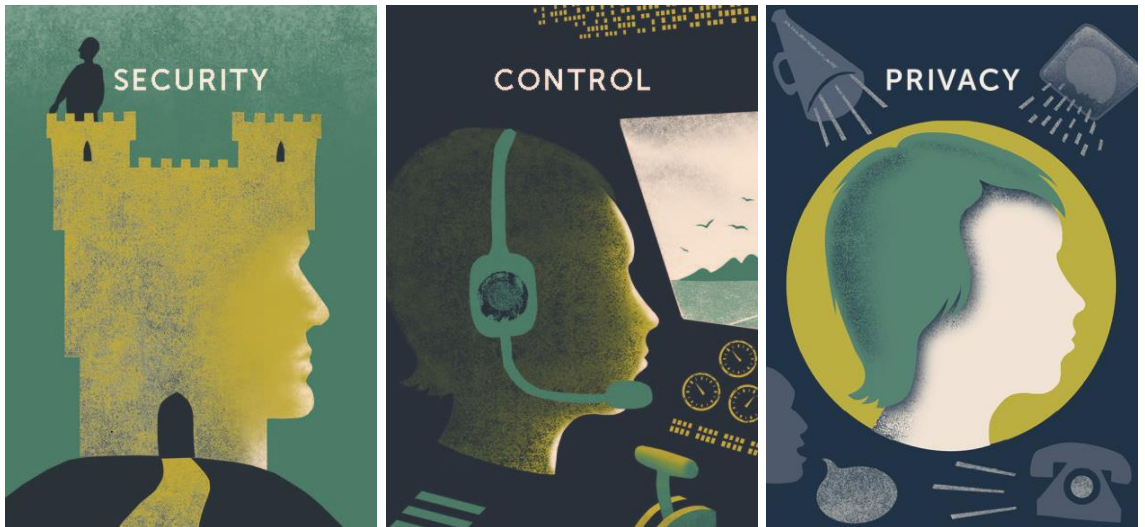
Security and Control Needs

For IP15, 16 & 17 **Security** is the third least met emotional eeed on average, with a score of 0.99 (on a scale of -3 to 3). It is also the lowest of the safety needs. This shows that individuals may not always be feeling as safe and secure in their lives as they would like to. We would expect Security to be slightly better met, reflecting the trend of our Suffolk data. We asked those who weren't meeting this need (i.e. scoring less than 0) to identify any barriers that prevent them from doing so. The biggest barriers to individuals not meeting their need for Security are their physical and mental health, the cost of living, Sizewell C and international politics.

Control is the fourth least well met emotional need, having an average score of 1.04. Those meeting the need for Control have found that their access to nature and their home environment helps them to do so.

This dataset shows a strong positive correlation between the needs for Security and Control. This means that if residents are feeling safe and secure, they may be more likely to be feeling in control (and vice versa). If we look at how Security and Control compares with our 2023 data in IP15, 16 & 17, we see that they have moved down the ranking compared to other needs. Previously, Community and Food & Drink were less well met than these two needs, whereas now they have surpassed them, with Security and Control not increasing as much over the last two years.

On the other hand, **Privacy** is a well met need on average, the second best met need among local residents. This is positive, since it reflects the fact that respondents feel able to take time to themselves – with the top supporting factor for respondents meeting this need being people's home environments.

2025 Average (n251)
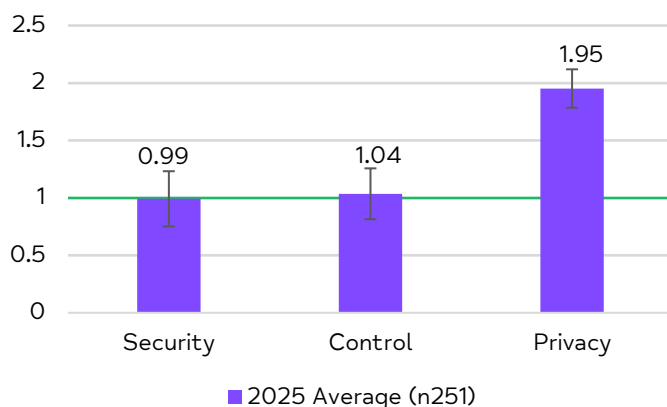
Security is among the least well met needs

How are the NSIP builds affecting the Security and Control needs?

Security –
A recurring theme identified in the qualitative data is that some residents are experiencing a lack of security. This could be due to the NSIP builds, with 41% (n9) of those not meeting this need stating that a barrier is Sizewell C. This feeling of insecurity could affect many areas of life, whether this is physically, financially, socially or environmentally.

Physically and socially -
As mentioned previously, the perceived poor communication between the NSIPs and the community seems to be affecting how well residents are meeting the need for Security. Residents are reporting hearing different things from different people which makes it hard to feel secure in what is happening. Residents are feeling like they have a lack of information about what is happening and what the effects are, in the short and long term: "*This uncertainty and current and potential disruption is severely impacting our well-being*". If residents don't know what the truth is and what to expect, it will be harder for them to adapt to these changes.

"Rent prices are rising and are no longer affordable to local people"

"I can't move away from the fear. The house is so devalued. It's a constant worry and at times difficult to sleep"

Financially -
The financial burden is adding to the lack of security experienced by residents. Residents feel that there is not enough compensation or mitigation for the effects of the NSIPs. A key area that is of concern for the residents is the impact that this will have on the housing market. For example, respondents have stated that rent prices are going up because more people are moving to the area temporarily, whilst house prices are going down as people are avoiding moving there permanently. One case study in Friston went so far as to say, *"I wouldn't come live in Friston if you paid me".*

More respondents explained how the NSIPs will have a negative effect on selling their house which is adding stress to their lives. This was illustrated by many comments such as: *"Fear of my house losing value and being unable to sell it"* and *"My house has lost value so can't afford to move".* This has made some report that they *"feel trapped"* as they cannot move and leave the area if they wish to do so.

One case study opened the conversation of how this could impact older residents who are thinking of their future and might not be able to borrow against home for social care.

> "There's older people who are thinking about social care ... your main asset is your home, and you're relying upon your home to fund your social care. Then you might think, well, actually, I might not be able to get money out of my house to fund my social care, because I won't be able to sell it... I think that's particularly true for the people who live closest to the site."
> [Case study respondent, resident in Friston].

