

MEDWAY'S JOINT LOCAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2024-2028

Creating a healthier Medway



NHS

Kent and Medway

**A BETTER
MEDWAY**
Easier ways to be healthy

Medway
COUNCIL
Serving You

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FOREWORD

With its rich and exciting blend of history, diversity, and culture, Medway offers a unique experience to both residents and visitors. The continued growth and development of our area brings new opportunities for everyone and the ability to enjoy these opportunities rests upon the health and wellbeing of our people. This Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy builds on our commitment to enhance health and wellbeing across all stages of life by recognising and tackling the things that get in the way of people living well, enjoying life, and feeling happy and fulfilled.

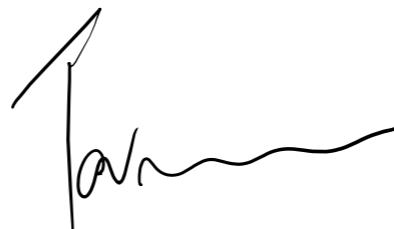
Much has changed and new challenges have emerged since our last strategy was adopted in 2018. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted stark differences in health outcomes between different groups of people. We have seen an increase in living costs and an escalation of the effects of climate change. We have also seen a shift in people's needs. There is now greater awareness and demand for services that support people's emotional wellbeing, especially when they feel lonely and isolated. We have heard our residents tell us how much they value happiness, wellbeing, and social connections.

We have a lot to be proud of since adopting our previous strategy. Our work on smoking has contributed to fewer women smoking during pregnancy and more babies being born healthy. Increased numbers of people have taken advantage of the NHS Health Checks screening programme to reduce their risks of getting diseases like diabetes, dementia, and circulatory problems. We have worked hand-in-hand with families and educational settings to provide the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, making sure children enjoy a nutritious meal, are active and safe, and not socially isolated during the school holidays.

As our residents' needs change, so too must our approach. Our new strategy enhances the focus on tackling inequalities and injustices and on creating the conditions that make it easier for people to thrive and achieve their potential. This means recognising that the environment in which we live, work, and grow is a vital component of our wellbeing. Over the next five years, we will aim to put in place the building blocks of a happy and healthy life, such as a safe and secure home environment, good education, stable employment, affordable housing, and access to support when it is needed.

We can only do this by working in partnership as members of the Health and Wellbeing Board, with a shared health and care agenda. This strategy's ambition to tackle inequalities and create healthy and fulfilling lives for everyone sits alongside the ambitions of NHS Kent and Medway's Integrated Care Strategy: to work together to reduce economic and health inequalities, support social and economic development, improve public service outcomes, and ensure services for citizens are excellent quality and good value for money.

Good health and wellbeing is a collective endeavour and having the right strategy is an important first step. COVID-19 demonstrated the power of togetherness and the incredible strengths that prevail in our community when people come together with a shared sense of purpose. We have a vibrant range of voluntary and community organisations who play a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of our residents. This strategy is an invitation to all sectors, organisations, and communities to build on our great foundations and strive towards a healthier, happier, and more equitable Medway.



Cllr Teresa Murray

Deputy Leader for Medway Council and Portfolio Holder for Public Health
Chair Medway Health and Wellbeing Board

INTRODUCTION

WHO WILL DELIVER THE STRATEGY?

The Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy is our blueprint for improving health and wellbeing for everyone living, working, and studying in Medway.

In this document we describe:

- The current health and care landscape in Medway and what residents have told us about their health and wellbeing
- A comprehensive set of priorities to inform what we all need to do together over the next five years to meet the needs of local people
- How this strategy was developed through a combination of looking at what the data tells us are important causes of illness and early death in Medway, and by listening to what people in Medway told us is important to them.

This strategy is overseen by the Medway Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) which includes the NHS, Healthwatch, Medway Council officers, and elected members (councillors). It is not owned by any single organisation but aims to develop a common purpose across health and care services, the voluntary sector and the people of Medway. The HWB will use this strategy to develop and agree annual priorities and leadership around programmes of work. All organisations in the HWB are collectively accountable for delivering this strategy.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Statutory Members:

- Healthwatch Medway
- Director of Children and Adult Services (Medway Council)
- Director of Public Health (Medway Council)
- NHS Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board

Non-Statutory Members:

- Medway Voluntary Action
- Kent Local Medical Committee
- Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Partnership Trust
- Medway NHS Foundation Trust
- Medway Community Healthcare
- Medway and Swale Health & Care Partnership
- Elected members

NHS KENT & MEDWAY INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM STRATEGY

Medway is part of the Kent and Medway Integrated Care System (ICS), which has its own strategy developed closely alongside the Medway Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The focus of the ICS is on the whole of Kent and Medway, while this strategy focuses on Medway alone.

What is the Kent and Medway Integrated Care System (ICS)?

The ICS brings partner organisations together across Kent and Medway to improve outcomes in health and care, tackle inequalities, improve experiences of and access to health and care services, enhance productivity and value for money, and help the NHS support social and economic development.

The three statutory organisations in Kent and Medway ICS are Medway Council, Kent County Council and the NHS Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB).

This new system allows for a more unified and collaborative approach across organisations over a larger geographical area. It is a means of using our combined strengths and resources to make a difference to people's lives.

