

HEALTH

Introduction

Health is at the centre of quality of life and the well being of future generations. Poverty, inequality and environmental pollution affect the health of individuals and communities. Poor health is an indicator of activities that are not sustainable.

What is Health?

The definition by the World Health Organisation is that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. In the United Kingdom, health status is comparatively good. However, occurrences of better and worse health are not evenly distributed.

Local government has always been involved in health. Much Victorian legislation was designed to improve the health of local people. In the 19th century, Sir Edwin Chadwick and other thinkers of the day realised that poor living conditions and poverty were a major cause of ill health and disease. They advocated dealing with the root cause of ill health, such as poor sanitation and housing, rather than treating the symptoms with conventional medicine.

It is important that we not only understand the role of everyone involved in health promotion and care but also realise that we all share a common agenda. Health Improvement Programmes (HimPs) recognise that partnership working is central to their development. There are two health authorities aiming to improve health and patient care in the county. West Hertfordshire covers Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers and Watford. East and North Hertfordshire covers Broxbourne, East Herts, North Herts, Stevenage and Welwyn Hatfield.

Indicator HE1: Local Health Life Expectancy

Evidence suggests that health in Hertfordshire is good, but inequalities and health improvement are still in need of attention. To tackle inequalities, attention must be paid to air pollution, poverty, low wages, unemployment, poor housing, crime and disorder.

INSERT HEALTH GRAPH A

Results for Stevenage and Broxbourne should be interpreted with caution because of the smaller populations and number of deaths.

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