

## News

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## Solicitor training

**Aspiring solicitors in Norfolk will no longer have to travel out of county to get qualified after the University of East Anglia (UEA) announced it will start offering training.**

The university has teamed up with the University of Law (ULaw) to offer the legal practice course (LPC), the main qualifying course required to practise law in England and Wales, from September 2019.

Previously students would have to travel to Cambridge to study the LPC.

Teaching will be classroom based for one year and students will have access to all UEA facilities including the law library.

Polly Morgan, UEA's deputy head of law, said: "We know that Norwich is somewhere that our students just don't want to leave. We're therefore very pleased to be linking up with the University of Law to enable current and prospective students, as well as those who have studied their undergraduate degree at another university, to undertake the LPC."

## Charity

**Young people being supported by a Norfolk charity will be able to learn a new skill thanks to a £28,942 grant from BBC Children in Need.**

Society Alive, which provides services to young people in and around Norwich, was awarded the three-year grant through Children in Need's small grants programme.

The funding will be used to provide 12-week photography courses for children and young people living in Bowthorpe, where Society Alive is based, and other parts of the city.

Godwin Unazi, secretary at Society Alive, said: "This grant will enable us to equip children and young people with a new skill which will not only enhance their creativity but also build their communicative, social and practical skills for the future."

Melinda Connelly, BBC Children in Need central region head, added: "This project really demonstrate how relatively small sums of money can have a huge impact on young lives."

## IN DEPTH: FIGHTING ANOREXIA

# Fed boiling water, missing family visits and restrained - teenager's anorexia nightmare

**Boiling water mistakenly pumped into her stomach, missing out on visits with family and being restrained by six people - that is how a Norfolk teenager has described the care she received while being treated for anorexia.**

Mellie Plummer, 18, always had disordered thinking around food. But it was in 2012 when she began to act on the thoughts in her head.

She said: "At the time I didn't realise I was doing it, nor did I realise it was creating a problem. I began to cut out lunches at school, make sure that I walked the long way home and slip my dinner to the dog when no one was watching. I thought that my actions were helping me stay in control."

After that, she deteriorated quickly and soon she was referred to the child and adolescent eating disorder team, where she was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa.

Miss Plummer, who lives in Brundall with her mother Catherine, father John and sister Esther, tried to take her own life and was admitted to a psychiatric unit in Lowestoft.

But over the next four months she got worse, and was taken to A&E - not for the first time - for self-harming.

She said: "When I arrived at A&E it was apparent that the eating disorder was damaging me more than self-harm ever could. I stayed for several weeks bed bound and tube fed until my physical health was stable enough to again be transferred to a psychiatric hospital."

Miss Plummer was transferred to Rhodes Farm, in North London, in July 2015. At the time this was

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run by Partnerships in Care, but in March 2016 the facility changed hands, and location, and was renamed Rhodes Wood. Miss Plummer moved with them.

She was discharged in July 2016 but it was in these hospitals Miss Plummer said she was subject to treatment that "wouldn't be wished upon your worst enemy". The facilities involved were approached for comment but despite Miss Plummer giving permission to discuss her care, both said they could not comment.

A spokesman for Elysium Healthcare, which runs Rhodes Wood in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, said: "At Elysium Healthcare the safety and wellbeing of our patients is our priority. For reasons of patient confidentiality, we are not able to comment on individuals in our care, nor those who have received care and treatment with us in the past."

Miss Plummer did complain to the Care Quality Commission (CQC), who confirmed she had been in touch. Her complaint is ongoing.

Miss Plummer said: "I know that I was very unwell during my admission to Rhodes, but that doesn't make me incapable of understanding what is wrong, what is right."

She said for much of her stay she was fed via a tube, but staff often forgot. She claimed: "During these feeds I was restrained by up to six staff members. While I am aware that many of these times I did need safe holding, I don't believe I needed it when proving that I would comply."

On one occasion during a feed, Miss Plummer said boiling water was mistakenly pumped into her stomach. She said: "I remember crying in pain."

She also said understaffing was regular, which meant shifts were filled using agency staff, or there were not enough staff to keep Miss Plummer on one-to-one supervision, so she was kept in her room. She said: "On a few occasions staff members had fallen asleep, leaving their keys out in my room and desperate to escape I took advantage of this. Despite being on one-to-one I had also stashed medication, drank dangerous liquids, self-harmed and tied ligatures while having been able to lock myself in the bathroom."

She said: "I felt horrendous during this admission. I was shouted at, spoken unkindly about by workers, zombified on medication and, most upsetting, I often had to cope without support from my family."

Miss Plummer said at Rhodes Wood, each patient had a 10-minute phone call with their family every weekday, but as hers was at 6.30pm she was often having feeds so could not attend. Visits were also allowed at the weekend, but Miss Plummer said: "If I had not finished a meal quick enough on the day of a visit my parents - who had travelled three hours - would have to go home without seeing me."