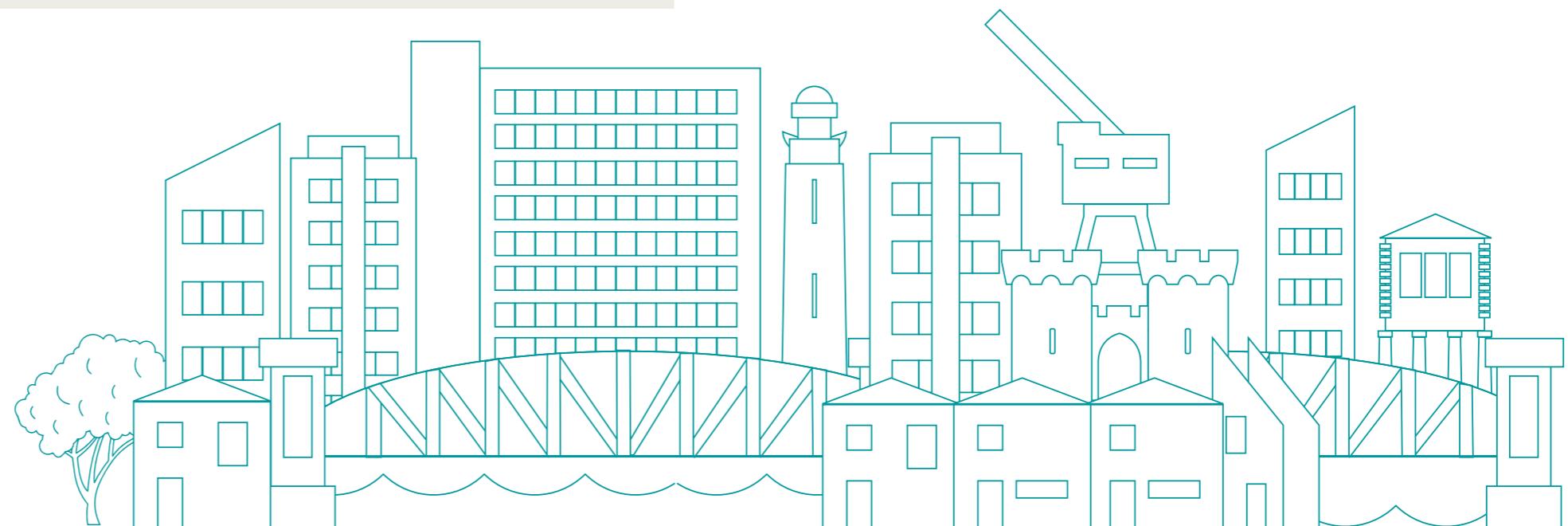
The Kent & Medway Integrated Care System Strategy sets out six priority areas for local authorities, health and care organisations and other partners to focus on that will bring improvements to the lives of people living in Kent & Medway.

Scan the QR code to go to the Integrated Care Strategy:



HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP

Health and Care Partnerships and Primary Care Networks sit within the ICS and are made up of several types of care providers. They serve the needs of people living within a smaller, defined geographical area and are well-placed to understand and respond to the needs and challenges faced by people in that area. Their remit extends beyond looking after the medical health needs of people and includes things like education, housing, environmental health, and leisure. Medway is part of the Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership.



THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Good health is about much more than health care services. A long and healthy life comes from a strong foundation supporting all the building blocks, such as good education and employment; good quality, affordable housing; access to healthy food; and strong social and community networks. When one or more of these blocks are missing, lives can be cut short leading people to spend more time in poor health. For example, housing with steep stairs that is poorly adapted for a frail older person can lead to falls and injury, with longer-term impacts on mobility and social isolation.

This Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy looks at these aspects of our everyday lives and calls on all of us to come together and play our part in improving lives and the environment in which we live.



Image based on The Health Foundation's 'Building Blocks of Health'
www.health.org.uk/publications/how-to-talk-about-the-building-blocks-of-health

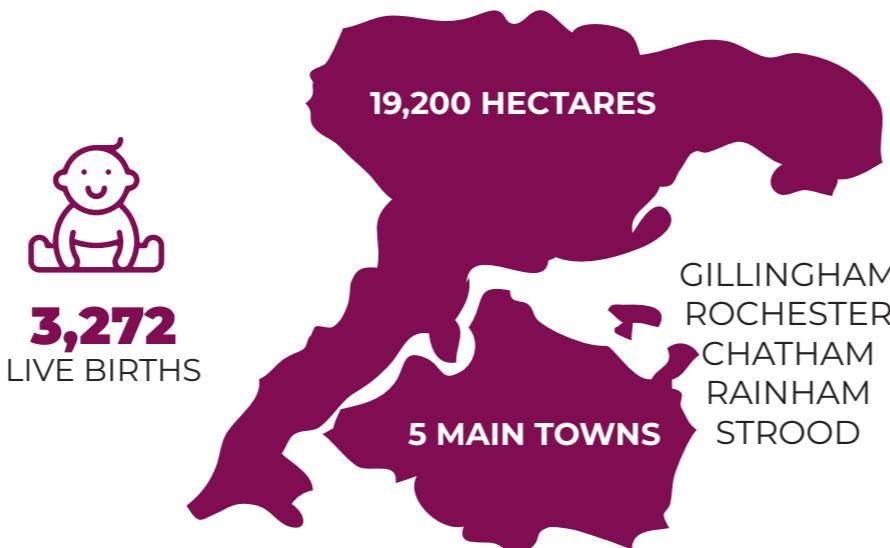
OUR PEOPLE AND PLACE

IN 2021
ESTIMATED POPULATION



279,827

IN 2018-20
LIFE EXPECTANCY



MEDWAY HAS **37** NEIGHBOURHOODS

RANKED IN THE **20% MOST DEPRIVED AREAS NATIONALLY**

14 OF WHICH ARE IN THE **10% MOST DEPRIVED** IN 2019

IN MEDWAY IN 2022
MEDIAN GROSS ANNUAL PAY OF A FTE WAS **£33,403**



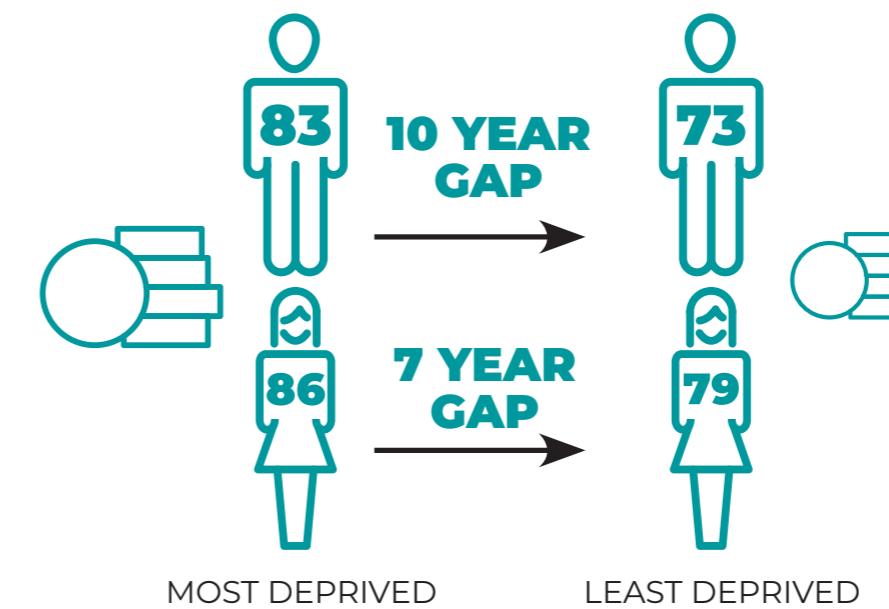
8,815 BUSINESSES

OUR HEALTH INEQUALITIES

There is a **GAP IN LIFE EXPECTANCY** between the most and least deprived deciles in Medway