Others are concerned that the builds will have a negative impact on tourism, as the area is popular for its coastline. A resident in IP17 explaining that *"I worry about my job security as my company relies heavily on tourism who visit the area for its natural beauty and beaches"*. With the cost-of-living crisis and the unknown financial effect of the NSIPs, it is unsurprising that some residents are worried about their finances and therefore Security ranks the third least well met need overall.

It is also important to recognise that some see a positive financial benefit to the NSIPs in the local area, including new jobs and business opportunities. For example, a respondent stating, *"I like the project Sizewell C because it employs many locals."* Another said: *"My work will start to get busier. Which makes me happier to be at work."* With more jobs in the local area, it may help others find a sense of security.

Environmentally -
With the land use changing this might increase environmental risks. For example, the increase of impermeable surfaces from new infrastructure and the deforestation will increase flood risk in the area.

Control –
When we are not involved in decisions that affect us, we might feel that we have less control. With the NSIP builds process, it seems that there has been an illusion of control through the consultation process. However, the community do not have the resources to meaningfully contribute to consultation, so cannot exert that control. This has left individuals feeling frustrated: *"The decision was already made. This makes me feel impotent and disempowered"*. Residents also feel they are not given enough of a voice to ensure that they will be protected through the process.

There are multiple NSIPs located in this area of East Suffolk, with new projects and potential proposals coming up regularly. A respondent highlighting that *"The pace and scale of these developments is too much in such a small area"* which is largely beyond residents' control. Residents are also *"not knowing exactly what is coming"* and when the builds and environmental destruction will stop. This lack of control can make us feel stressed and overwhelmed.

> *"The lack of control local people have over these projects is hugely damaging to wellbeing and a sense of efficacy. We are left feeling our voices don't matter"*

> *"The unknown and feeling of no control, it feels a threat to my peace of mind and home"*

ACHIEVEMENT · MEANING & PURPOSE · STATUS

Achievement and Value Needs

Achievement is a well met need on average, scoring 1.36 (on a scale of -3 to 3). Respondents' work situations strongly affect how well they're able to meet their need for achievement, with 58% of those not meeting the need reporting it as a barrier, and 57% meeting the need reporting it as a supporting factor. Other significant supporting factors for those meeting the need include hobbies and interests (52% reporting this) and access to nature or the outdoors (48% reporting this).

Meaning & Purpose is strongly positively correlated to Achievement within the Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham data, meaning that on average we'd expect to see that if Achievement is high, then so is Meaning & Purpose (and vice versa). Meaning & Purpose has a similar score to Achievement where it is also well met on average for Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham, with a score of 1.31.

Value is a well met need, with an average score of 1.60. Value indicates how much people feel others appreciate them for their actions and contributions. Therefore, Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham meeting this need well on average suggests that individuals are feeling valued for what they do and what they contribute.

Status, on the other hand, tells us how much people feel others appreciate and respect them as a person (and not just for their actions or contributions). Status is just about well met need on average, with a score 1.04. For those not meeting their need for status, the biggest reported barrier was the cost of living, with 69% reporting this. The data in this area shows that Status and Control are strongly positively correlated. Therefore, as the average score for one need increases, it is expected that the other will also.

2025 Average (n251)
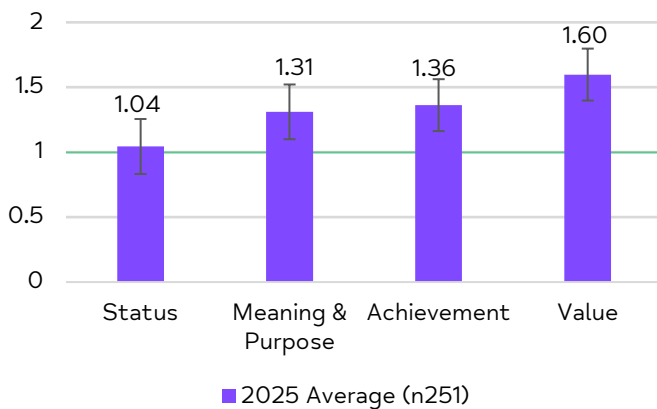
How are the NSIP builds affecting the achievement and value needs?

Status –

Status links to the idea of being listened to and respected by others. Many residents feel that their opinions are not being heard by NSIP developers. For example, a respondent in Saxmundham said that they feel they are *"not listened to as an individual or a community"* which could affect the need for Status. When we don't meet this need, it can contribute to feelings of low self-esteem.

The area is becoming well known for the construction of the NSIPs. A local resident living in Friston has stated that the village is now defined as *"where the massive development's going to be: 'Poor you, you live in Friston'."* Having these negative perceptions of the area is upsetting for long-time residents as the village is not being recognised for what it once was.

Achievement –

The need for Achievement may be affected as some residents' have tried to go against the proposals – feeling hopeful that they can represent their community. Residents have spent money, time and resources to do this. However, they have not got the sense of achievement they were hoping for with a respondent highlighting that *"the decision was already made"*.

Meaning & Purpose –

The insecurity about the long term means it's hard for people to maintain Meaning & Purpose around what their lives will look like in the future.

Additionally, seeing the local area change may make some residents feel that their initial Meaning & Purpose in their lives looks different. Many mentioned how they moved to the area for the rural and quiet nature of the landscape, which has considerably changed.

A lack of Meaning & Purpose in our lives is a significant risk factor for suicide and suicidal thoughts. Therefore, it's important to support people to keep meeting this need through achieving things, feeling they are needed, or connecting to something bigger than themselves.

