

# East Devon Public Health Strategy 2024 – 2027

Improving health and wellbeing for  
communities across East Devon



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*Stroke survivors exercise class. © LED Community Leisure*

*Cover photo: Wellbeing Walk Leaders event at White Cross, to celebrate all volunteers who help the programme. © LED Community Leisure*

# 1 Why a public health strategy

Everything we do as a council aims to ensure that East Devon is a place where people want to live, work, visit and enjoy life.

## Message from Cllr Ledger

“I am pleased to introduce our new Public Health Strategy here. We believe we have an overarching responsibility to consider health and wellbeing in all our activities. We want to help improve the health and wellbeing of communities across East Devon.

As leaders we have scope to influence our population’s health and wellbeing. We work together with other organisations and with local people to create an outstanding community, economy and environment for East Devon, now and for future generations. We aim to ensure that everyone in East Devon has an equal chance to lead a long, happy and healthy life.

After emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic and entering a cost of living crisis, it is timely for us to review and update our Public Health Strategy going forward into 2024.

Our new Strategy reflects this. It sets the scene locally, gives a flavour of what we have already achieved, then outlines our strategic aims and priority activities. It identifies how we will meet these aims and acknowledges the vital role our partners play, then explains how our key council strategies and plans fit together. Although this is not a statutory requirement, our commitment reflects our local choice, because we believe it is the right thing to do for the benefit of our communities.”



*Cllr Dan Ledger, Portfolio Holder Sustainable Homes & Communities © EDDC*

# What we mean by public health

Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organised efforts of society.

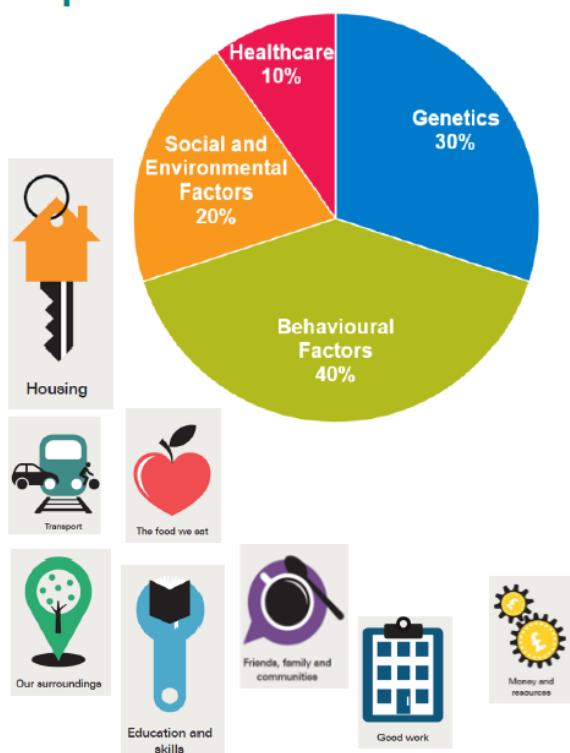
The term 'public health' is used here to cover the physical, mental and social wellbeing, of everyone in our district throughout our strategy.

Public health activities include:

- Assessing the health of populations.
- Forming policies to prevent or manage health problems and significant disease conditions.
- Promoting healthy environments.
- Societal action to invest in health-promoting living conditions.

Genetics and healthcare together have only 40% impact on the risk of morbidity and mortality. Behavioural, social and environmental factors have a 60% impact on those risks. Housing, transport, diet, surroundings, education and skills, friends / family / community, employment, money and resources can all be modified.

## Impact of Different Factors on risk of morbidity and mortality



### In Devon:

- 2.7% are frail and it is estimated to rise to 3.9% by 2038
- Most areas of the county have significantly higher levels of frailty compared to national average (1.9%)
- 1 in 3 people live with one or more long term conditions

### Opportunities

- Detection and prevention to address risk factors at an early stage to reduce ill health and burden on health and social care services

Source: Schroeder, SA (2007). 'We Can Do Better – Improving the Health of the American People'. New England Journal of Medicine. 357: 1221-8 (cited in Public Health England Strategic Plan, 2016-2020)



## 2 Setting the scene locally

A lot has happened since we published our [East Devon Public Health Strategic Plan 2019–2023](#). We moved through the stages of the covid-19 pandemic and into a national cost of living crisis, both of which have impacted on our health and wellbeing.