The main contributions to this gap are **circulatory disease, cancer and respiratory disease**



THE **GAP IN LIFE EXPECTANCY** HAS WIDENED SINCE 2011-13

OUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

IN 2021/22

2 OUT OF 3 ADULTS
OBESE OR OVERWEIGHT



IN 2017, **38,260** people lived with a common mental health disorder



IN 2022, **9%** OF ADULTS SMOKE



IN 2021, THERE WERE **1,048** PREMATURE DEATHS; WORSE COMPARED TO ENGLAND

Premature deaths-deaths under the age of 75 years

CANCER is a **major** cause of premature death

40% **28%**
Premature death due to cancer

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES are the **next largest** cause of premature death

14% **22%**
Premature death due to cardiovascular diseases

MEDWAY'S JOINT LOCAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2024-2028

GOAL: Improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Medway residents and reduce inequalities.

PURPOSE: To ensure everyone in Medway lives a long, healthy, and happy life, with people valuing self-care and helping others. Opportunities are available to all throughout life to help people grow and create a brighter future. Medway is a place where help is easily available, places are connected, and when people move between services, their journey is seamless.

People are proud to live in Medway and feel part of their community.

PRIORITY THEME 1	PRIORITY THEME 2	PRIORITY THEME 3	PRIORITY THEME 4
HEALTHIER & LONGER LIVES FOR EVERYONE Babies and children are healthy, happy, and safe. They develop well and are ready to start school. People in Medway are supported to live healthy, long and happy lives, and value self-care. Vulnerable adults lead fulfilling lives in a caring environment that ensures their wellbeing and safety. Older people live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible. Good mental health is enjoyed by everyone. People can cope with life's challenges, sleep well, have positive relationships, and experience a sense of purpose and fulfilment.	REDUCE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY All children achieve a good level of education leading to secure employment in adulthood. Outcomes are improved for those in vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as children in care and care leavers. People and families can access healthy food, have steady jobs, and live in affordable, good quality homes. People in Medway are supported in managing the cost of living.	SAFE, CONNECTED AND SUSTAINABLE PLACES Services are close to where people live and accessible by active transport such as walking or cycling, or using public transport. People and organisations work together to create a sustainable, clean and green environment. Green spaces can be accessed and used by all. People feel safe in their neighbourhood.	CONNECTED COMMUNITIES AND COHESIVE SERVICES People feel connected with their community, have a sense of belonging and strong support networks. Everyone can find and access services and information easily, with support to ensure digital inclusion. Organisations work together so when people move between services, their journey is seamless. There is trust and respect between services, organisations and users, regardless of their differences; diversity is recognised and embraced.

OUR VISION

Medway will be a place where people care for themselves and others, and where help is easily available when it's most needed. Our community will work together to create equal opportunities and a brighter future, making Medway a place where wellbeing is valued by everyone and pathways to personal growth are open to all.



WHO WE SPOKE TO

Our engagement in numbers

526 adults
completed the Medway Better Health Survey for Adults

148 children and young people
completed the Medway Better Health Survey for Children & Young People

14 organisations
completed the Medway Better Health Survey for Organisations

7 focus groups
were conducted with groups impacted by health inequalities

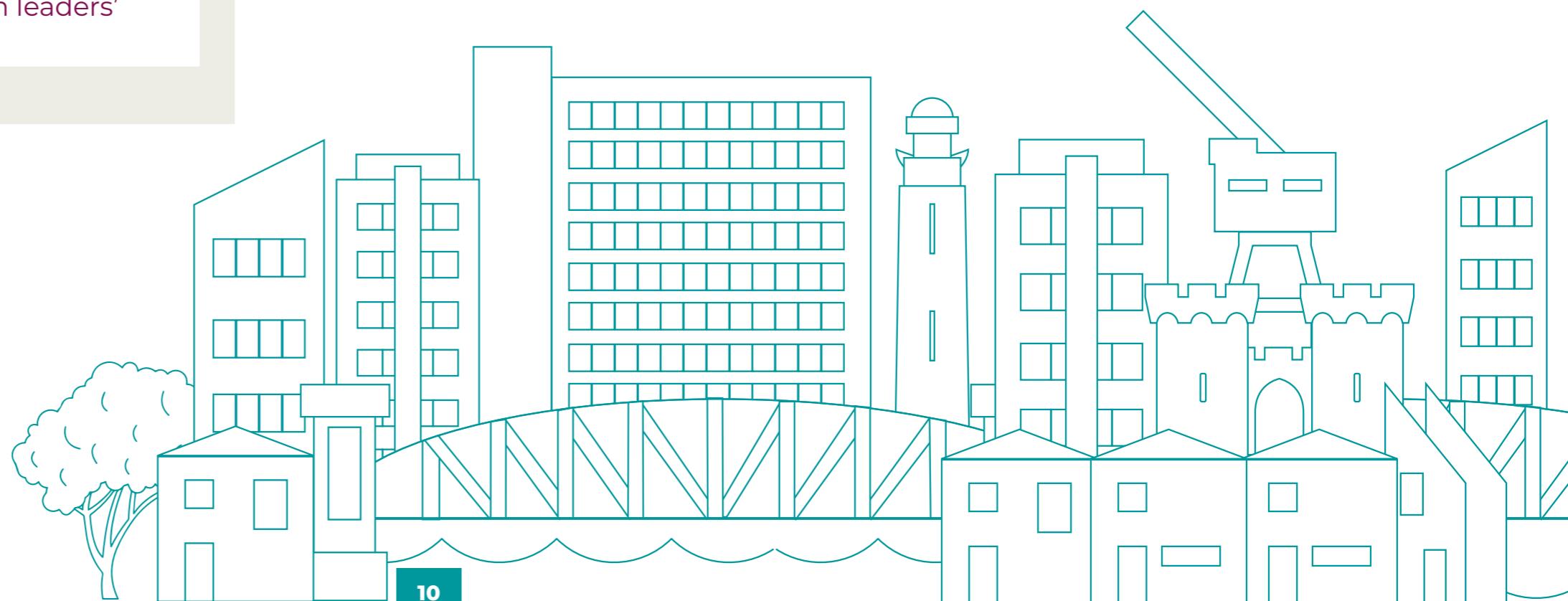
7 one-to-one interviews
were carried out with people who are less likely to respond to surveys and engagement opportunities

20 organisations
were represented at our system leaders' workshop

People are at the heart of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. We made it our priority to better understand the experiences and health and wellbeing needs of people in Medway to develop this strategy. That meant speaking to children and adults who live and work in Medway, with a particular focus on residents who may be less likely to voice their needs, including:

- Those living in more deprived areas
- People experiencing homelessness
- Sex workers
- Older women and men
- People whose life experiences have made it more difficult for them to manage their own physical and mental wellbeing
- People living in rural areas (through Parish Councillors)
- People in the armed forces
- Ethnic minority groups
- The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community

We also spoke to a range of health and care organisations and the voluntary and community sector.



