Developing the Aspirations of Young People in Rural Areas

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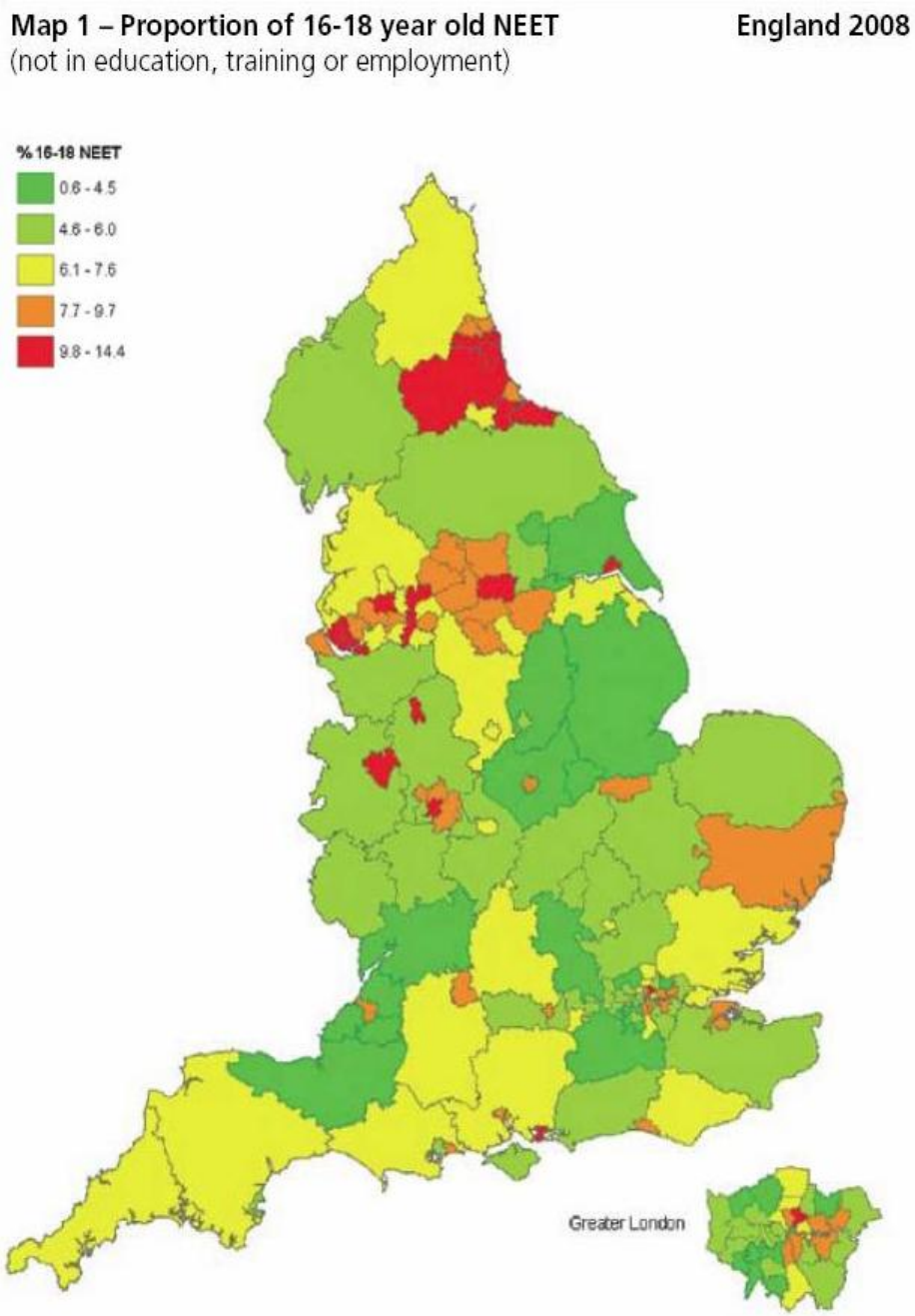
- The Suffolk context
- What we found
- What we are doing about it