We cannot succeed in isolation. We work in partnership and we reflect local, regional and national priorities. Alongside East Devon’s priorities, we support work by Devon County Council, Devon’s Integrated Care System “One Devon” and the UK Health Security Agency. Devon County Council has the statutory responsibility for Public Health through the Health and Social Care Act 2012, the Director of Public Health, and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Our local choice to support this work dovetails with Devon’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-25, to the benefit our communities.

We use evidence such as data collated by Devon County Council’s public health intelligence team to understand and focus on local priority issues and communities. We also take account of “soft intelligence” by listening to conversations with officers, elected members, partners and key stakeholders.

### Financial position

The period covered by this strategy is likely to be challenging. Public services face continual change and increasing challenges including:

- Less money from the government.
- Changes to how councils can raise money.
- More people living here including more older people.
- Worsening local, national and global economic, environmental and social issues.

The economic and financial pressures seen through the pandemic, together with rising inflation and increasing energy, food and fuel costs mean that Devon’s residents have been particularly affected. The cost of living is increasing across the UK, and Devon is particularly vulnerable due to lower-than-average salaries and above-average housing and other costs.

### Our district – where we are today

Devon is the third largest county in England. The county council area has around 800,000 residents, with a higher proportion of older people than the national average. It is also one of the most sparsely populated counties, with few large settlements and a dispersed rural population. East Devon’s catchment covers 314 square miles, and serves a resident population plus numerous summer visitors. ONS Census data shows East Devon’s population increased by 13.9% from under 132,500 in 2011 to around 150,800 in 2021.



Population growth was higher in East Devon than across the South West. The population is diverse in its age-distribution: for example Cranbrook has a particularly young population while Budleigh has unusually high numbers of centenarians.



*New houses in Cranbrook. © EDDC*



*Axminster memory café. © LED Community Leisure*

More details of our district are available from our [Knowing East Devon report - East Devon](#).

# 3 What we have already done - some recent highlights

We publish [annual reviews](#) of each previous year's progress towards our Public Health Strategy.

We are particularly proud of how we stepped up into new and uncharted roles to provide the support we gave to our residents during the Covid-19 lockdowns, for instance ranging from offering phone advice, making welfare visits, delivering emergency food to helping local NHS teams deliver vaccines in our Maer Road carpark.

During this phase we forged stronger links with many community and third sector groups as well as with the County Council and other District Councils.



*Government emergency food boxes for onward distribution, and*



*NHS vaccine station set up in Maer Road © EDDC*

As we all started learning to live with covid, the extent of difficulties caused by the pandemic and the emerging national cost of living crisis became increasingly apparent.

Poverty has a direct impact on health and wellbeing. Council teams have worked hard to implement numerous schemes offering support to individuals and to businesses, reporting work to the Poverty Working Panel as described here: [About the Poverty reduction strategy - Evolving our approach - our strategy for tackling poverty - East Devon](#)

In response to concerns about deteriorating mental wellbeing, we have funded some local projects aimed at supporting children and their parents/carers in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

# 4 Where we want to be - aims and priorities

Our Strategy aims to be challenging but realistic. We can influence some but not all aspects that affect the health of individuals and of communities.



Challenging but realistic

## Strategic aims

We respect equality and diversity and would like everyone in East Devon to have an equal chance to lead a long, happy and healthy life. We aim to help influence aspects of health and wellbeing described in three very broad terms:

1. **Healthy People:** focuses on health outcomes such as life expectancy, physical health conditions like dementia, cancer and kidney disease, disability, personal wellbeing and mental health.
2. **Healthy Lives:** focuses on health-related behaviours and personal circumstances including obesity, hypertension, drug misuse, smoking and cancer screening.
3. **Healthy Places:** focuses on the wider social, economic and environmental drivers of health such as crime, unemployment, child poverty, pollution, noise and road traffic.

## Priority activities

In these challenging times and to achieve fairer health outcomes for vulnerable groups and communities, we must prioritise our activities and communities on which to focus.

### What activities will we focus on?

For more details and an overview of the evidence behind our choice of priorities, please see the companion report *East Devon Public Health Strategy 2024 – 2027: Evidence-base for our priorities*.