WHAT WE HEARD – THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO THE PEOPLE OF MEDWAY

Resident engagement – adults

- Better mental and physical health
- Having enough money to provide for their own and their family's needs
- Better access to health and care services
- Affordable good quality housing
- Improved job security



Resident engagement – children and young people

- Help with mental health needs
- More social connections
- Doing more physical activities
- Better access to public green spaces
- Tackling environmental issues



Focus groups

- Social groups and places where people can connect with others
- Better access to health and care services, including alternatives to digital access
- To be treated with respect by health and care professionals
- Help with parenting skills, as their own experiences of being parented have had a detrimental impact on their adult life
- Support groups that last longer than 8 weeks



Service Providers and System Leaders

- Access and barriers to services
- Help with mental health needs
- Communication and education
- Workforce pressures
- System cohesion



PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS



PRIORITY THEME 1:

HEALTHIER, LONGER LIVES FOR EVERYONE

We will ensure that people in Medway have what they need throughout their lives to maintain good physical and mental health and wellbeing.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

In Medway in 2022/23, over a third of children aged 10 to 11 years were overweight or obese (37.3%), which is similar to England (36.6%)¹

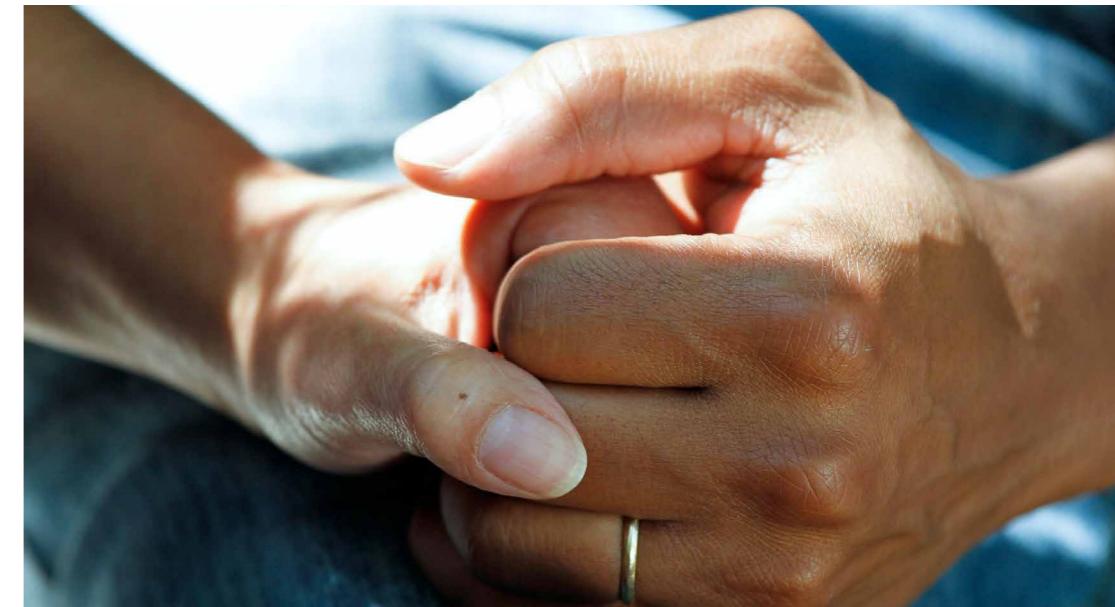
Health is affected by a mix of social, economic, and environmental factors, the effects of which build up over an individual's life. At each stage there are actions we can take to promote health and prevent disease and prevent health gaps opening up between groups of people: before birth; in infancy, childhood, and adolescence; during working age and through to old age.

Additional effort is also needed to ensure people who tend to have worse health outcomes than the general population, such as those with

learning disabilities or severe mental illness, can lead happy and fulfilling lives.

We will maintain the focus of the 2018–23 health and wellbeing strategy on improving how well people live and how long they live. This includes valuing mental health just as much as physical health, which is a clear message coming out of our engagement with Medway residents.

Around 75% of residents described some form of movement or regular exercise as being important to helping them stay healthy
(Medway Better Health Survey for Adults)