Suffolk…

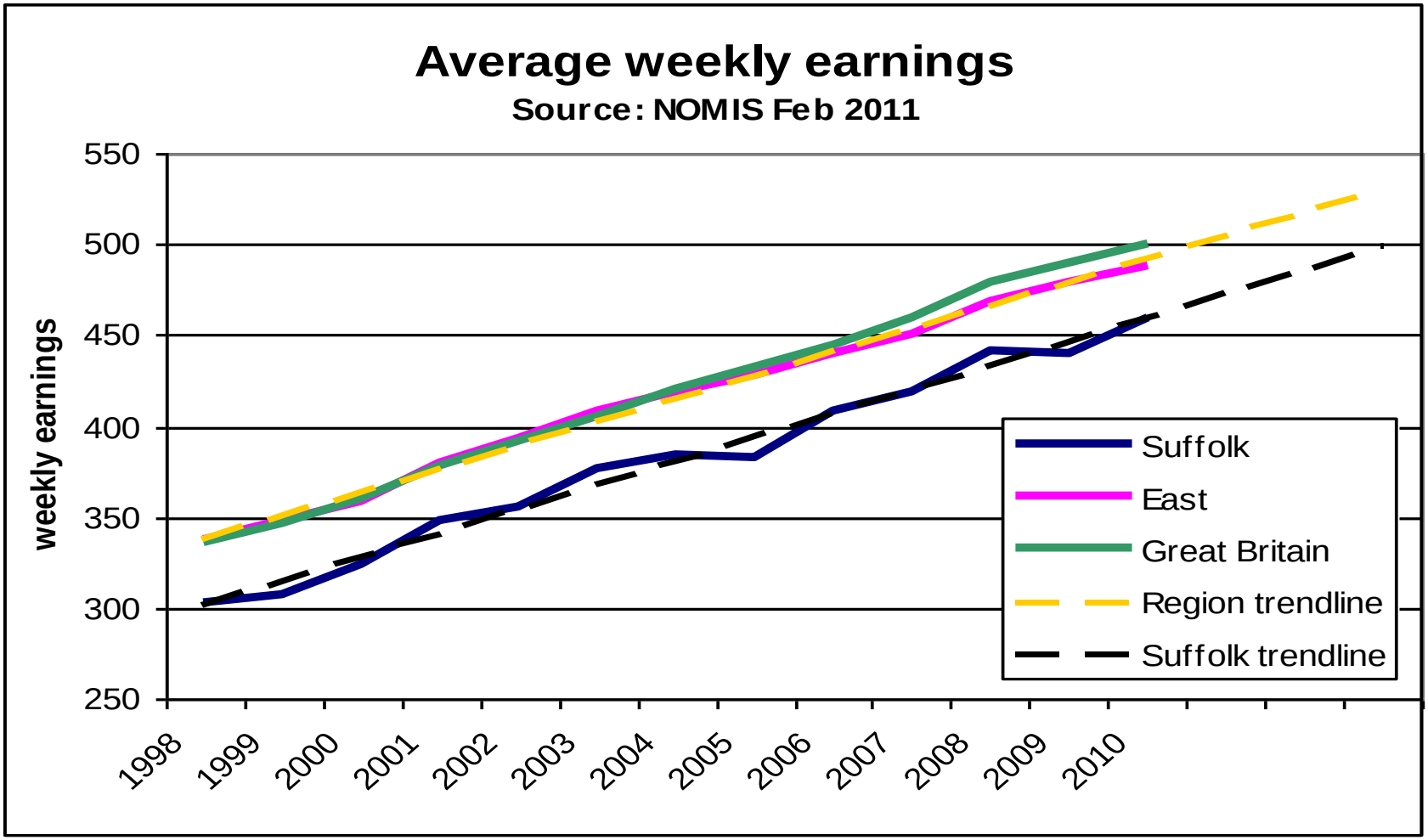
…famous for beautiful countryside, quality of life, community cohesion

Suffolk…



…infamous for a NEET rate similar to Hackney & Hartlepool

Suffolk…



…a low wage, low skill economy

In summary we were faced with:-

- Disappointing educational attainment
- High levels of young people either unemployed or in work without training
- Employers who cannot find the right calibre of staff
- “Suffolk has low aspirations” self fulfilling prophecy
- Lots of initiatives but few solutions with lasting impact

Questions we wanted answers to…

- Do young people in Suffolk have low aspirations?
- Does this result in lower attainment, higher youth unemployment and NEET levels?
- Is there a rural factor?

National & Bespoke
Local studies 2009 & 2010

- **Aspiration and attainment amongst young people in deprived communities** (Dec 2008-Cabinet Office)
- **Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training** (July 2010-University of York)
- **NEET Deep Dive** (Sept 2010-Suffolk Leadership Collaborative)
- **Understanding Educational Choices-Research with 16-22 year olds** (Oct 2010-Suffolk County Council/Aimhigher Suffolk)
- **Future Choices: Raising aspiration and attainment in years 5-8** (Dec 2010-Simon Bysshe & Associates)
- **Young people's aspirations in rural areas** (May 2011-National Foundation for Educational Research)
- **Inspiring Communities, Changing Behaviour** (June 2011-Communities & Local Government)

Aspirations…

- Having goals for the future to inspire progress
- Aspirations have to be supported by expectations to achieve success

Young people…

0-11

- Forming aspirations & evolving
- Future education plans fixed by 11 & highly predictive of actual at 16yrs

11-14

- Progressive elimination of options
- 9 out of 10 know what they want to do

14-16

- Very few seek or trust professional help unless long term relationship
- Decisions made about higher education by 16
- Confidence wanes about career goals previously held

Parents…

- The most important influence on aspiration & future career goals
- Young people whose parents aspire for them to stay in learning post-16 perform better in secondary school
- Parents often lack knowledge of potential opportunities & how to get there
- 95% of parents of 9-13 year olds surveyed felt important to set goals for future

Communities

- People & places influence aspirations
- Close knit communities with low population & mobility & strong social bonds often linked with low aspiration
- Access to limited networks beyond immediate community narrows horizons & access to opportunities
- Potential to mobilise community around goal of “doing best for its young people”

