

Information from the Suffolk Voluntary and Statutory Partnership:

A co-produced **Happy to Chat** sign is for securing to a bench in a community space, such as in a park, a playground or by a pathway. The idea of friendly benches and talking benches is not a new one, they occur both in this country and abroad. This design for Suffolk is by local people, choosing what they felt would work for them and aims to share a friendly message, and to feel inclusive.

These signs have been printed by Leiston Press to be weatherproof and robust, they are aluminium di bond, have an aluminium backing plate, and the corners have been curved to be safe. The signs are pre-prepared for securing, they have a 0.6mm dia. hole in each corner ready take plastic zip ties or screws. Attaching a photograph of the **Happy to Chat** sign and of one of the signs attached to a bench in Elmhurst Park, in Woodbridge.

Anyone who is feeling isolated, by sitting on a bench with a **Happy to Chat** sign may let people know they would like others to pause and say hello.

Local people who are regularly passing a bench, having already seen that it has a **Happy to Chat** sign, may well kindly pause to say hello if they see someone sitting there.

If someone wishes to use the bench and not show the **Happy to Chat** sign, that's of course fine too, by sitting in front of the sign it's no longer in view. The sign doesn't make much, if any, difference to how comfortable a bench is to sit on.

Healthwatch Suffolk has a small stock of the signs available and ready to provide at no cost, which can be provided with plastic zip ties too, if useful.

Woodbridge Town Council approved having **Happy to Chat** signs secured to benches in three community areas in Woodbridge, within; Fen Meadow, Elmhurst Park and Kingston Field, news item: <https://healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk/news/happytochatbenches/>

The Kirkley People's Forum has been given nine free aluminium signs for Kirkley. The forum have offered to help fix the signs to some benches in London Road South using any vandal screws and are currently waiting for permission from Suffolk CC. The forum would like the Town Council's permission to fit some in Kensington Gardens and Fen Park, and, if agreed, will also seek the advice of the relevant Friends Groups.

The project will not be delivered until restrictions are eased, but the forum would like permissions in place ready.