"This will impact not only those who have lived here for generations and see everything they know disappear, but also those who made a conscious choice to live here over the last few decades and see everything they worked for disappear"
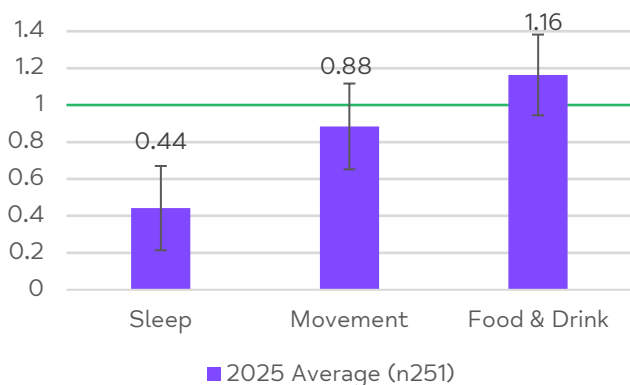
SLEEP • MOVEMENT • FOOD & DRINK
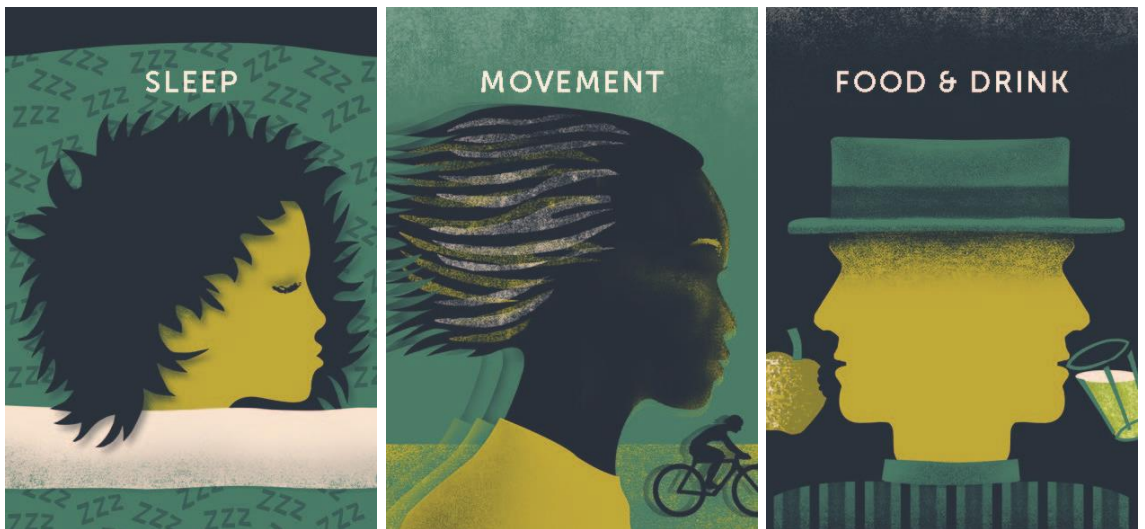
Physical Needs

As for the physical needs, it can seem like these aren't as connected to wellbeing as some of our emotional needs. However, there are many connections between our emotional needs and physical needs, and what happens during the waking day can have a significant impact on our physical needs, particularly Sleep. Our wider mental health research often shows that people tend to meet their emotional needs better than their physical needs – this is consistent with this data where the physical needs average score is the lowest compared to the other need groups. However, all the physical needs show an increase in average scores from the 2023 data, particularly the need for Movement which has increased by 32%.

We can see from the data that **Food & Drink** is the only physical need which is well met, having an average score of 1.16. Additionally, 70% of respondents are meeting this need well.

However, Movement and Sleep are both not well met on average. **Movement** has an average score of 0.88. The top barriers for those not meeting this need are respondents physical and mental health and their work situation. **Sleep** is the least met need overall and out of the physical needs with an average score of just 0.44. Just over half (55%) of respondents are feeling rested after sleep. This means that just under half of the respondents are not feeling like they are getting enough sleep.

Chart: Bar chart titled "2025 Average (n251)" with values — Sleep: 0.44, Movement: 0.88, Food & Drink: 1.16. Y-axis scale from 0 to 1.4. A green horizontal reference line is drawn at 1.

Sleep is the lowest met Emotional Need

How are the builds affecting the physical needs?

Movement –

For many residents, their access to nature and the outdoors helps them meet the need for Movement, with 83% (n25) of respondents citing this as a supporting factor. With residents' increasing concerns over the loss of green spaces and access to the beach due to the NSIP builds, this is having a negative impact on residents' need for Movement. Furthermore, 19% (n5) of residents have stated that Sizewell C is a barrier for meeting the need for Movement.

"I enjoy walking in the countryside for clearing my mind, but it's difficult to go anywhere to avoid the devastation caused by one project or another in the area"

Our qualitative data shows that the NSIPs in the local area are affecting how much physical activity some residents are doing. For example, one respondent sharing that *"Getting out in environment used to help. But now it's just depressing seeing by destruction wherever I turn"*. The NSIPs could pose a barrier for some getting outside and meeting the need for Movement.

With more people moving to the area, services and sports facilities are in demand. One Suffolk Mind referral stated that: *"An increase in residents to the local area has meant that it is far more difficult to do activities such as going to the gym which helped manage my anxiety I feel."* When we asked respondents what they would introduce to support mental wellbeing, some suggested having better exercise facilities to allow for new people moving to the area (see page 19 & Appendix 5 for more community suggestions).

Sleep –

Not getting the sleep we need can be caused by stressful life events which compromise our ability to meet our emotional and physical needs. Particularly, excess worry and stress can have a direct effect on how refreshed and rested we feel after sleep. For the respondents, the top barrier for those not meeting this need was Sizewell C, where 38% (n10) cited this. The qualitative data we have gathered highlights residents' worry – from their houses, the community, businesses and the future. The concern was reflected in a case study respondent: *"Sleep has gone out the window... We're in a constant state of stress."*

