



Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Awards 2026

Supporting Young People Award

Carolyn McAskill, Michaela Wood, Rachel Senior: Epilepsy Nurse Specialists

East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust

Carolyn and Michaela, specialist epilepsy nurses at Ipswich Hospital, recognised that traditional clinical appointments could not address the isolation experienced by young people living with epilepsy and their families. In response, they created the Epilepsy Social Club in February 2024, beginning with a small bowling event attended by 10 young people from 7 families. Since then, the initiative has grown significantly, with around 20 young people from 17 families attending recent events, alongside continued engagement from new participants. Activities now include bowling sessions, summer picnics, team games and seasonal gatherings, all designed to be inclusive and welcoming.

A key strength of the initiative is collaboration with Rachel, the paediatric youth worker, who plays a vital role in supporting young people. Using her knowledge of individual needs and personalities, Rachel thoughtfully connects participants who would benefit from each other's company, helping to foster meaningful friendships and peer support.

What makes this work exceptional is the team's dedication—events are organised entirely in Carolyn and Michaela's own time. Informal settings allow them to better understand family dynamics and identify wider needs such as emotional, social or practical challenges, enabling signposting to further support.

The impact has been profound. Families who once felt isolated are now building friendships and networks. Young people report increased confidence and reduced stigma, while parents benefit from shared understanding and reassurance. By creating a supportive community alongside clinical care, Carolyn, Michaela and Rachel have transformed the experience of living with epilepsy for many local families.