

# Health and Wellbeing

## Where we are now

People in some parts of the county are in very good health, but others suffer significant ill health. Health problems and health inequalities exist in every District and Borough in the county, although some are more extreme than others. For example, life expectancy in Gensing ward, Hastings is 72.3 years compared to 85.6 years in Mayfield, Wealden.

Poor health and health inequalities are related to poverty and deprivation. Whilst overall poverty in the county is below the national average, more than 52,000 people depend on means-tested benefits and more than 16,000 children live in low income families. The prevalence of mental health conditions is strongly related to deprivation. Residents in some areas of Hastings are three times as likely to have reported mental health problems as rural areas of Lewes. GCSE attainment is lower than the England average and the level of people classed as homeless is above average. These factors also impact on people's health and wellbeing. Early death rates from heart disease, stroke and cancer are falling. The death rate from smoking is also decreasing but still accounts for 1,000 deaths in the county each year, but much more should be done to improve people's life chances and to help them to avoid serious illnesses. Alcohol consumption is a problem in the county, with more people admitted to hospital for specific alcohol related conditions than the national average. Around 350 people die or are seriously injured on the roads in East Sussex every year, which is high and is partly a reflection of our predominantly rural and single-lane road network.

The number of older people over 65 who suffer from hip fractures is above the national average. The number of older people supported by Adult Social Care to live independently is low compared to similar areas in the region. However other innovative ways of helping older people to remain independent in their own homes continue to develop, including more flexible ways to provide care and to support people and their carers – however young or old they are. Permanent admissions to residential care and nursing homes supported by Adult Social Care remain low. 42% of adults are estimated to eat healthily, which is higher than the England average, and 17.3% are estimated to be obese, which is lower than the England average. Children have lower levels of tooth decay than England and the South East. The number of teenagers who become pregnant is highest in the most deprived

areas: Hastings has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy at 61.2 (per 1,000 population) which contrasts with Wealden which has the lowest rate at 26.6.

## The Challenges Ahead

A lot of work has been taking place to tackle the main health problems across the county, including support for carers of all ages and smoking cessation and healthy eating programmes. But maintaining and improving people's health is not just about good and accessible healthcare services. We also need to tackle deprivation and low employment and improve access to education, transport, healthy environments, open and green spaces, good quality housing and services that promote healthy living, self-esteem, positive aspirations and independence. One of our biggest challenges will be meeting the changing health, social care and wellbeing needs of a growing aging population.

**Our strategic priority for 2026** is to reduce health and care inequalities within and between communities and improve overall health and wellbeing

## Our key tasks will be to:

- Improve physical health, mental wellbeing and life expectancy, especially amongst those who are least healthy
- Reduce the number of people getting long term and serious illnesses
- Provide easy and appropriate access to information and services to help people of all ages to make healthy lifestyle choices
- Enable people to live healthy and active lives, and encourage use of open spaces including the countryside, beach, parks and gardens
- Reduce teenage pregnancy and reduce self-harming lifestyles, obesity, smoking, alcohol and substance misuse
- Support people to have access to, choice and control over services provided to help them remain independent as they grow older, or if they have physical disabilities, learning disabilities or mental health problems or live with long-term health conditions
- Improve the user, patient and carer experience and support for carers of all ages
- Improve support to children and young people on the edge of care, especially vulnerable teenagers.