“There are a lot of things people can do themselves which will delay the point where they first have disability and then multi-morbidity. They are old-fashioned things, actually. Having lots of exercise, having mental stimulation and a social network, eating a reasonably balanced diet (with) not too much high fat, sugar and salt, moderating alcohol, stopping smoking if you do – these are things which are old fashioned, but they still work.” Chris Whitty [2023]



*Swim To Sea class for adults, Exmouth. © LED community Leisure*

Almost half of the burden of illness in the UK is associated with four unhealthy behaviours: smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, poor diet and low levels of physical activity. We will focus on local activities which we are most able to support or influence. Our priorities are:

- Cost of living crisis.
- Mental health.
- Unpaid carers.
- Loneliness and social isolation.
- Dementia.
- Homelessness, housing and indoor environment factors.
- Smoking.
- Alcohol and other drug use.
- Diet and nutrition.
- Physical activity.
- Pandemic preparedness.
- Health effects of climate and adverse weather events.



*Early-intervention mental wellbeing work delivered to primary schools in partnership with LED Community Leisure © HeadsUp CIC*

### **Which communities will we focus on?**

To reduce health inequalities, we must prioritise those communities that are most deprived. There is overlap with the priority activities listed above, e.g. homelessness; we will work across the East Devon district with particular focus on communities in most need, including deprived and isolated rural communities.

To identify priority communities we will assess statistical data, as a local council we also want to use our local knowledge and we will respond to “soft” intelligence such as information received from officers, councillors, other agencies and our third sector partners.

## **5 How we will get there**

To achieve our strategic aims and meet our priority activities we will:

- Promote wellbeing and self-care.
- Encourage healthier behaviour so fewer people become ill.
- Tackle environmental and social conditions to promote good health.

To achieve our aims we will:

- As a major employer we will take seriously our responsibilities towards health and wellbeing of our staff and our opportunities to lead by example.
- Work together across services to identify health and wellbeing priorities in each annual service plan, such that a golden thread runs throughout council actions.
- Seek and respond to new opportunities, continuing to build strong partnerships and maximising partnership-working including with volunteers.
- Explore the concept of “citizens as partners” and facilitate them ‘finding their own solutions” in a range of creative and accessible ways.
- Align our activities to support those of One Devon Integrated Care System and with Devon County Council as they deliver their statutory duties.
- Support East Devon’s communities and residents in making it a healthier place.
- Plan for healthy communities in all developments e.g. via health impact assessment.
- Aim to adopt a health-in-all-policies approach e.g. via council report templates.
- Liaise with LED Community Leisure e.g. over opportunities for re-badging spaces ‘health hubs’ for health as well as leisure.
- Ensure that our outstanding environment contributes to health and wellbeing.
- Ensure there are enough resources to improve health and wellbeing across the district.
- Embrace technologies to share health messages and help to improve health literacy.
- Continue to monitor evidence to inform and update priorities e.g. via JSNA data.
- Monitor how we are doing, then report and publish progress annually.

## Playing to our strengths

East Devon is an outstanding place. Everything we do aims to ensure that East Devon is a place where people want to live, work, visit and enjoy life.



*Littleham Primary School class Swim to Sea at Exmouth. © LED Community Leisure*



We are lucky that our district has such special green spaces and beautiful coastlines. We are committed to ensuring that this outstanding environment contributes to the health and wellbeing of our residents. Prevention is better than cure: we know that nature plays an important role in health and wellbeing. Our natural open spaces provide valuable opportunities for us to achieve many of our public health priorities, ranging from increasing levels of physical activity, to improved mental wellbeing and reducing social isolation. There are many opportunities for exercise on our land – through play areas, outdoor gyms and skateparks. These spaces offer us tangible opportunities to align with One Devon’s integrated care work and include the potential for increased social prescribing/health referral schemes.

We will work alongside our many partners to meet our shared goal of a healthier, happier and greener future. We will help to create and protect local networks of places that are good for wildlife and people. We will deliver this on our own land and encourage landowners to follow our example.



*Seaton Wetlands © EDDC*

Our Planners will work with partners to ensure the joined-up thinking needed to create this network of green spaces and avoid social and environmental problems. Streetscene, our Countryside team, LED Community Leisure, our Community Development Workers and others will involve our communities in delivering and deriving benefit from our green spaces and our coastlines.



*New cycle and walkways facilitate sustainable travel. © EDDC*



## Our partners

Across our services, we will work alongside many other partners to advance our evidence-based priorities. Our activities could range from signposting to appropriate services, to contributing to new strategies and policies.

