



Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Awards 2026

Supporting Young People Award

Health Inequalities at ESNEFT – The Bea Healthy Play project

East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust

The Bea Healthy Play should be recognised for its innovative and impactful approach to improving health education among children, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Developed through a partnership between ESNEFT clinical professionals, local schools and a theatre company, the project transformed key public health messages into an engaging, creative experience. Using storytelling, music and interactive performance, the play addressed important topics such as asthma, healthy eating, oral health and mental wellbeing in a way that was accessible and memorable for young audiences.

Aligned with the Core20PLUS5 programme, the initiative specifically targeted schools in areas of deprivation, including those within CO15 and IP1/2 postcodes, and ensured inclusivity by working with a SEN school. Clinical expertise ensured all content was accurate, while accompanying educational packs, toothbrushes and seed kits extended learning beyond the performance and supported sustained behaviour change.

Evaluation data demonstrated significant improvements in children's knowledge and understanding across all health topics, with teachers reporting that the theatrical approach was more effective than traditional classroom methods. The project successfully reduced barriers to engagement, built confidence and empowered children to make healthier choices.

Beyond immediate outcomes, the initiative strengthened collaboration between healthcare, education and the arts, creating a scalable model for prevention-focused care. Positive feedback and requests for future sessions highlight its lasting impact. Through creativity, inclusivity and strong partnership working, the Bea Healthy Play demonstrates a powerful, replicable approach to embedding health education within communities.