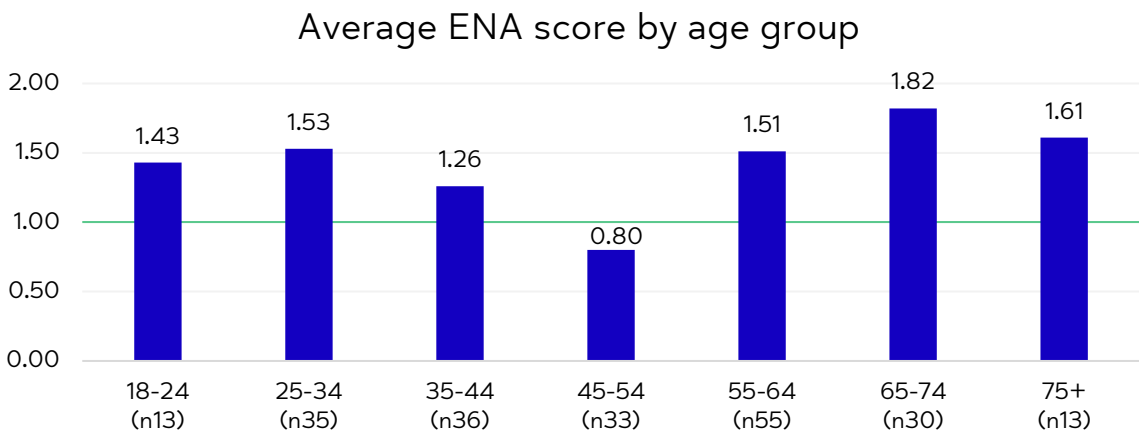# How does wellbeing change looking at different factors?

Do results change with how long respondents have lived in this area?

90% (n225) of respondents have been living in the area for more than 2 years. Only 6% (n14) of respondents have been living in the area for less than a year. The average ENA score is slightly lower for those who are new to the area (1.14) compared to those who have been living in the area for over 2 years (1.34).

The majority of the respondents (90%, n225) did not move to the area for employment on the NSIP builds.

Only 9% (n22) specifically moved to the area for employment on a local energy project. Those who moved to the area for employment on a NSIP are meeting all the emotional and physical needs, on average. This indicates good mental health. Additionally, over two thirds (68%) of those working on an NSIP have stated that the local energy projects are supporting their mental wellbeing. It is interesting to note that the need for Control is the second best met need overall for this group. This emphasises the gap between those meeting the need for Control and whether local energy projects pose a barrier to their mental wellbeing.

Do results change with age?

Average ENA score by age group

Age group	Average ENA score
18-24 (n13)	1.43
25-34 (n35)	1.53
35-44 (n36)	1.26
45-54 (n33)	0.80
55-64 (n55)	1.51
65-74 (n30)	1.82
75+ (n13)	1.61

If we look at how ENA results differ with age, we can see that nearly all age groups are meeting their needs well. Those over 65 are the most well with an average score of 1.76. This aligns with our wider Suffolk research which shows that individuals in older age categories have better mental health, on average.

As you can see from the graph, there is a significant dip in the average ENA score for those in the 45-54 age category. This group are only meeting 6 of the 15 emotional needs with an average ENA score of 0.80. Those who are in the middle age category often deal with many responsibilities that can add extra stress and stretch in their lives. From family life, financial stress, relationships and caring for relatives, these factors may alter how well emotional and physical needs are being met. The NSIP builds in the area could exacerbate this pressure on this age group through factors such as the financial impact of the builds – in fact, 70% of respondents aged 45-54 stated that the NSIPs are a barrier to their mental wellbeing to some extent.

How can wellbeing be improved in the local area?

Only 56% have heard of the local community hubs in the area.

Many are not sure what is out there in their community. With respondents highlighting that: *"It's not advertised. I don't know anything about it"* and one respondent suggesting there should be *"more awareness of what's available".*

We asked respondents what they would introduce to support mental health or wellbeing locally. These were the four main themes that we gathered:

Improved Emotional Support:
As this research has shown how residents' wellbeing has been negatively affected by local NSIPs, many mentioned how more emotional support in the area would be beneficial. In-person mental health services are limited due to the rural nature of the area. Therefore, some suggested that in-person drop-in sessions for those who want to chat with someone would be valuable. Additionally, several mentioned more counselling services that are accessible and outside working hours.

Better communication about NSIP builds...
Some mentioned how wellbeing could be improved with better communication and control over the NSIP builds. Respondents suggested that it would be beneficial to have all the information on NSIPs in one place so information is easily accessible or meetings with developers and/or the council where residents can have their views heard. Keeping residents informed will help them feel more secure and in control of their lives.

Environmental projects:
Our research has shown how vital access to nature is for residents' mental health. With the loss of green spaces in the area, many have suggested that replacing and replenishing these spaces would help – such as tree planting schemes. Suggestions on having information on how to support local wildlife. Several respondents also suggested having outside wellbeing groups such as walking, cycling and beach meet-ups to help them meet their needs for Movement, Community and Emotional Connection.

Integrating the Community:
The quantitative data highlighted that Community is the lowest of the social needs and the qualitative insights revealed that residents are feeling disconnected. Residents suggested having better community activities. For example, positive and engaging social events for the community (e.g. street parties, festivals, markets) which might shift the focus away from residents' frustration of the NSIP builds. More classes and activities were also mentioned such as art, singing and exercise classes.

For more of the community suggestions on what would help improve their wellbeing, see the anonymised summary in Appendix 5.

What conclusions can we draw from these results?

Our research has revealed that the needs for Security and Control, alongside Sleep and Movement, are the least well met needs in IP15, IP16 & IP17, on average. Therefore, targeting local interventions to better meet these needs could help to improve wellbeing here.

Although the quantitative data suggests that people are generally meeting their needs, the qualitative data has given us an insight into how residents are affected by the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

This varies by area, with some people not being affected at all, and some being affected indirectly, for example through increased traffic or loss of access to green spaces. Of those being directly affected, some will only be affected for a short period of time, during construction (for example, those near cable routes), while others will be affected forever, like those living near the substation in Friston. It's worth considering how support might be differently targeted to each of these different groups, and especially considering those who are *"permanently and significantly impacted by the infrastructure"* – for example, those living in Friston.

Since much of the building of the energy projects has already started, some factors are irreversible and the community can't control this. Therefore, it's important that there is good communication, empathy and honesty with residents to help them feel more security and control in their lives. Working on what the community have suggested will support wellbeing in the area, including by giving them a sense of autonomy and choice over what is happening when they don't have control in other areas.

When considering how things could change going forwards, our case study respondents spoke about wanting an increase in honesty, respect and consideration of the community – both in terms of inclusion in conversations and acknowledgement of the mitigations that are required to make up for the damage being done.