We recognise that we cannot achieve all of our aspirations alone and that our work requires close partnerships. We will continue to strengthen these, by aligning and sharing knowledge, skills and resources to achieve the population health outcomes to which we aspire. We will maximise partnership working at a strategic level to identify priorities, extend reach, align resources most effectively to avoid duplication and respond to local need.



*Wreath Making session from a project in partnership with Devon County Council's Natural Environment Team. © LED Community Leisure*

Input from other agencies, local CICs, charities and other community groups is crucial. We will seek to develop our partnership activities to help achieve our public health objectives, and through a more joined-up approach to support effective use of local government resources.

See [Appendix 1](#) for some of our current partners.

# Engagement

Health inequalities are not caused by one single issue, but a complex mix of environmental and social factors which play out in a local area or place. This means that place-based approaches have an important role to play in reducing health inequalities.

We appreciate the enormous value that volunteers bring to their communities. To deliver the Strategy, volunteers will be key to keeping VSCE organisations going and supporting their communities to achieve the priorities we have identified.

We will help people to live healthier and happier lives in their communities by:

- Strengthening town- level, community-led initiatives by working with the voluntary sector to choose approaches for health and wellbeing and build social support networks.
- Enabling local communities to find their own solutions.

This could include social prescribing, seen as a way to connect communities with non-medical interventions and to find their own way to being healthier, happier and connected.



*Community Instructor with Stroke Survivors Group in Littleham. © LED Community Leisure*

# Monitoring and communicating

All councillors and officers have a role in implementing the Strategy and ensuring that council policies, decisions and activities are delivered in support of our priorities.

To ensure our work is accountable, we will monitor, review and report progress annually:

- We will develop annual implementation plans based on activities stated in service plans.
- Each annual implementation plan will outline SMART actions, with outcomes<sup>1</sup> and evaluation measurements.
- We will work together across services to identify health and wellbeing priorities in each annual service plan, enabling us to monitor impact.
- We will produce an annual review of work, reflecting on progress against services' objectives and reporting achievements along with any areas needing further work.
- We will work with our Comms team to share progress with officers, councillors and residents.

## SMART

<b>S</b>	<b>Specific</b>
<b>M</b>	<b>Measurable</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>Achievable</b>
<b>R</b>	<b>Realistic</b>
<b>T</b>	<b>Timed</b>



Feedback from mental health ambassador work in primary school. © HeadsUp CIC

<sup>1</sup> Outcomes = What difference did we make? Are we busy doing the right things to create change? As opposed to Outputs = How much did we do? Are we busy?

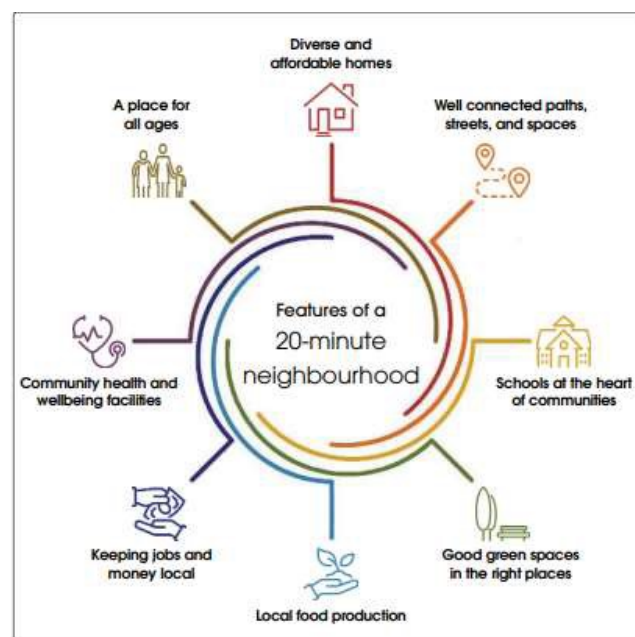
# 6 How our strategies and plans fit together

Our council's vision is to make a positive difference to residents' lives and our environment in East Devon. Learning from the pandemic, we believe that healthy people are essential for a healthy economy. Similarly, we believe that what is good for an individual's health tends to be good for the planet.

Our [Council Plan](#) priorities are for:

1. Better homes and communities for all.
2. A greener East Devon.
3. A resilient economy.
4. A well-managed, financially secure, and continuously improving council that delivers quality services.