Rurality

- Young people in rural areas had aspirations for future
- Less important than socio-economic background
- Potential dampers on aspiration – transport, lack of choice
- Perception of limited employment options, industry decline
- More limited role models

But

- No real difference in aspiration could be established due to rurality

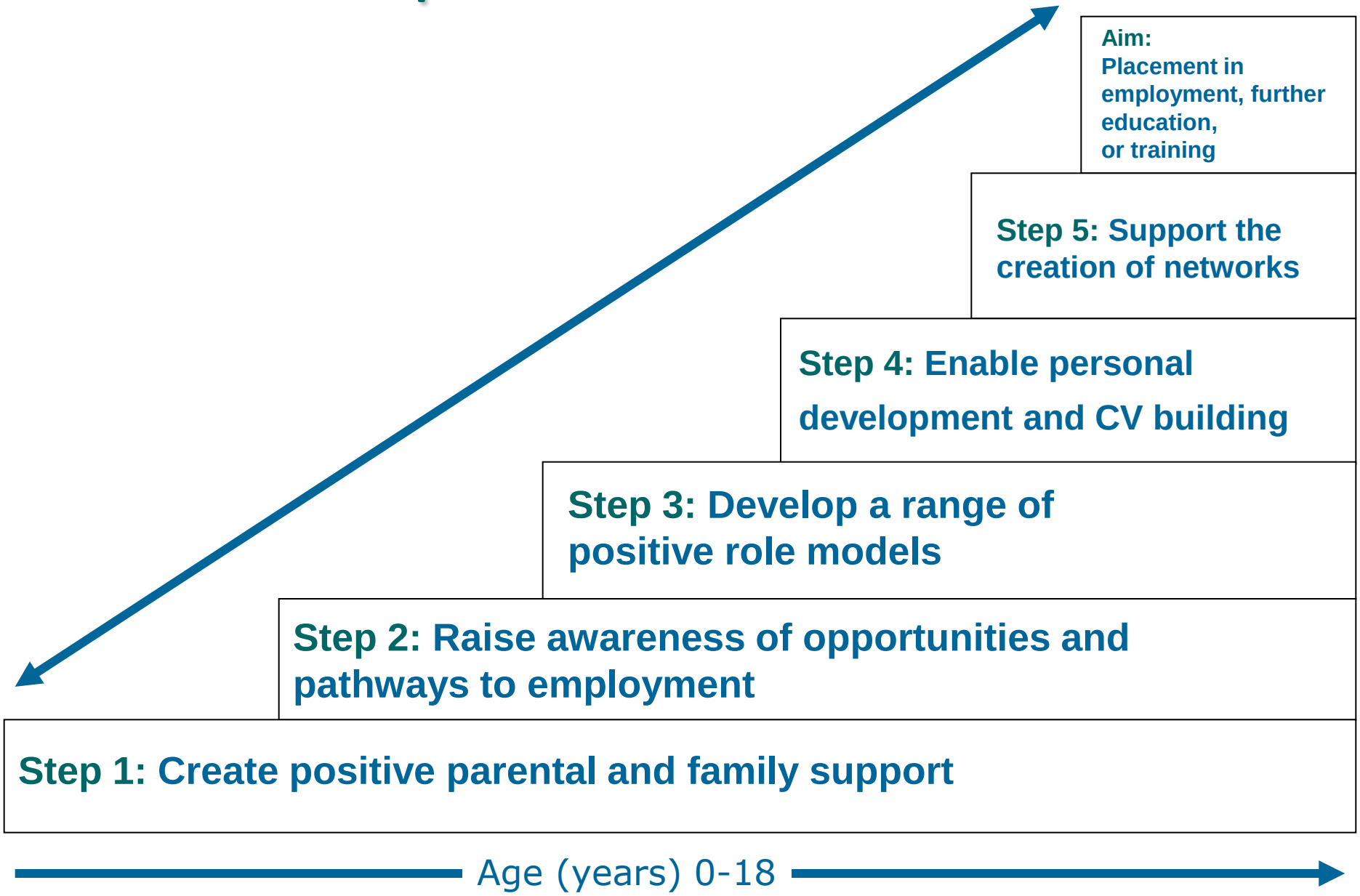
What conclusions did we reach for Suffolk?

- Our young people have aspirations but these appear to be narrowed by community situation
- Parents are most important advisers but get no real support in this role
- Young people are most open to suggestion about future goals up to age of 14 – before most current IAG starts
- Success is a lottery & the current arrangements do not systematically support each young person

Top 10 barriers to realising ambitions

- Lack of roadmap & destination
- Lack of self-confidence – fear of failure
- Geography – actual & perceived
- Lack of money
- Lack of people precedent
- Perceived risks
- Parental passivity
- Disconnect with academic education-relevance
- Ethnicity & cultural/family duties

Aspiration Escalator



The Escalator

- Locally based approach
- Community mobilisation
- Gap analysis to build on what is in place already
- Systematic interventions to ensure each step of the model is in place
- Very long term project