"there is some money on the table but there's not enough"

"a lot more proactive engagement with the community"

"to improve going forward would be just honesty"

"It might be helpful if the developers of the energy projects and the government departments behind them would take the time to listen to local communities who are being negatively impacted by their actions and explain how they are they trying to mitigate the impacts on local people"

Appendix 1

Purpose of Report

This research, funded by East Suffolk Council, was conducted using our validated mental health measure, the Emotional Needs Audit (ENA), which has been distributed widely online and on foot by trained data collectors.

This report focuses on the average wellbeing of those in Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham, throughout this report, defined to be IP15, IP16 and IP17 postcode areas respectively, based on data gathered from 3rd April 2025 to 25th June 2025. This data is compared with data gathered over the same geography from 13th June 2022 to 14th March 2023.

Methodology

This research is based on the Emotional Needs and Resources approach, which outlines the 12 innate Emotional Needs that we must meet, in balance, in order to be mentally well. This approach can be used to provide a useful direction to help improve mental wellbeing, allowing us to identify when a specific need is not met and enabling us to make changes to meet that need and improve wellbeing. This idea applies to individuals, but also to groups of people, including samples of the population. Looking at which needs are generally unmet in a sample population can help identify areas to work on to make this area a healthier and happier place to live. If you'd like more explanation on each of the Emotional Needs, see Appendix 2, or visit our website: www.suffolkmind.org.uk/ENR.

In the ENA, we ask 15 questions that encompass all elements of the 12 needs, containing both emotional and physical aspects. These are scored on a scale from -3 (not at all met) to +3 (very well met). We also ask respondents to identify any environmental barriers that may prevent them from meeting their needs, as well as any factors that support them to meet needs well. We included some bespoke questions asking respondents how the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) affected their mental health (either positively or negatively). Finally, we collected data on demographic factors, such as age and gender identity, to determine how these factors affect wellbeing. For a full list of questions, reach out to the Suffolk Mind Research Team. We also undertook case studies to support this research and allow us to gain a deeper understanding of factors that may prevent or enable individuals to meet their needs.

Appendix 2 – The Emotional Needs

Sleep helps calm emotions and repairs our body. We can tell our need for Sleep is met when we feel rested after waking up

Movement isn't just about going to the gym or out for a run. Getting our heart rate above resting level just three to four times a week – whether that's a brisk walk, dancing or hoovering – is enough to trigger a hormone release equivalent in its effect to anti-depressant medication

Food & Drink is about feeling you get energy, nutrition and pleasure from your diet – however that looks for you

Control is feeling we are free to make choices for ourselves, and part of meeting this need is recognising that there are things we can't control

Security is to do with our need to feel safe and secure in our surroundings. Some examples of where we meet our need for Security is in our housing situation, financially or in relationships

Meaning & Purpose is feeling motivated and that there is a point to getting out of bed in the morning. This can be met through meeting our need for Achievement, through helping other people, or by being part of something bigger than ourselves

Privacy is about being able to get time away from distractions and have time to process our thoughts and emotions

Status is met by feeling appreciated and respected as a person. **Value** is about feeling appreciated for our actions and contributions

Achievement is met by feeling stretched and challenged by the things we do

Emotional Connection is about feeling connected in smaller, more intimate groups. **Close Relationships** is about feeling we can be completely ourselves around at least one other person (or a pet!)
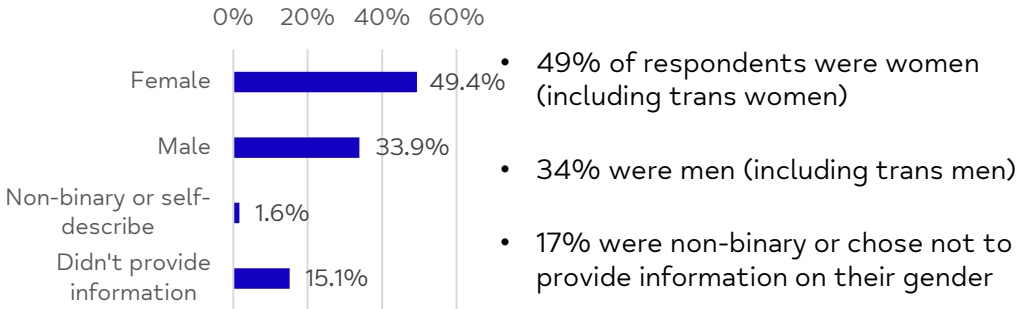
Giving and Receiving Attention is about exchanging positive attention with those around us. It is a finite resource, but can replenished by better meeting the need for Privacy

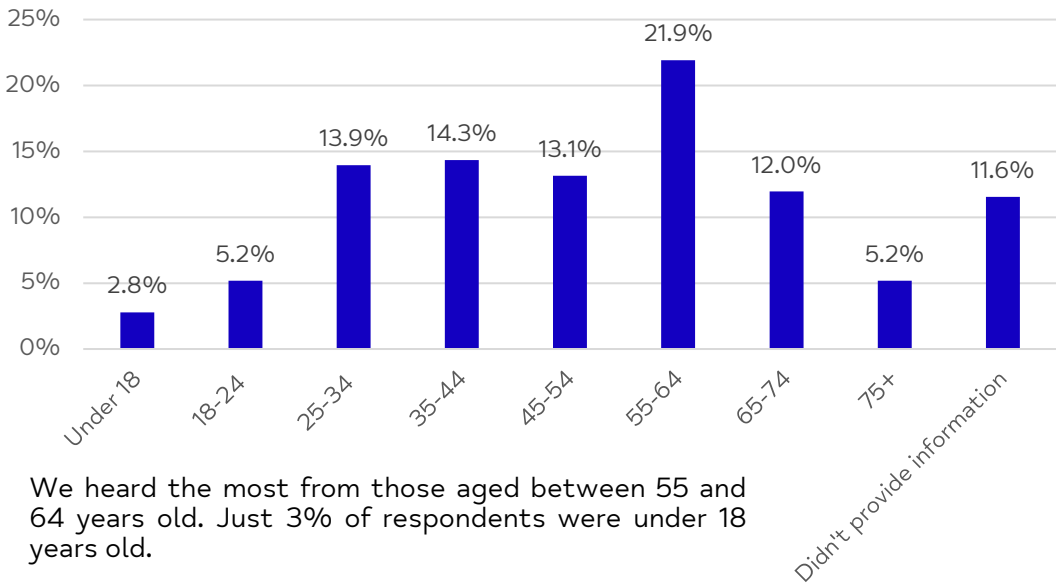**Community** is met when we feel we're part of a group

