

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Our work to improve mental health issues has only just begun

It won't be surprising, or new, to read that people living with mental health problems often go without the support and treatment they need.

The vital work of awareness drives and our ever-progressing society have not yet conquered the stigma attached, or the tendency of our healthcare system to treat physical ailments with much greater urgency.

A year ago, we decided to launch a campaign to improve the poor services here in our region. We couldn't promise answers – but the growing call for change from our readers was both distressing and inspiring.

Today, we reflect on the past 12 months.

There are glimmers of hope – our Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is out of special measures and is determined to tackle its weaknesses.

Fewer patients are being sent far away from home for care, and the number waiting to get treatment is dropping.

But a multi-million pound funding gap still has to be plugged, threatening already stretched support services, more staff are needed and, overall, waiting times remain too high.

There is much more to be done.

Mental health problems are overwhelming – they are unseen, isolating, dark and, at times, they feel insurmountable.

As a voice for those who go unheard, we will continue to champion the vital support services which are so heavily relied upon – and hold our health providers to account.

And we call on you to do the same. Only by working together can we see change become a reality.

Duke's candid admission

The Duke of Cambridge will strike a chord with many when he describes the life-changing experiences of settling down with a partner, having children and the “wonderful highs and lows” that can bring.

His candid admission that he has struggled to cope at times is hardly surprising in light of the fact he is juggling a family with a demanding job, where people's lives are at stake, and with his Royal duties.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge chose to make a secluded corner of north Norfolk their home in order to try to give their children as normal an upbringing as possible.

Prince George attends a nearby village school, while for his little sister Charlotte's christening, the couple chose the nearby village church at Sandringham.

After speaking out for the conservation of some of the world's most endangered wildlife, on his first official visit to Vietnam, William spoke of his hopes that his children might grow up with simple aspirations and outlook.

As he increasingly enters the world stage, undertaking more high-profile engagements, we fear he may well find leading the simple life even more of a struggle.

Best wishes to newlyweds

When someone decides that the time is right to pop the question, pressure is heaped on that all-important proposal. The perfect ring. The romantic location. To kneel or not to kneel?

So Daniel Nicholson took a risk when he decided to propose to fiancée Katrena Hayes at the Tesco store in Sheringham where they met and both work.

He popped the question over the Tannoy, before getting down on one knee to reveal the engagement ring – which was nestled in a Pokémon, reflecting the pair's love of Pokémon. Thoughtful, personal and romantic – Daniel's proposal will certainly be memorable for the pair and we wish them a very happy marriage.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iWitness24



■ Pretty beach huts at Wells by Lesley Buckley. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iWitness24.co.uk

Intelligence shows in what you say, not your accent

Peter
Trudgill



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The accent bigots are at it again. This time it's Angela Rayner who is their target. Rayner is MP for Ashton-under-Lyne, and shadow secretary of state for education. She comes from Stockport, Greater Manchester; and when she speaks she sounds like she comes from Stockport, Greater Manchester. This is normal and right and good.

The vast majority of people in the world speak with the accent and dialect of the village, town or area they come from. It's part of being human to signal your regional origins when you speak. People from Gothenburg speak a different Swedish from Stockholmers. Berliners don't sound like Bavarians. New Yorkers have a different kind of English from Californians. And people from Stockport don't speak the same as people from Surbiton.

This is a fact of linguistic life in every part of the globe, and one which is noted, accepted, and appreciated everywhere – except that in this country there are still those who attack people who have accents which, for reasons best known to themselves, they don't like. The further away your accent is from the south-east of England, and from the upper middle



■ Angela Rayner, shadow education secretary, is the latest target of the 'accent bigots'.
Picture: GARETH FULLER/PA

classes, the more vulnerable it is to such attacks.

Reports in the national press tell us that Angela Rayner has been the recipient of comments to the effect that her accent makes her sound “thick”. What can one say? One can, for a start, say “No it doesn't”!

The particular sounds of the vowels and consonants that form our speech have nothing to do with our intelligence. Anyone who thinks otherwise is being foolish and, well, thick. The trolls who are attacking Angela should realise that a person's intelligence is revealed by what they say, not by how they pronounce it.

In this country, accent bigotry is the last

major prejudice which is still expressed openly, without shame. We do still have racists, misogynists, and homophobes, but at least they mostly know they're not supposed to reveal these nasty little prejudices in public. But it's still felt to be OK to ridicule, criticise and show disdain for others because of their accents, even though our accents are as much a part of the essence of who we are as our ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, so the expression of these irrational prejudices is potentially demoralising and hurtful.

We will know that our society has truly matured when the overt expression of accent prejudice disappears from public discourse.