TOP FIVE CAUSES OF DEATH IN 2021 IN MEDWAY³

Cancer: 663 deaths

Cardiovascular diseases: 551

COVID-19 (due to): 441

Respiratory: 267

Dementia, including Alzheimer's: 217

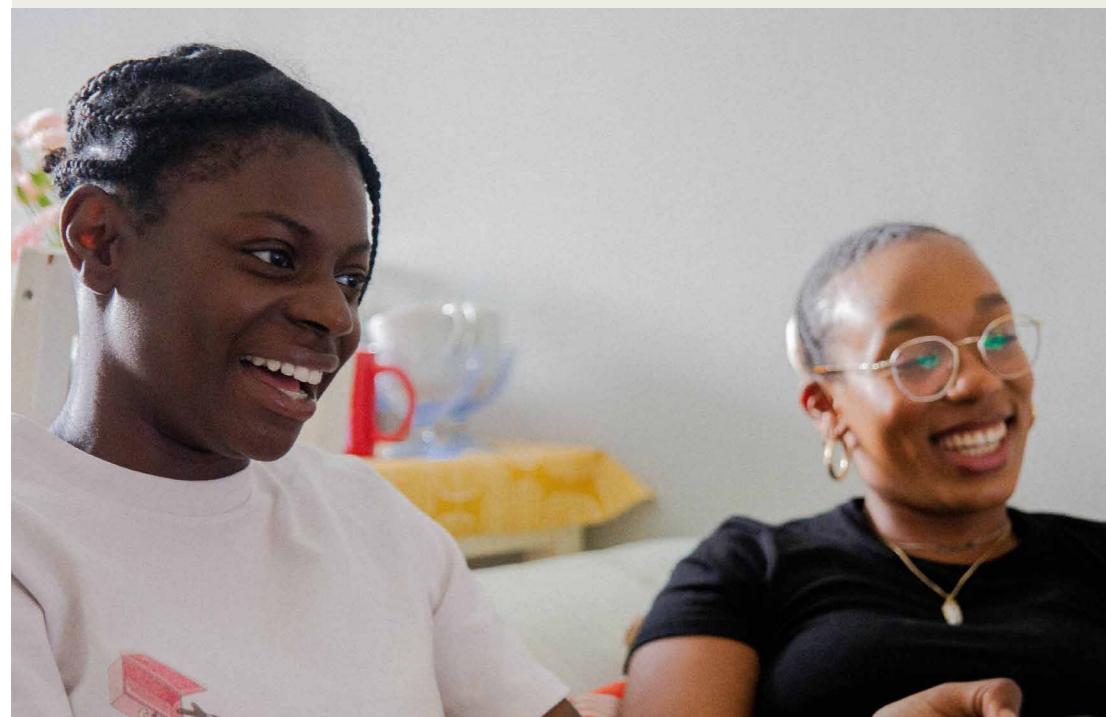
SOME PEOPLE IN MEDWAY EXPERIENCE MORE HEALTH PROBLEMS COMPARED TO OTHERS AND DIE EARLIER THAN THEY SHOULD.

In our least well-off neighbourhoods, men are dying 10 years earlier than those in the most well-off. For women the gap is 7 years².

PRIORITY THEME 1

WHAT RESIDENTS SEE AS HEALTH AND WELLBEING PRIORITIES

- Feeling happy
- Mental health
- Being without illness or pain
- Worrying less
- Sleeping well
- Physical activity



"Help with parenting skills...I felt I couldn't talk to my parents...If things had been different, I might not be suffering from anxiety and depression"

[Focus Group]

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS RESIDENTS WANT TO SEE

- Timely access to reliable health and care services, including GPs
- Support to get physically active and eat healthily
- More accessible mental health and wellbeing services
- Services that are accessible for people such as sex workers, rough sleepers and those experiencing homelessness
- Making sure the building blocks for good health are in place, such as having enough money; affordable, good quality housing; access to green space; good quality jobs and job security



WHAT WE ARE BUILDING ON

- A strong partnership of local agencies, organisations, and residents who provide core support to promote, prevent, and treat disease from birth to old age. This includes the Kent and Medway Integrated Care System and Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership, formed in 2022
- An increase in the amount and strength of multidisciplinary working. For example, the Blue Light Project brings together a multidisciplinary team to support people experiencing severe disadvantages such as substance misuse, homelessness, criminal justice system involvement, and mental health challenges. It prevents people from falling through service access gaps
- Increased support to carers and measures to address fragmentation in care, enabling residents to navigate services and lead fulfilling lives independently within their homes
- Innovative mental health initiatives, such as Medway Men in Sheds, that supports men to get together and learn new skills, and a 24/7 'Reduce the Pressure' helpline that provides mental wellbeing support, brief cognitive behavioural therapy and signposting to other services
- Targeted community-based interventions such as 'Hypertension Heroes' for early identification, treatment, and self-management of diseases in higher risk community groups

PRIORITY THEME 1

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

We will work together with our residents to ensure that every person in Medway has what they need throughout their life to maintain good health and wellbeing. By working in partnership with we can increase the number of years we all spend in good physical and mental health, reduce the risk of dying early and make Medway a place where everyone can thrive.

- **Give children the best start in life**, so they are happy, healthy, and safe, and have a firm foundation for their future. We will provide an enhanced parenting support programme to address health and educational inequalities and help families get the help they need. We will continue to support children to develop well and be ready to start school
- **Prevent ill health, help people to value self-care and stop people dying early**, so that people live healthy, long and happy lives. We will work with residents to create the support and opportunities they need to get active and eat healthily, and act early to prevent ill health and diagnose disease
- **Support and protect vulnerable adults**, so they can lead fulfilling lives with the right amount of care and support that ensures their wellbeing and safety
- **Make Medway a good place to grow older**, enabling our residents to live well and with dignity, and stay independent for as long as possible
- **Promote mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience**, by encouraging community-based initiatives and facilitating social connections whilst recognising the importance of a robust support network for people's resilience



REDUCE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

We will enable all residents to achieve their full potential by reducing existing inequalities and creating the conditions where they can thrive.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

LOW-INCOME FAMILIES⁴

Within Medway, in 2021/22 there were 11,364 (19.9%) children living in relative low-income families.

FOOD INSECURITY⁵

In 2021, approximately 17.2% of Medway residents lived in areas at highest risk of food insecurity.

16 – 17 YEAR OLDS NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, OR TRAINING OR WHOSE ACTIVITY IS NOT KNOWN⁶.

In 2022/23, approximately 6.1% of 16–17-year-olds in Medway were not in education, employment, or training.



An individual's social and economic conditions affect their behaviours—for example their likelihood of smoking and eating unhealthy food. The variation in living conditions creates differences in health and wellbeing outcomes, disadvantaging some groups of people and can lead to unavoidable and unfair inequalities in health outcomes. In Medway, some of our most disadvantaged groups of people include children in care, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and some migrant communities.

Poverty is a significant underlying reason for inequalities as it affects a person's ability to access and obtain the things they need to stay healthy. Reducing health inequalities requires improvement in the key building blocks of health such as; educational achievement, job security and the affordability and quality of housing.

We need to harness our strong partnerships to improve social and economic conditions and enable targeted support to those who are vulnerable and most disadvantaged. This will create systems where all residents have the opportunity to transform their lives and achieve their full potential.

Over a third of adult respondents to the Medway Better Health Survey for Adults (200 people), indicated the importance of affordable and accessible activities for their health and wellbeing.

“Much better and more accessible health centre [is needed] because at the moment my present one is overstretched, oversubscribed and difficult to access”.

