

Director of Public Health Report 2012/13 – SUMMARY

What influences our health?

Our chances to be healthy start before we are born. Health begins in our homes, our schools and playgrounds, the jobs we do, the neighbourhoods we live in, the air we breathe, the food we eat, the friendships we make. It is vital that we continue to address these broader determinants of health to create the conditions for people to thrive. A recent study found that social and environmental factors can account for as much as 60% of what affects an individual's health.

How healthy are we in Buckinghamshire?

People in Buckinghamshire can generally expect to live a long and healthy life. Death rates are falling and life expectancy is increasing. Women in the county can expect to live until 84.0 years and men until 80.5 years – both longer than the national average. Almost four out of five people in Buckinghamshire (79%) report a high satisfaction with life and 86% of people in the county rate their health as good or very good.

But some of our outcomes for babies and young children are not as good as they should be and too many of our residents suffer from preventable disease. People in the most deprived areas of Buckinghamshire also have worse health across a range of outcomes.

What are the key health issues?

Cardiovascular disease, which includes hearts attacks and strokes, is the most common cause of death in Buckinghamshire, and **cancer** is the second commonest. These conditions are also important causes of disability. Recent declines in death rates from cardiovascular disease appear to be levelling off among those living in the most deprived areas. Many cases of cancer and cardiovascular disease could be prevented through lifestyle changes.

The proportion of people in Buckinghamshire with a diagnosis of **diabetes** has increased by 24% over the last four years. The majority of the Buckinghamshire population is now overweight or obese, a key risk factor for diabetes. The NHS Health Check programme identifies those at risk of developing heart disease, stroke and diabetes and supports them to improve their health.

Mental wellbeing is central to our quality of life. Studies suggest that on average happy people live between 7.5-10 years longer than people who report that they are unhappy. One in five people have lower life satisfaction in Buckinghamshire, so there is much that could be done to improve wellbeing locally.

A third of people with a long term condition also have **poorer mental wellbeing**. Many people now have two or more long term conditions, with poorer health outcomes. Care needs to be holistic and needs to address all of the person's long term conditions.

The Big Four lifestyles – vital statistics with massive impact

- **Physical inactivity.** Many adults in Buckinghamshire do not do enough physical activity to protect their health. Over a quarter are completely inactive.
- **Smoking.** Almost one in seven adults in Buckinghamshire smoke. Half of them will die from smoking-related diseases such as cancer and heart disease.
- **Healthy eating.** 2 in 3 Buckinghamshire residents do not eat healthily.
- **Drinking alcohol.** One in five people in Buckinghamshire drink alcohol at levels that will harm their health.
- **Together the big four lifestyles account for 42% of the deaths from the leading causes**

Where should we focus – key areas for collective action

- Ensuring that everyone has as healthy a pregnancy as possible and all children are provided with what they need to grow up happy and healthy.
- Promoting mental and emotional wellbeing – feeling good in yourself helps you get the most out of your life
- Increasing the numbers of people making healthy choices in the “Big 4” lifestyles. All organisations have a role to play in making healthy choices the easy choices.
- Improving our approach to long term conditions such as cancer, heart disease, stroke and dementia. This involves improving prevention, early detection and better ways of supporting people to live with long term conditions.
- Improving the health of those with the poorest health.

We want to draw on the talents & skills in our communities to make the change!

Consider your neighbourhood. What do you want improved? Could you work with local councillors and people from other organisations to design healthier local communities?

- Do you want more options to be physically active?
- Do you want to have healthier and more affordable food choices?
- Do you want to go where you need to locally, more easily without a car?
- Do you want to have more chances to get to know your neighbours?
- Do you want your community to be a good place for all people to live regardless of age, abilities, or income?
- Do you want to live in a greener environment, with good access to green space on your doorstep?

Work with us to shape public health in the future in Buckinghamshire. We are setting up a public health network to drive change, share ideas, and make a real difference. Be there from the start. Sign up via publichealth@buckscc.gov.uk.