Appendix 3 – Engagement from residents

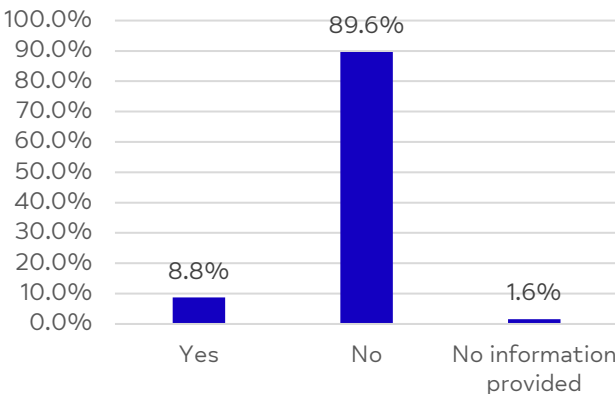We received 251 responses from those living in IP15, IP16 and IP17.

Response rates by gender:

Female 49.4%

Male 33.9%

Non-binary or self-describe 1.6%

Didn't provide information 15.1%

- 49% of respondents were women (including trans women)

- 34% were men (including trans men)

- 17% were non-binary or chose not to provide information on their gender

Response rates by age:

Under 18 2.8%

18-24 5.2%

25-34 13.9%

35-44 14.3%

45-54 13.1%

55-64 21.9%

65-74 12.0%

75+ 5.2%

Didn't provide information 11.6%

We heard the most from those aged between 55 and 64 years old. Just 3% of respondents were under 18 years old.

Did respondents move to the area for employment on an NSIP?

Yes 8.8%

No 89.6%

No information provided 1.6%

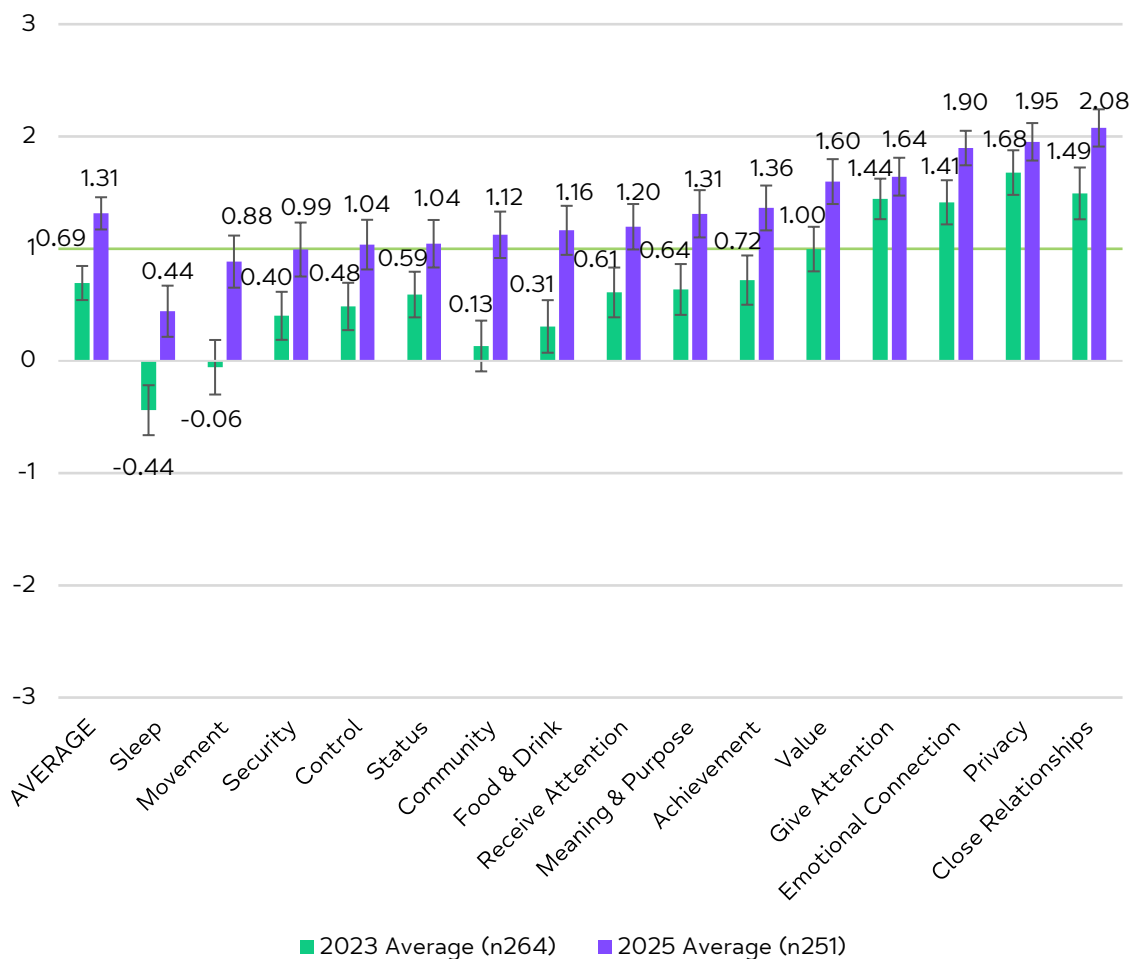The majority of respondents – 90% – did not move to the area specifically for employment on a build. Just under 9% did move to the area for employment. It's worth bearing in mind how these differences of perspective will affect responses.

Where we receive fewer than 3 responses per reportable group, we do not report on the average wellbeing of this group – to ensure all responses remain anonymous.