[Medway Better Health Survey for Adults)

PRIORITY THEME 2

WHAT RESIDENTS SEE AS HEALTH AND WELLBEING PRIORITIES

- Having enough money to meet their needs
- Affordable, good quality housing
- Improved job security

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS RESIDENTS WANT TO SEE

- Low-cost health and wellbeing activities for all residents
- More support to access affordable physical activity and healthy eating, e.g., healthy eating on a budget
- More effective service provision to meet the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, including people experiencing homelessness
- Greater promotion of available social and economic support published both online and in print

“More affordable and safe access to exercise and not just subsidising those who are unemployed or on benefits...some local council pools can be expensive for working people”.

[Focus Group]

WHAT WE ARE BUILDING ON

We are building on a strong foundation of interconnected partnerships which work together to tackle the wider social, environmental, and economic conditions which lead to inequalities.

For example:

Provision of targeted access and support for vulnerable groups, including

- Focused oral health assistance to Medway's most vulnerable residents
- Tailored physical activity programmes to those with long term-health conditions
- Continued drive to increase the number of affordable homes by building on average 219 affordable homes each year over the past 5 years

Establishing networks that promote health and wellbeing while considering financial constraints

- The creation of the Medway Food Partnership which collaboratively ensures access to healthy, affordable food
- Setting up the Holiday Activities and Food Programme which provides a healthy hot meal during school holidays to children who are eligible for free school meals
- Providing money management and budgeting courses to support residents with the cost of living

Enhancing the connection between education and employment by creating pathways for people from disadvantaged groups to acquire new skills

- Delivery of the Business Pledge programme which links business and education facilities to ensure opportunities for everyone, including care leavers, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), veterans, and young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)
- Digital Inclusion classes for disadvantaged groups, leading to participants being able to check own blood pressure, book GP appointments, apply for bus passes, use online banking services and understand fraud prevention
- Delivering life-skills training to support people to engage with services



PRIORITY THEME 2

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

We will deliver a coordinated and comprehensive approach to addressing the social and economic conditions that influence health. We will do this by layering the support offered to communities whilst joining up our actions to transform the lives of Medway residents.

- **Ensure all children achieve a good level of education**, which will equip them with the knowledge and skills to widen their opportunities and lead to secure employment in adulthood. We will specifically focus on children who face existing educational inequalities, such as children in care and those who have free school meals
- **Improve outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups** by bridging the gaps in social and economic circumstances to enable all residents to thrive. We will provide a targeted approach to ensure that those who need the most support can access it
- **Improve access to healthy food, steady jobs, and affordable good quality homes.** We will plan, develop, and regenerate in a way that improves the quality of life for new and existing communities and makes Medway the area of choice for new businesses and anchor organisations, encouraging them to employ locally whilst enhancing social value

- **We will increase the supply of affordable homes** ensuring that there is a mixture of property types and sizes to meet the needs of Medway residents
- **Support residents to manage the cost of living**, which will improve their wellbeing and build stronger, more resilient, and equitable communities. We will focus on providing the building blocks and tools so that residents feel empowered to effectively manage their living expenses



PRIORITY THEME 3

SAFE, CONNECTED AND SUSTAINABLE PLACES

We will make Medway a healthy place to live, work, and visit. We will preserve and improve the environment around us so that current and future generations can enjoy all that Medway has to offer.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

There were 52 crimes involving violence against the person in Medway for every 1,000 people in 2022-2023, which is higher than the Kent average rate of 41.⁷

It is estimated that one in every 18 deaths in Medway in 2021 were linked to particle air pollution.⁸

12.5% of adults walked for travel at least three days a week in 2019/20, which is similar to the England average of 15.1%.⁹

The places where we live and work affect our health, from the air we breathe to the streets we walk.



“Things to tempt people away from the screen... include whole family in fitness... rebuild family social connections”

[Medway Better Health Survey for Adults]

“I started cycling a bit more in the last couple of years, but you know you don’t always feel safe on roads.”

[Focus Group]

When we build health into the fabric of daily life, we enable people to make healthy choices. Green space, leisure facilities, and opportunities for walking and cycling make physical activity easy and enjoyable, promoting health and happiness. Right now, some of the places we live in are causing us harm: air pollution is a major issue in Medway and is linked to heart disease, respiratory problems, and lung cancer, as well as making asthma worse. Often those living in highly polluted areas are less well-off, widening health inequalities.

Ensuring people are safe and free from mental and physical harm such as violence or domestic abuse is also essential for health and wellbeing. Safety, in turn, fosters a sense of security, which encourages physical activity, social engagement, and emotional wellbeing.

Services need to be in the right places so that they are easily accessible to residents when they are needed. This is especially important for groups who are often disadvantaged, such as those experiencing homelessness; migrant; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

Achieving this and transforming Medway into a healthy place to live and work will require us to look outward and work in partnership with residents and the community.

PRIORITY THEME 3

WHAT RESIDENTS SEE AS HEALTH AND WELLBEING PRIORITIES

- An environment that supports mental and physical health
- Services that are easily accessible for all members of the community
- Being able to move around for work, leisure and other day-to-day needs

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS RESIDENTS WANT TO SEE

- Better access to green spaces
- Low-cost and safe access to opportunities to exercise
- Measures to make public transport and active travel, such as walking and cycling easier, cheaper and safer

