



Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Awards 2026

Partnership with People and Communities Award

East Suffolk Compassionate Communities Collaboration

St. Elizabeth Hospice and partners

The East Suffolk Compassionate Communities Collaboration, led by St Elizabeth Hospice, is recognised for its exceptional partnership approach to improving how communities understand and respond to death, dying and grief. Over 18 months, the initiative brought together more than 20 organisations—including health services, local authorities, libraries, faith groups, arts organisations and the prison service—to build a shared vision of compassionate support. This collective effort led to East Suffolk achieving official Compassionate Communities UK accreditation, marking a significant cultural shift in how end-of-life experiences are approached.

Central to the programme was a five-week training course delivered with Compassionate Communities UK, equipping partners with the skills and confidence to normalise conversations about death and grief across diverse settings. Rather than relying solely on healthcare services, the collaboration empowered communities to support one another, embedding compassionate practices into everyday environments such as workplaces, schools and community groups.

The partnership went beyond traditional boundaries, fostering new relationships and sustaining engagement despite system pressures. Initiatives included Compassionate Cafés, Dying Matters Awareness Week events, workplace training, and projects like The Larch Project and “Dying to Talk,” which reached 80 schools with age-appropriate education on grief.

The impact has been wide-reaching, increasing confidence in discussing sensitive topics and strengthening connections between organisations and communities. Feedback highlights how creative approaches, such as arts-based engagement, have supported expression and understanding. Importantly, this is an ongoing programme, with a steering group driving continued activity and embedding compassionate approaches into local culture, ensuring lasting and sustainable change across East Suffolk.