



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Section 9

Health and Communities



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HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

Addressing health inequalities

- 9.1 Medway Council is committed to reducing health inequalities, increasing life expectancy and improving the quality of life of those who live and work here. People's lifestyles and environment affect their health and wellbeing and each of these lifestyle risk factors is unequally distributed across Medway. Medway performs poorly against key public health outcomes in life expectancy and causes of death as a result of inequalities. Average male life expectancy is below the national average, and there are pockets of marked health issues in some neighbourhoods, with reduced life expectancy and health impairments. Lifestyle issues including smoking, obesity and alcohol are key contributors to high mortality rates, particularly circulatory disease, cancer and respiratory disease. With an ageing population, the number of people living with dementia is projected to increase.
- 9.2 Planning has a role in supporting healthier lifestyles, particularly in:
- Promoting healthy weight by providing a green, vibrant infrastructure that will encourage people from all sectors of the community to increase their everyday activity through walking and cycling and other physical activity and participation of all sectors of the community in active lifestyles;
 - Improving access to health care settings and services;
 - Supporting access to healthy and affordable food, including opportunities for food growing.
- 9.3 One of the council's biggest aspirations is to enable all of Medway's people, both residents and people who work here, to enjoy an outstanding quality of life, including happy, healthy, safe and fulfilled lives. Quality of life is essential to health and wellbeing and relates to every facet of life. Challenges to this may include the lack of skills needed to secure productive employment; an unfit and poorly insulated home; poor access to public open space; not having access to affordable healthy food; reduced opportunities to be physically active as part of everyday life; having limited opportunities for food growing; lack of access to health care; fear of crime; or a lack of social interaction and sense of community.
- 9.4 Alongside creating and sustaining economic growth, we wish to place residents, workplaces and communities in a position to take advantage of the opportunities growth brings. Some areas of Medway have experienced consistently higher rates of economic inactivity and unemployment, including youth and long term unemployment, and low incomes.
- 9.5 Healthy food environments can help address obesity. Areas where there are opportunities for people to buy affordable healthy food, rather than areas that have a proliferation of hot food takeaways can help support healthier lifestyle choices. There are also positive benefits in people having space where they can grow their own



food. Obesity levels in Medway are above average and the council supports an integrated programme to address the problem through healthy eating and physical activity.

- 9.6 In 2014 the Council published a Hot Food Takeaway Guidance Note to restrict the number of these facilities within close proximity to a school and avoid over concentrations of takeaways in one location. This document has been used in planning application decisions and is seen as a successful tool to help facilitate a change in the health of Medway's residents.
- 9.7 Medway is projected to see an increase of 31,000 residents aged over 65 by 2035. With this population change, planning for the needs of older people is a key consideration for the Local Plan. Medway seeks to establish the area as 'Dementia Friendly', embedding awareness of the needs of people with dementia and their carers in service design and delivery. This will include how public places and buildings are designed to make it easier for people with dementia to find their way around and be safe. This will also help to deliver on the council's ambitions that Medway's growth should benefit all, and will take consideration of the needs of different groups in the community with physical and learning disabilities. In planning for Medway's future, the council will seek to retain and develop sustainable and accessible neighbourhoods, where people can easily reach a range of services and facilities, and reduce the risk of social isolation through enabling interactions in the wider community.
- 9.8 The council seeks to embed ambitions for a healthier Medway in all its work, and will encourage new development to promote opportunities to improve health. It supports the use of Health Impact Assessments to identify how development might have positive or negative effects on health. A health impact assessment (HIA) helps ensure that health and wellbeing are being properly considered in planning policies and proposals. HIAs are best done at the earliest stage possible to look at the positive and negative impacts of a development as well as assessing the indirect implications for the wider community. The aim is to identify the main impacts and prompt discussion about the best ways of dealing with them to maximise the benefits and avoid any potential adverse impacts.

Healthcare facilities

- 9.9 Since the Health and Social Care Act was implemented in 2012, provision has undergone major change, and will continue to do so. Responsibility for public health was passed to Local Government, meaning the council now has this responsibility within its area. In 2013 Clinical Commissioning Groups replaced Primary Care Trusts in the commissioning of healthcare at a local level. Healthcare services are provided by a range of providers; including the NHS and Medway Council Public Health Service. However these services are strained. Initial infrastructure review work has identified several issues. There are high numbers of GP's practices where the number of patients per GP is above the national average.¹³ There is a challenge in succession planning as many GPs approach retirement. Medway Maritime Hospital

¹³ Infrastructure Delivery Schedule 2016



is also under increasing pressure financially and socially and has seen its services rated as inadequate by the Care Quality Commission.

- 9.10 The NHS, Medway Council and Kent County Council as the major healthcare, social care and public health providers in the area have drafted a Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) (October 2016).¹⁴ This highlights the need to evolve the model of care provision to develop larger multi-modal practices that provide a range of services. These could be based on the present healthy living centre model within Medway. The outcomes of this review process will inform the policy provision for healthcare facilities in the new Local Plan.
- 9.11 Comments were received in the Issues and Options consultation on the need for more local healthcare facilities and the need to give further consideration to the location of the Medway Maritime Hospital. There was also support for planning for green spaces, walking and cycling to promote opportunities for better health and wellbeing.

¹⁴ Kent & Medway Sustainability and Transformation Plan, 2016



Policy Approaches: Health

Reduce Health Inequalities

The council is committed to reducing health inequalities, increasing life expectancy and improving quality of life. It will support work to improve economic and social opportunities to tackle disadvantage across Medway.

The local plan shall seek to reduce health inequalities through a range of measures relating to the siting of healthcare facilities to provide better access, and assessing developments for their health impact. Potential approaches include:

- Require significant new developments to undertake health impact assessments.
- The council will seek new developments to be located within a sustainable distance of local health practices, and where this is not possible seek contributions towards improving existing healthcare facilities.

Healthy Food Environment

The council will seek to enhance the food environment in Medway by requiring new residential developments to either have new green infrastructure within them or be accessible to existing green infrastructure, including local food growing space.

The council will seek to protect the food environment around existing community assets (schools, community centres, play areas and leisure centres) through measures to manage the locations and opening times of hot food takeaways, and improvements in the public realm. This will aim to build on the work of the 2014 Hot Food Takeaway Guidance.

Medway Maritime Hospital and Healthcare Provision

The council will work closely with Medway NHS CGG to plan for the future of acute care within Medway and investigate the options for redevelopment of the Medway Maritime hospital site or relocation to a new site within Medway.

The council will work with the commissioners of health services to identify need and deliver a rationalised and resilient approach to healthcare provision that meets the needs of Medway's population over the plan period.

This will include consideration of the development of community health centres that provide a range of services, including GPs surgeries and community care. Opportunities for the integration of health and wider social care will be encouraged to meet the needs of local communities.

Neighbourhood Plans

9.12 The Government encourages local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Plans to help shape the future of their areas. Once formally 'made', the Neighbourhood Plan



forms part of the Development Plan and therefore provides a policy basis for planning decisions.

- 9.13 The community of Cliffe and Cliffe Woods is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for its parish. Medway Council is supporting work on the Neighbourhood Plan to share information and coordinate work with the emerging Local Plan.
- 9.14 The council will similarly engage with other Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Forums that may come forward in Medway to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.