Appendix 4 – Overall Wellbeing Graph

Average wellbeing amongst those living in Aldeburgh, Leiston & Saxmundham, compared to 2023 data:

Chart data (2023 Average / 2025 Average):
- AVERAGE: 0.69 / 1.31
- Sleep: -0.44 / 0.44
- Movement: -0.06 / 0.88
- Security: 0.40 / 0.99
- Control: 0.48 / 1.04
- Status: 0.59 / 1.04
- Community: 0.13 / 1.12
- Food & Drink: 0.31 / 1.16
- Receive Attention: 0.61 / 1.20
- Meaning & Purpose: 0.64 / 1.31
- Achievement: 0.72 / 1.36
- Value: 1.00 / 1.60
- Give Attention: 1.44 / 1.64
- Emotional Connection: 1.41 / 1.90
- Privacy: 1.68 / 1.95
- Close Relationships: 1.49 / 2.08

Legend: ■ 2023 Average (n264) ■ 2025 Average (n251)

The error bars indicate the values we would expect our averages to fall within if we repeated this research. We used a 95% confidence interval.

Appendix 5 – Wellbeing suggestions from respondents

NSIP specific suggestions (12% (14/87) of suggestions), including:
- Easy to access information about the local energy projects all in one place
- Developers, government departments, the council to listen to residents (e.g. hold meetings or forums with residents)
- Restricting, reducing and rejecting major infrastructure projects or building developments in the area

Improved emotional support (26% (30/87) of suggestions), including:
- More people to talk to for emotional support – drop-in sessions, wellbeing café
- Accessible, closer in-person mental health support
- Outside wellbeing groups – group walks, cycles, dog walks, using the beach, forest bathing
- Counselling – easily accessible, free/affordable, better work-friendly hours, specifically mentioned the need in Leiston
- More knowledge and awareness of mental health services, support and workshops
- Suicide prevention
- Specifically, wellbeing activities for young people, those with young children, those in the construction industry and Saturday wellbeing for those working in the week.
- Support groups for those with autism or those who are neurodiverse
- More GPs, dentists, companion services in the area

Integrating the community: (15% (17/87) of suggestions), including:
- Local community hub in village
- Social events – in Leiston and Saxmundham
- Group activities – such as art groups, singing, chess, bridge, exercise classes
- Community events – such as street parties, festivals, markets, discos
- Low cost, free and engaging activities

Environmental suggestions: (7% (8/87) of suggestions), including:
- Protected green spaces
- Replacing wildlife areas and trees – tree planting schemes
- Info and advice on how to support the local wildlife with the destruction going on
- Outside wellbeing groups – group walks, cycles, dog walks, using the beach, forest bathing

Supporting younger people: (5% (6/87) of suggestions), including:
- Hub for young people
- Advice and career support
- Suicide prevention

Better wellness/exercise facilities in the local area: (7% (8/87) of suggestions), including:
- More local gyms
- Affordable exercise groups – such as for disabled people, yoga and mindfulness classes.
- Local people discounted rates at leisure centre
- Sauna and cold plunge releases

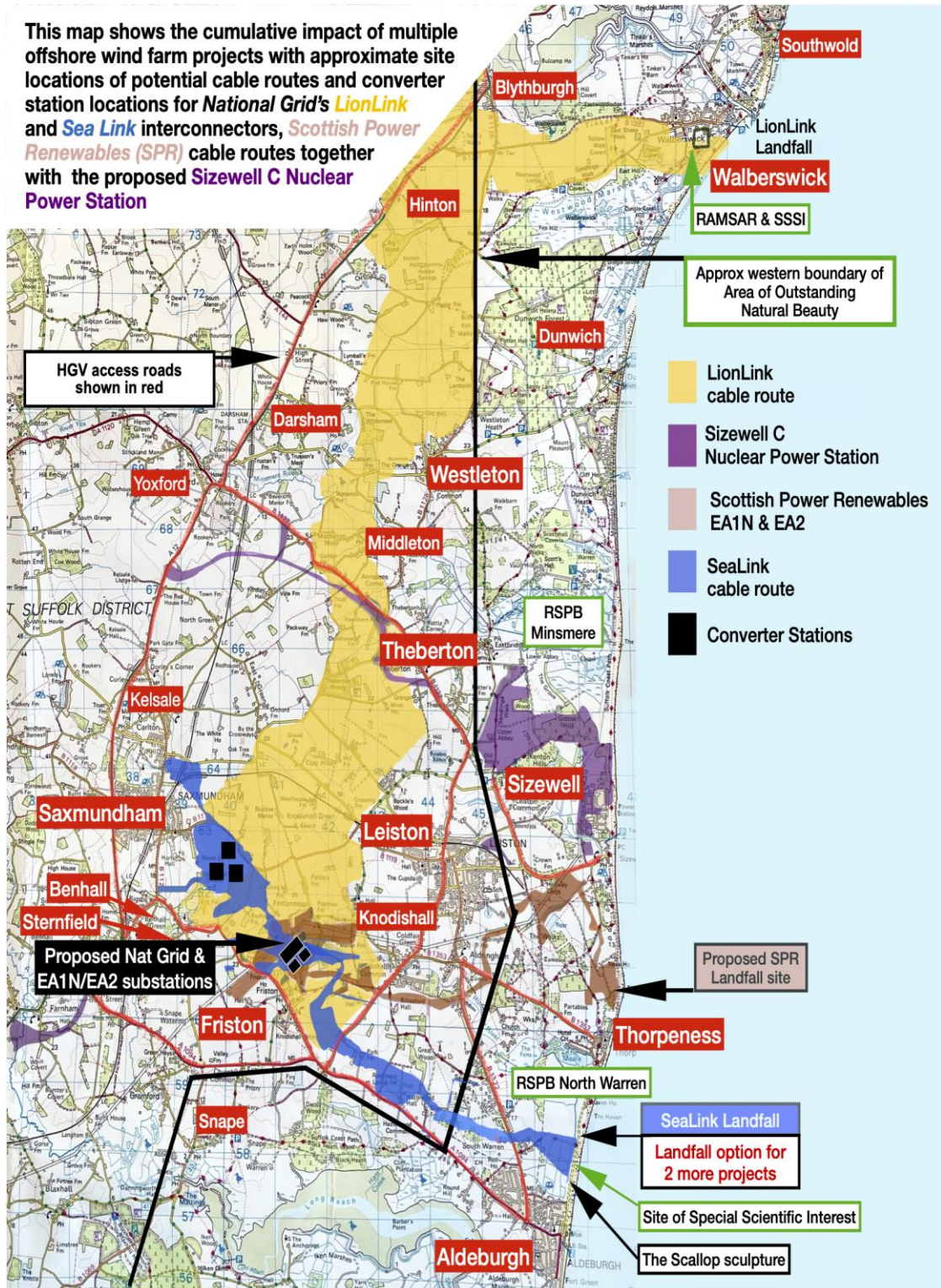**Infrastructural and financial changes:** (6% (7/87) of suggestions), including:
- Better public transport links
- Parking – free parking at Sizewell beach
- Social Hub in Saxmundham – improve the high street to encourage people to meet up
- Road improvements – quieter, traffic policing due to excessive roadkill
- Dog free zones on beach
- Financial – reduction in council tax