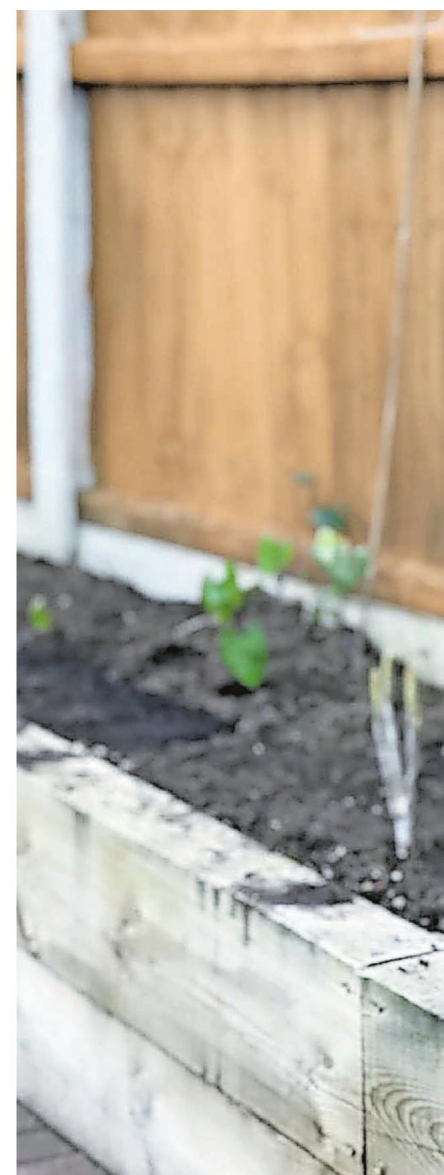
Miss Plummer said her parents fought for a year to have her transferred closer to home, and eventually she was able to move back to a unit in Lowestoft, while she submitted complaints to the Care Quality Commission. But she said: "Undoubtedly my recovery was hindered."

## What is anorexia?

**Anorexia is a serious mental illness, where people have a low weight due to limiting their intake of food. Some people will experience rounds of bingeing and purging, while others over exercise - some do both. Sufferers often do not see themselves how others see them and have a distorted view**

**of their weight, with a deep fear of gaining any. As well as causing damage mentally, anorexia also has physical effects due to the impact of starvation. It can lead to the loss of muscle strength and reduced bone strength, and periods can also stop. Around 1.25m people in the UK**

**have an eating disorder, and around 75pc of those are female. If you need help with an eating disorder, call charity Beat on 0808 801 0677. The charity also offers web support groups and one-to-one online chats. Visit [www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/) support-services to find out more.**







18-year-old Mellie Plummer from Brundall, who was admitted to an eating disorder unit in 2015  
Pictures: VICTORIA PERTUSA

What happened after Rhodes?

After Miss Plummer returned to East Anglia she relapsed for a third time, and she was in and out of the NNUH. "I had four admissions onto a ward in an attempt to stabilise my health," she said. "By the time the last admission came around I was severely and critically ill. My body was under so much strain to stay alive that I began to lose sight and hearing. The hospital couldn't provide the high level of support I needed and so a bed at a specialist eating disorder unit was located." This time she was admitted to the Phoenix Centre in Cambridge, where she stayed for 10 months, and flourished. She said: "It wasn't easy, it was far from that, but the staff were amazing. My care here was individualised, staffing levels were appropriate and I was allowed as much contact with my family as I wanted." Miss Plummer was discharged from the unit at the end of 2017, and her recovery has continued with nearly two years of maintaining her health.



Left, Mellie Plummer and her dog Wally. Opposite page, Mellie Plummer pictured with her mother Caroline while in hospital.

Pictures: VICTORIA PERTUSA/ MELLIE PLUMMER

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Car crash

A man sustained a "life-changing" injury in a car crash on the A11.

Norfolk Police were called at 5.15am on Thursday to reports that a vehicle was on its side in a field off the southbound carriageway near Wymondham, about two miles from the Mulbarton junction. Officers attended along with an ambulance and rapid response vehicle from the East of England Ambulance Service and the East Anglian Air Ambulance. Fire crews from Hethersett, Wymondham and Earlham also attended and helped to release a man from the vehicle. An ambulance service spokesman said the man had sustained multiple serious injuries and was taken by road ambulance to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital for treatment. The nearside lane of the southbound carriageway was closed while police dealt with the incident and reopened shortly after 10.30am.

Bicycle theft



Picture: NORFOLK POLICE

Police are appealing for help to identify a man following a theft in Norwich.

It comes after a bicycle was stolen from outside Namco Bowl in Barnard Road, Bowthorpe between 3pm and 7pm on Friday, April 12. Officers have released a CCTV image of a man they would like to speak to following the incident.

Anyone who may recognise the man, or anyone with information, should contact PC Aaron Parker at Earlham Police Station on 101. Alternatively people can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.