The Public Health Strategy supports our council priorities along with others of our strategies and plans. These include our [Poverty Strategy](#), [Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy](#), [Housing Strategy](#), [Leisure Strategy](#) [pdf] and [Climate Change Strategy](#), as well as Planning policies such as health impact assessment work. To implement these strategies, health and wellbeing activities appear in annual service plans such that a golden thread runs throughout council actions. We have already published our [implementation plan of health and wellbeing activities for 2023/24](#) showing activities by our own services.



*'Planning for a 20-minute neighbourhood': a planning concept that aims to create places where people can meet most of their daily needs within a reasonable distance of their home. © TCPA<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> 20-Minute Neighbourhoods, The Town and Country Planning Association, 2021.



# 7 Summary and reflections

It is safe to assume that most people want to be in better health, but although people are living longer, many are often in poorer health.

We use the term ‘public health’ to cover physical, mental and social wellbeing of everyone in our district. We believe we have an overarching responsibility to consider health and wellbeing in all our council activities. Everything we do aims to ensure that East Devon is a place where people want to live, work, visit and enjoy life, while focusing on where there is greatest need.

East Devon’s population is diverse in its needs. Inequality can take many forms which impact population health, and to which we and many other organisations from across the system need to respond.

Our fundamental commitment should be to support individuals to have a warm and safe home and adequate healthy food, so that they can live their lives well in thriving communities which are empowered and supported to create strong social networks.

We cannot achieve our priorities alone. We will work across our services and engage with many partners to fulfil our priorities. These activities will be played out during the almost inevitable financial constraints which are impacting local authorities. We will adapt to new partnership opportunities as these arise and we will focus on activities which we are most able to influence.

Our new Strategy will help local leaders ensure that health is a better understood element of decision-taking. It is important to remember that these priority activities also align closely with our golden threads of poverty and climate emergency.

We can revise and update the Strategy as required; we will plan our actions then monitor and report our progress annually. We will do this in parallel with our Council Plan and other key strategies and plans.

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*Author: Helen Wharam, Public Health Project Officer, October 2023 updated February 2024*

***East Devon – an outstanding place***

# Appendix 1: some of our partners

Input from other agencies, local CICs, charities and other community groups is crucial.

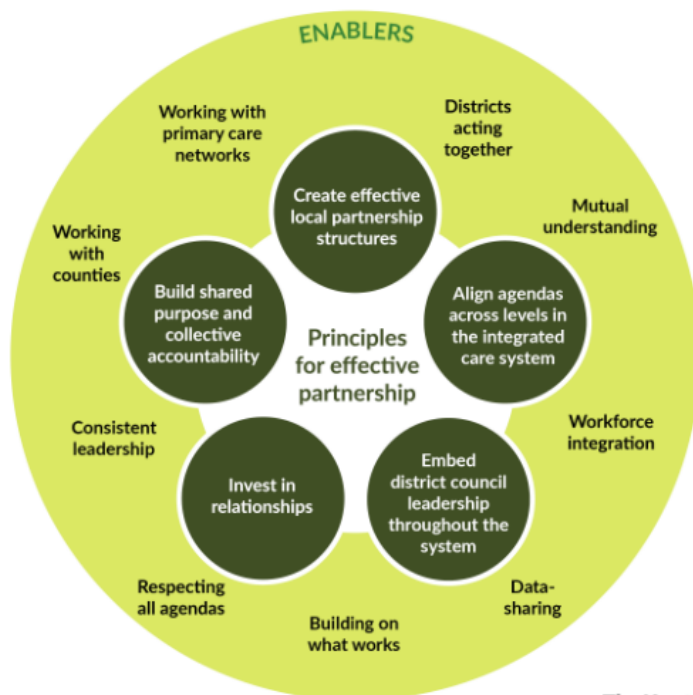
## Some of our agency partners:

- One Devon Integrated Care Board
- Devon County Council [Public Health; Communities; Learn Devon]
- Town and parish councils
- Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service
- District councils – Teignbridge, Mid Devon and others
- Exeter City Council
- NHS providers
- Police
- Schools and colleges
- South West Water

## Some of the local organisations with whom we work:

- Action East Devon
- Active Devon
- Citizens Advice
- Devon Communities Together
- Devon Local Nature Partnership
- HeadsUP Mental Health Awareness
- Honiton Health Matters
- LED Community Leisure
- Open Door Exmouth
- Ottery Health Matters
- Parental Minds
- Project Food
- Seachange
- Sport England
- Woodbury, Exmouth & Budleigh (WEB) Community Health & Wellbeing Board
- Westbank, and many more groups.

## Summary of enabling actions



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