

# Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY  
SINCE 1870

## Whatever happens, the children must be the first priority

The performance of Norfolk County Council children's services has been a tale of serious difficulty with no apparent end.

An October inspection found, yet again, that the most vulnerable children in Norfolk were still being let down by the state services in place to protect them.

Improvements were highlighted, but they have not been deemed to be fast enough.

Meanwhile, those often without a voice, continue to suffer.

This week shockwaves will reverberate through County Hall as the government takes drastic action with its plans to send in a commissioner with a view to taking over the service. The department is a vast one, with many big problems to tackle.

Running parallel to failures in keeping children safe and adoption, is the under-performance of our schools.

Time will tell if the potential splitting off of children's services to be overseen elsewhere raises standards in both.

Today marks a crossroads at County Hall.

Within 12 months it could have responsibility for one of its key services taken away. Downing Street is set to intervene. The language from Number 10 suggests that it is sending in a commissioner with a view to a takeover.

While County Hall is adamant that a firm decision has not been made but whatever happens next, what must be at the heart of any decision over the next few months are the children, who are currently being let down by this department's failure.

## Mistakes are still rare

Thankfully the vast majority of NHS operations go to plan and the miracles that are performed in theatres change people's lives every day.

But very occasionally mistakes are made that can have profound implications for patients.

Our story about N&N doctors misplacing a tube on an unconscious patient is a reminder of the challenges surgeons face, and the huge importance of getting it right.

These incidents are named 'never events' for a reason.

But while what happened in this particular case is alarming, it is important to remember that they happen extremely rarely.

The chances of a never event happening to you in hospital is remote at best.

However when these incidents take place it is vital that the hospital learns and puts in place safeguards.

## Bright idea for town

Once again East Anglian youngsters are proving to be great ambassadors for their home area.

Children in Brandon have been putting coloured pencils to paper to express why they love where they live.

And their messages about the country park, the river, the playing fields and the shops will be emblazoned on lamp-posts around the town to tell everyone of their pride in the place.

It is a scheme which will raise awareness and improve community spirit, and a bright idea from which other towns could benefit.

The Lord makes firm the steps  
of the one who delights in him;  
though he may stumble, he will  
not fall.

Psalms 37:23-24

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## READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

# iwitness24



■ What are you looking at? This very watchful stoat was captured on camera by Nick Appleton at Hardley. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

## Our schools should reflect our local historical legacies

Peter  
Trudgill



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Names of institutions are important. They can be symbolic, and they can tell us much. I'm old enough to remember wondering, when the University of East Anglia was first founded, why the authorities who chose that name couldn't bring themselves to use the name of the city or the county where the university was situated. At around that time we saw the foundation of the Universities of Essex, Sussex, York, Lancaster, Kent, Warwick, Bath, Surrey. So why not the University of Norwich, or the University of Norfolk? Did they think these didn't sound intellectual enough?

The titles of other educational institutions are also very telling. Norwich schools used to have names reflecting local pride, local citizens, and local history. The Hewett School was named after the philanthropist Mordecai Hewett, a churchwarden at St Peter Hungate who, when he died in 1708, left his fortune to an educational charity.

The Blyth Jex School was called after the Norwich citizen E E Blyth who, before he died in 1934, held the distinction of being the last Mayor of Norwich and then its first Lord Mayor. The Alderman Jex was named after Fred Jex, a Norwich boy



■ Amelia Opie. Why aren't we celebrating her in a school name, asks Peter Trudgill.

Picture: SUBMITTED

who grew up in poverty and became Lord Mayor. Fred Henderson, who gave his name to the Henderson School, was a Norwich-born socialist activist and journalist, who was imprisoned for his political activism, and later became Lord Mayor.

The Gurney School preserved the name of the legendary Norwich Quaker family who produced the prison reformer Elizabeth Fry, and founded the trusted financial institution which became Barclays Bank.

But today we are beginning to see school names in the city which seem to tell a different story. Not only do educational institutions inflate their own significance by designating themselves 'academies' and

'colleges' instead of schools – and by referring to their pupils as 'students'; they also choose names which show insensitivity to the fact they are actually in our city. Had the founders of the new Sir Isaac Newton Sixth Form never heard of our famous Norwich polymath Sir Thomas Browne?

Outrageously, a new school standing on Colegate in Norwich, on the same site as the house where our own famous novelist Amelia Opie was born and grew up, is named after some Hampshire novelist called Jane Austen! Opie was a contemporary of Jane Austen. Would the Amelia Opie School have been such a terrible name for a Norwich educational institution?