



Health and Wellbeing

Where we are now

As a nation and a county, we are living longer. Over the last 30 years, life expectancy has risen significantly and deaths from major illnesses have fallen. However, compared with other parts of England we continue to perform poorly in some key areas and there are persistent inequalities in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy within the county.

Our ageing population and longer life expectancy means rising numbers of frail older people and people living with one or more long term conditions. Several major diseases are more common in part reflecting lifestyle changes for example, obesity and excessive alcohol consumption. The prevalence of mental health concerns has also continued to rise. At the same time we have had rising numbers of children requiring statutory social care support and there is widespread recognition of the long term impact on children when parents and carers cannot provide a good standard of care, pointing to the importance of effective early intervention to support vulnerable families and young people. Parts of East Sussex experience higher than average rates of hospital admissions for a range of different injuries amongst children and young people and for falls amongst older people. We also know that most people approaching the end of life prefer to be cared for and die at home.

The wider determinants of health and wellbeing are well evidenced. Poverty, worklessness, crime and poor housing are all associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes. Acquiring skills and educational achievement enables children to realise their full potential and can impact on a range of outcomes including their employment prospects, income and physical and mental health in later life. However, compared to England averages, some parts of East Sussex experience higher rates of poverty and long term unemployment; higher levels of over-crowding; higher rates of violent crime, alcohol related crime, sexual offences and numbers of first time entrants into the youth justice system; and lower GCSE achievement rates.

National research shows that some groups of people experience worse health and wellbeing than others including Black and Minority Ethnic groups, people who are homeless and carers. The geography of East Sussex also poses some particular challenges as a combination of urban and rural localities can result in patchy service delivery and difficulty for rural residents to get to services

The Challenges Ahead

In addition to a number of health and wellbeing issues and inequalities within East Sussex, we are facing significant challenges due to longer life expectancies, lifestyle changes, demand for better choice and quality and a tough economic climate. We also recognise the impact wider determinants such as housing and educational attainment can have on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. Whilst we have much to build on there are improvements to be made and doing the same things in the same way will not be affordable in future. We have to look at how we can continue to protect and improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities within the resources available to us. We will therefore focus on a small number of big issues where a more joined up approach will help to improve outcomes, reduce inequalities and help to manage or reduce demand in future years.

Our strategic priority for 2026 is to protect and improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities

Our key tasks will be to:

- Support the best possible start for all babies and young children so that they develop well and are safe and healthy.
- Support safe, resilient and secure parenting for all children and young people so that parents are confident, able and supported to nurture their child's development.
- Enable people of all ages to live healthy lives and have healthy lifestyles so that more people can improve their prospect of a longer, healthier life.
- Prevent and reduce falls, accidents and injuries amongst children, young people and older people.
- Enable people to manage and maintain their mental health and wellbeing so that they and their carers are able to manage their condition better and maintain their physical health.
- Support those with special educational needs, physical and learning disabilities to have better health and wellbeing and a longer life expectancy and for those with long term conditions to be diagnosed earlier and provided with more personalised care in the community or at home.
- Promote high quality and choice of end of life care so that more people are cared for and die in their preferred place of care and death and receive the highest standards of end of life care.