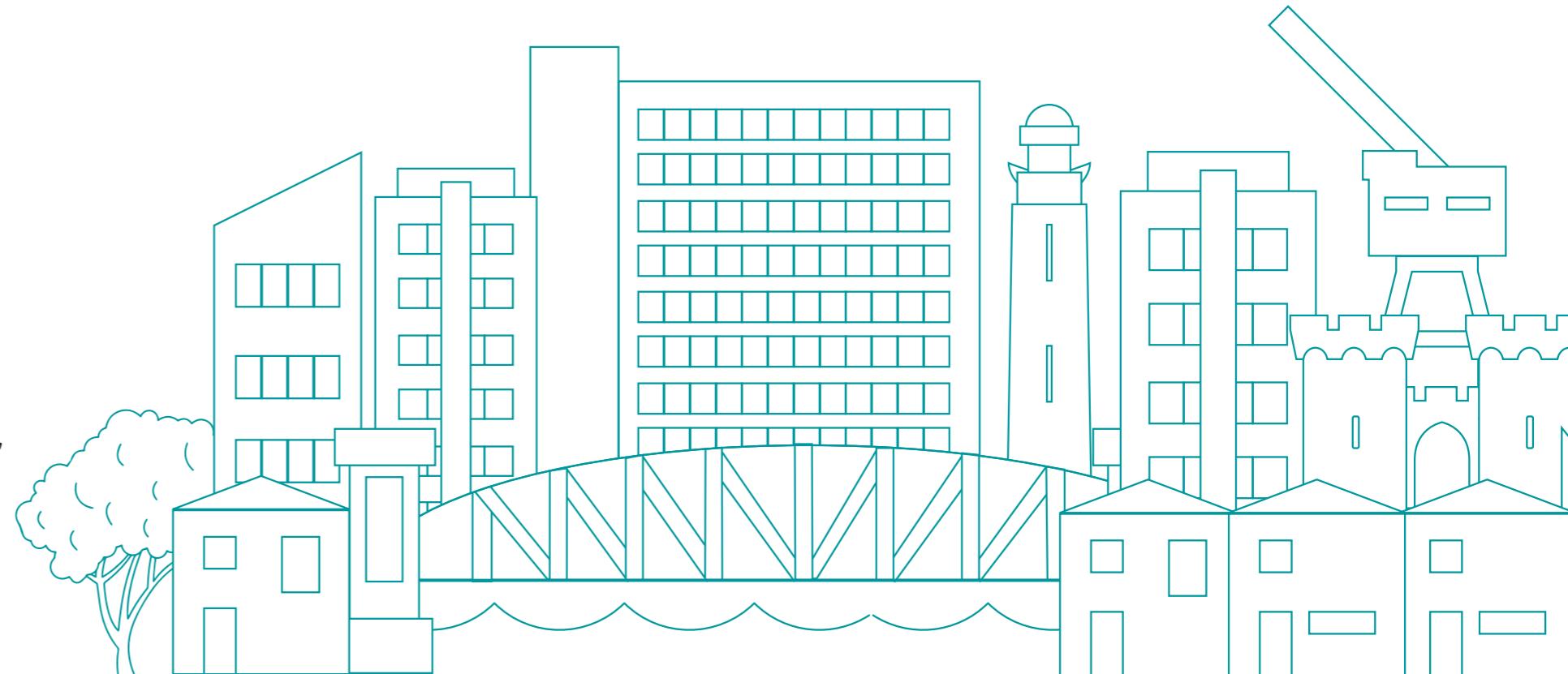
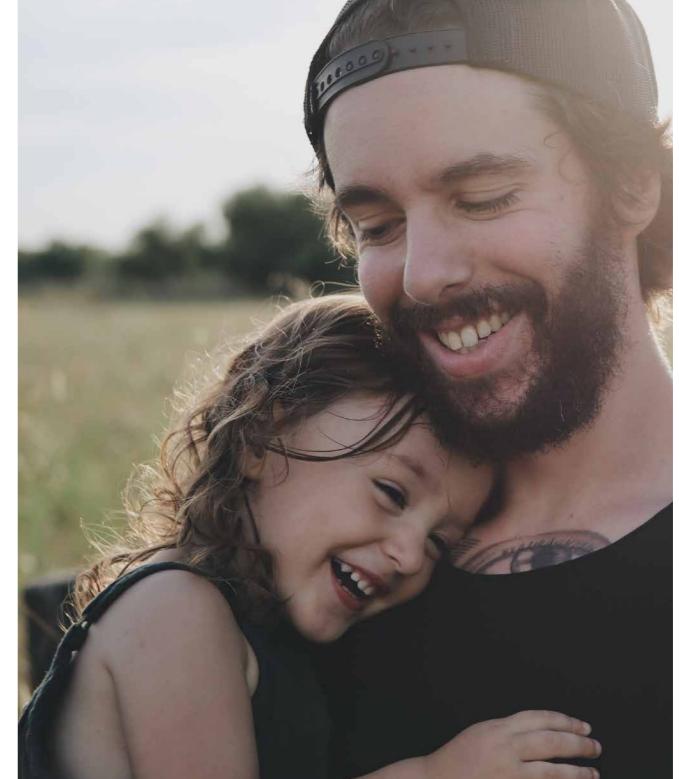
WHAT WE ARE BUILDING ON

- An Active Travel Working Group that brings together multiple workstreams in a strategic way, supporting the development of the Council's emerging Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), including capital infrastructure and behavioural change interventions. The group also assists bidding opportunities for funding and initiatives related to active travel and public transport
- A multi-agency Community Safety Partnership to develop and implement strategies to address issues like anti-social behaviour, drug or alcohol abuse and re-offending
- Medway's [Climate Change Action Plan](#) includes actions to reduce carbon emissions across Medway and build resilient communities. Initiatives include support for domestic retrofit and active travel.

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

We will take a place-based approach, working with the community and residents to ensure safety, security, and wellbeing for all.

- **Bring services closer to people.** We will ensure services are accessible by active transport such as walking or cycling, or using public transport
- **Create a sustainable, clean, and green environment** by strengthening the partnership between individuals and organisations in Medway
- **Improve access to green spaces** so they can be used and enjoyed by all
- **Build safer communities,** so that people feel secure in their neighbourhood



PRIORITY THEME 4

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES AND COHESIVE SERVICES

We will celebrate our communities and help them feel empowered, placing them at the heart of all we do, and ensure no-one is left behind. People will feel more connected with one another. When support is needed, services will be accessed seamlessly.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

In 2019/20 **14.9 %** of adults in Medway felt lonely¹⁰

In 2021/22 **43.9%** of adult social care users over the age of 18 years stated they had as much social contact as they would like¹¹

Relationships have a powerful influence on our health and wellbeing. Whether these connections are formed with friends, within the community or through interactions with services, their influence is profound. Positive relationships and meaningful connections create a sense of belonging and establish a support system which improves resilience. The benefits of these social connections extend beyond the individual, having a positive impact on the wider community. This in turn builds trust, creates a shared sense of purpose and fosters understanding and empathy among community members.

In Medway we are proud of the rich tapestry of cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives within our communities. Embracing inclusivity means we need to focus on valuing our communities whilst also proactively maximising opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups to participate and flourish. This means enabling easy access to services across healthcare, education, and community settings.

“The other day I got six questions from the surgery, and I can’t reply to it cuz I can’t get on the internet”

[Focus Group]

WHAT RESIDENTS SEE AS HEALTH AND WELLBEING PRIORITIES

- Services that are easier to access
- Trust and respect between service users and organisations
- Maintaining social connections

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS RESIDENTS WANT TO SEE

- Compassionate services where people feel valued and respected
- Support provided in ways that work for people, particularly for disadvantaged groups, such as people experiencing homelessness, older people, and those with mobility issues
- Timely access to services
- Easier ways to get information about support that is available.

