

23th Nov 2018

Jo Churchill MP
10 Hatter Street,
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Suffolk IP33 1LZ

Mid Suffolk HOPS
office@midsuffolkhops.org.uk

Dear Ms Churchill

Potential closure of Mid Suffok HOPS 2019

It is with great concern that as Trustees of the above charity we are moved to contact you with respect to the possible closure of this vital service.

We are a small charity with a track record of 40 years providing a safe and stimulating play setting and holiday respite for children with special needs and their families and carers in Suffolk.

We are financially stable with diverse and robust funding streams but our future is jeopardized as a consequence of lease renewal refusal at our current setting and delays in decision making with respect to a potential alternative. We have pursued various options but have been thwarted and are now faced with the stark reality of closure next year.

Demand for our service far exceeds what we can provide and there is no equivalent or alternative specialised respite provision in the County. The scheme is a safety net for the most vulnerable children in the community and we provide a compassionate and obliging response to those desperate to obtain respite for their sanity and family cohesion. Closure of the scheme will have devastating effects -directly in the short term on:

- 59 children carers and families of those we support
- 11 senior and 26 junior staff we employ and have trained
- 70 young volunteers - enthusiastic supporters of our children and beneficiaries of training and personal development at the service
- Loss of 4465 hours per annum of quality respite care

In the medium term the loss of this respite provision will inevitably promulgate pressures on social care services and the already overloaded health service - a dreadful scenario we desperately wish to avoid.

Your recent expressed commitment in support of improved special needs education recognises the desperate situation that Suffolk is facing and our service is an essential adjunct to this. We are seeking a long term solution to our plight and we would be extremely grateful if you could support us in our search for a viable setting to sustain and grow what is an essential and respected community service.

Yours faithfully

Trustees Mid Suffolk HOPS		John Broad	(Chair)
		Michael Powley	(Vice chair)
	<i>Simon Linford-Wood</i>	Simon Linford-Wood	(Secretary)
		Jean Broad	(Treasurer)
	<i>K.M. Corcoran</i>	Kim Corcoran	

An overview of HOPS

(Mid Suffolk Holiday Opportunity PlayScheme)



Mid Suffolk HOPS provides holiday clubs and short break opportunities for disabled children and young people (aged 4-17 yrs) in Suffolk. Those supported often have the most complex/severe care needs: multiple disabilities, life-limiting conditions or severe behavioural and learning issues. We give the young people the opportunity to play and socialise with others, giving their parents/carers and siblings a well-earned break from their caring role. Founded in 1978, hundreds of vulnerable Suffolk families have been supported. Currently employing 10 Qualified Play Leaders and 26 young Saturday staff, 70 young volunteers and supporting 59 disabled children annually.

Our delivery model includes the innovative use of young volunteers (aged 14-18 yrs). Each year we train/mentor up to 80 young volunteers to underpin our service delivery. This approach allows our service to deliver the high-staffing ratios required and enables young volunteers to get their first real experience of the workplace. This methodology has an evidential impact upon their lives – in terms of growing and maturing as a person, but also in terms of vocational progression; many volunteers go on to work in the SEN health, care and education sectors

Despite our success and our standing in the local community, the HOPS service is currently under threat.

Since 1991, The Kerrison centre near Eye has been our setting, this site is earmarked for housing development and we have been given notice to vacate by September 2019.

Extensive research for an alternative affordable venue with adequate space inside and out has proved a challenge.

There are very limited services like HOPS Suffolk as a whole and nothing in the Mid Suffolk area. The closure of HOPS will see families struggling to cope with their children with additional needs, this will see more family breakdowns or children going into full-time care.

HOPS Service Delivery

HOPS provides the specialist daytime respite for children and young people with severe disabilities on Saturdays and school holidays throughout the year, all of the HOPS sessions are based around multi-sensory activities.

HOPS encourages children to be physically active through a range of activities such as running, jumping and climbing. Children are supported to improve their physical development and co-ordination skills through carefully planned activities.

All children are encouraged to communicate with adults and peers within the setting. HOPS staff are trained to use a variety of augmentative and alternative communication aids such as Makaton, Ipads, PECS and switches. This enables all children to make their own choices about play and involvement within sessions.

Children with sensory needs are supported by trained staff in activities such as TAC PAC, rebound therapy, sensory stories and massage. Some children within the setting benefit from targeted personal programmes including the use of Deep Pressure therapy and intensive interaction.

HOPS works closely with multiple agencies to ensure that child-centered planning is enabled. Staff work with schools, social workers, MASH and families to share ideas and develop individual programmes, risk assessments and behaviour support plans.

HOPS support hub

In addition, we would also like to reinstate much needed support to families. For example, behaviour support, communication workshops, and other support services that were previously provided by Learning Disability teams.

Professional staff could deliver specific training sessions to groups of parents at the same time. This would be more cost effective and would also benefit the health and wellbeing of families, providing mutual support and allowing them to appreciate that they are not alone when facing the challenges ahead.

We would continue to sign-post and provide networking services for families, volunteers and professionals, and propose enhancing our involvement in supporting our clients going forward in the process of transition from Child to Adult services.

Support services are much needed by families of children and young people with disabilities and also the teenage volunteers. We already do much in the way of sign-posting to other services, and provide emotional and motivational support for our current families.

We have worked in partnership with other organisations in the past - sharing facilities. We feel this move would be a good opportunity to diversify, develop partnerships and work with the local community and other specialist service groups.

Additional information

Provided below is some demographic information relating to the children and families we support. Our setting needs, the transportable assets we have and info relating to our OFSTED rating and approved service provider status.

