

Health and Wellbeing Board - 24 September 2025
Questions from Councillors

Question 1, submitted by Cllr Carole Jones

- The South West Regional Health Conference focusing on children and young people.
- The Government's Ambition is for this to be the healthiest generation.
- Over-arching aim for the NHS to move from treatment to prevention.
- Justin Varney-Bennett, SW Regional Director Public Health and Senior Policy Advisor to the Department of Health, talked about the South West being THE region for teenagers. He said if you ask teenagers how they feel, their response isn't great. He believes there needs to be more physical activity and improved diets and nutrition.

In the Minehead area the PCN is working with the local secondary schools to target school absences. They are taking a health based approach, so that when a young person starts being absent from school (they didn't actually give a threshold but persistent absenteeism is 10% or more of sessions missed) the first intervention is by health. A GP appointment is made in order to explore any medical/health reason as to why the young person isn't attending school. Out of 15 pupils seen by this process 7 are back in full-time education, 1 has been provided a place in specialist education and the others are continuing to be supported.

This was a new approach and has only been running for about a year but is clearly having some success. It also goes to show GP surgeries working in a multi-disciplinary way in partnership with other agencies in the community.

Can we in Dorset please look at replicating this in our area?