Awareness of community hubs and support: (6% (7/87) of suggestions), including:
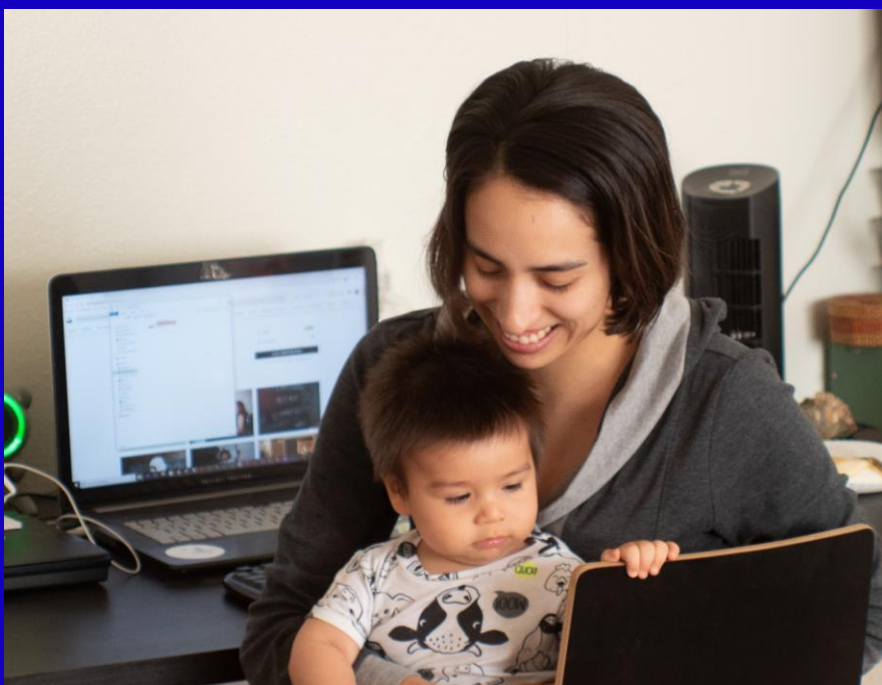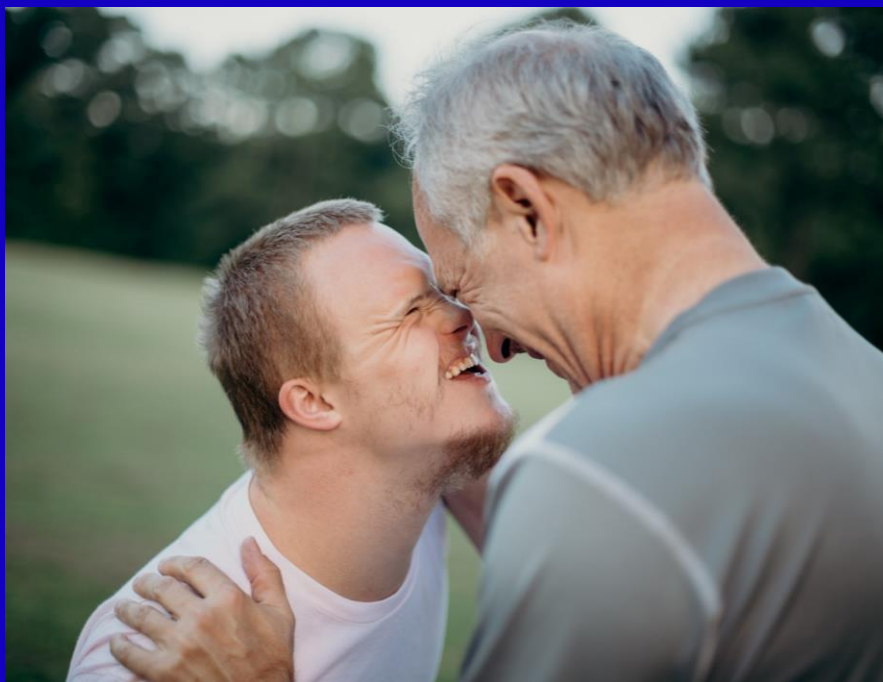- More awareness of mental health support and local community hubs
- Advertisements on support – e.g. in a local magazine

Appendix 6 – A map of where different energy projects are being built across East Suffolk

This map shows the cumulative impact of multiple offshore wind farm projects with approximate site locations of potential cable routes and converter station locations for *National Grid's LionLink* and *Sea Link* interconnectors, *Scottish Power Renewables (SPR)* cable routes together with the proposed Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station

HGV access roads shown in red

LionLink Landfall

RAMSAR & SSSI

Approx western boundary of Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Legend:
- LionLink cable route
- Sizewell C Nuclear Power Station
- Scottish Power Renewables EA1N & EA2
- SeaLink cable route
- Converter Stations

RSPB Minsmere

Proposed Nat Grid & EA1N/EA2 substations

Proposed SPR Landfall site

RSPB North Warren

SeaLink Landfall
Landfall option for 2 more projects
Site of Special Scientific Interest
The Scallop sculpture

Place names: Southwold, Blythburgh, Walberswick, Hinton, Dunwich, Darsham, Yoxford, Westleton, Middleton, Theberton, Kelsale, Sizewell, Saxmundham, Leiston, Benhall, Sternfield, Knodishall, Friston, Thorpeness, Snape, Aldeburgh

Ref – https://www.suffolkenergyactionsolutions.co.uk/cumulative-impact/

Research@suffolkmind.org.uk