Contact details for Midsuffolk HOPS

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[www.facebook.com/midsuffolk HOPS](https://www.facebook.com/midsuffolkHOPS)

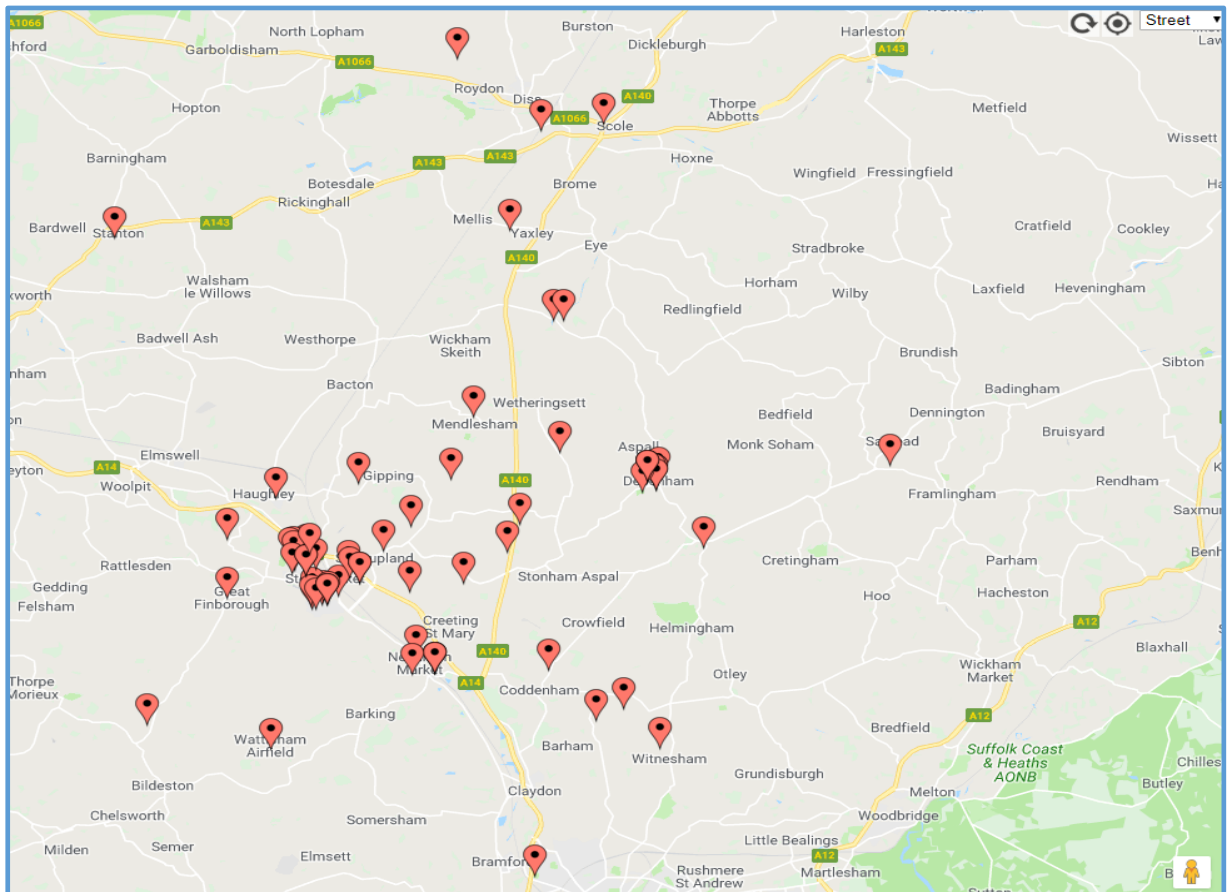
HOPS service users map (in 2018)

Pins will represent a number of children in the Bury St Eds and Stowmarket areas



Volunteers for HOPS in 2018

Teenage volunteers attended from the following areas. one map pin might cover more than one volunteer



These are our priorities with respect to a suitable facility

Inside Area	Priority
Soft Play	High
Ball pool	High
Art Room	Low - but need a cleaning area
Bathroom with enough room for wheelchair and changing bed with hoist	High
3 other children's toilets	High
Wet-room with enough room for wheelchair and changing bed with hoist	High
Toilets for adults and volunteers	High
Sensory Room	High
Time out/ Medical room	High
Office	High
Rest rooms for staff and volunteers	Mid to high
Kitchen	High
Multi-purpose room	High
Storage for equipment	High
Cleaning Storage	High
Outside Areas	
Needs to have school type fencing	High
Grass or safety floor area fenced (at least 450 m2)	High
Hard surface area fenced (170 m2)	High
Storage – Large shed	High

We have the following equipment and resources to relocate

Swing frames and disability attachments, slide, 14ft Trampoline, disability bikes and trike's. 2x 3Mx4M marquees.

Ball pool, soft play, sensory room, hoists, wall mounted change bed, medical room bed, medication cabinet, lockers.

Folding tables, stacking chairs, office furniture,

Plus toys and other play equipment

Outside and inside toys and play equipment,

HOPS is an approved Service Provider to

Suffolk County Council & Norfolk County Council

HOPS is regulated by Ofsted

URN 251526 Last inspection carried out in May 2018 - Rated Good with 2 of 3 areas Outstanding

HOPS is a registered charity Registration Number 282472

HOPS holds a Community Action Suffolk Quality Standards Accreditation

Please take a look at our **Introduction to Mid Suffolk HOPS** video.

This will give the insight from a parent, volunteer and staffs point of view

The link is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZIC33ir9Og>