

Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee: 14 October 2015

Extract from Joint Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy for Suffolk

Outcome 2 - Suffolk residents have access to a healthy environment and take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing

Why has the Board chosen this as a priority?

We know that a healthy lifestyle will improve the health and wellbeing of the population and that the environment we live in can facilitate this. If green spaces are available and people feel safe they are more likely to take exercise. Increasing the levels of physical activity is recognised as a valuable cross cutting contribution to all four outcomes in this strategy. Exercise is also encouraged by well planned and properly linked walking and cycling routes. Access to leisure, culture and community based activities all play a part in improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. Appropriate housing is also essential to a person's health and wellbeing.

Tobacco is still the greatest health risk and accounts for up to half of the life expectancy gap between deprived communities and the rest of the population. Three people in Suffolk die each day from the effects of smoking. Increasing levels of obesity and excessive drinking of alcohol affect quality of life and are contributing to increasing rates of long term conditions and hospital admissions. Alcohol and drug abuse also detrimentally affect communities, increasing high risk behaviour which can lead to more sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies, and also increasing levels of antisocial behaviour and crime.

The level of engagement of the population in their own health affects NHS and social care expenditure. A "fully engaged scenario" where individuals make healthy lifestyle choices and where organisations in the wider public and private sector work to improve health, is required for an affordable NHS and social care system in the future.

Priorities for action:

- Creating an environment where it is easy to make healthy choices
- Increasing the levels of physical activity and encouraging greater use of our natural environment
- Decreasing the harm caused by alcohol to individuals and communities
- Improving access to suitable housing