“Easy, accessible healthcare [is needed]. Not being able to get help, care and advice when you need it is the most worrying and stressful part of my life”



PRIORITY THEME 4

WHAT WE ARE BUILDING ON

We are building on dedicated services which work alongside a robust community and voluntary sector to enhance the health and wellbeing of our area. Some of the areas we have developed in recent years include:

Harnessing the skills of the local community to improve health and wellbeing and to sustain community resilience.

- Launched the 5 Ways to Wellbeing campaign and rolled out the Connect 5 mental health intervention
- Developed Hypertension Heroes a community led approach to identify people with hypertension and promote self-management and understanding of the condition
- Promoted the Better Medway Pledge campaign to raise awareness of and reduce loneliness and social isolation by empowering individuals, groups, organisations, and businesses across Medway to make a pledge to increase connection and reduce loneliness.

Providing a range of services to improve community cohesion and awareness of services.

- Introduced the Peer Ambassador Programme to provide young people with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to act as a peer mentor to have wellbeing conversation and signpost their peers to sources of support and to help eradicate mental health stigma

- Continued provision of A Better Medway Champions Programme which delivers free high-quality training on public health topics and interpersonal skills. The training raises awareness of local support services and how to access them
- Developed the Directory of Services for the Social Prescribing system across Medway and Swale. This directory contains details of many health and wellbeing services and activities within the community to which Social Prescribing Link Workers can readily refer.

Developed innovative opportunities for groups to contribute to service development.

- Created the Children and Young People's Consultation and Engagement Framework and Toolkit to ensure that the voices of children are represented through Council plans and services
- Implemented the Digital Inclusion Strategy so that everyone can access the information and services they need. One example is the work of Medway Diversity Forum who, in partnership with Kent Police, have delivered educational sessions so that people can learn how to use their own digital devices to access services whilst remaining vigilant to fraud

WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

We will work to ensure services are aligned and coordinated and build relationships with our communities that are grounded in trust and respect. We will recognise the strengths of our communities which provide a foundation for all residents.

Support people to feel connected with their communities

We will promote inclusivity, engage with communities in new ways and listen to feedback on how we can work together to improve health and wellbeing within Medway. This will help create a sense of belonging and build strong support networks

Ensure easy access to service information and actively promote digital inclusion

This will enhance equality, promote inclusivity, and empower residents through better access to the information they need to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing

"I think so many of us live alone or feel lonely; 'gathering' places where you feel safe and can be with others might be a good thing to have, should you need it."

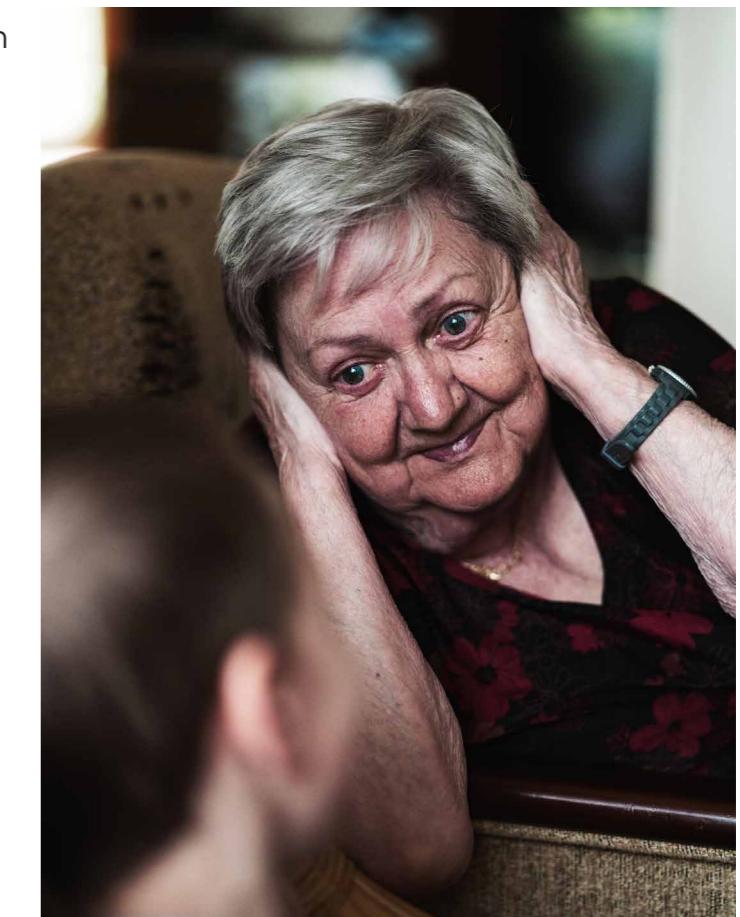
[Medway Better Health Survey for Adults]

Work together so that when people move between services, their journey is seamless

We will work with system partners to improve the coordination of services

Champion a focus on trust and respect between services, organisations, and users

We will recognise and embrace diversity and embed equity within our communities and service provision.



USING RESEARCH TO REDUCE HEALTH INEQUALITIES

In 2022, Medway Council was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research to set up a Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) with the University of Kent. The aim of the HDRC is to enable Medway Council to become more research-active, to conduct research and to use the results of research to improve health and wellbeing.

Up to 80% of what influences a person's health and wellbeing happens outside of the NHS, for example housing, education, employment, and the physical environment, much of which is either directly or indirectly influenced by the council. The HDRC aims to find ways to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities by doing research on these building blocks of health.



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We are grateful to Medway's residents for their pivotal role in shaping the priorities set out in this Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The experiences and perspectives shared by the people of Medway will underpin our plans and actions over the coming years. We extend our thanks to both individual residents who completed surveys, as well as community members and groups who took part in interviews and focus group discussions, including:

Tywdall Library - Social Group

Christ Church, Luton – Social Group

One Big Family – Service Users' Group

1 RSME Brompton Barracks

Imago – Service Users

Frindsbury Extra Parish Council

Caring Hands – Ladies' Night Social Group

Kent Ramgarhia Darbar (Gurdwara)

Cuxton Caravan Site

We would also like to thank our system partners across both public sector organisations, as well as those representing the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector, for their contribution in creating this strategy.

