Health and Wellbeing Board
18 November 2026
Healthy Life Expectancy JSNA Narrative
For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr M Bell, Public Health, Prevention & Communities

Local Councillor(s):

Senior Leadership Team:
S Crowe - Executive Director, Housing, Prevention and Communities

Report author and job title:
Wilson Otitonaiye, Public Health Data Scientist
Eleanor Jeram, Public Health Intelligence Team Lead
Email:
Wilson.Otitonaiye@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
Eleanor.Jeram@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Statutory Authority: Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Sections 116 and 116A), as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Health and Care Act 2022.

Report status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

1.1 Each Health and Wellbeing Board must have a process for Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) sets out the role and responsibility of the Health and Wellbeing Board for this work. The current JSNA process is co-ordinated by the Public Health team and involves annual strategic narrative updates alongside deep dives into specific topic and cohort areas.

1.2 This JSNA was commissioned following a Health and Wellbeing Board development session in November 2025; as part of the approved JSNA Forward Plan for 2026/27, the Board requested further understanding of the drivers behind the gap between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy and the implications for future planning and service delivery.

1.3 Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) measures how long people can expect to live in good health and is an important indicator of population health and health

inequality. While Dorset residents generally experience higher life expectancy than the England average, significant variation exists between communities, and residents spend many years living with ill health, disability or long-term conditions. The 2025 JSNA narrative update highlighted that Dorset men spend around 16 years and women around 19 years of their lives in poorer health.

1.4 The assessment explores the factors contributing to these outcomes, including deprivation, long-term conditions, health behaviours, mental wellbeing and wider determinants such as housing, employment, social connection and access to services. The report highlights the importance of maintaining independence, mobility and wellbeing throughout life, recognising the significant contribution that musculoskeletal health, physical activity and healthy ageing make to healthy life expectancy.

1.5 The report identifies several strategic opportunities for Dorset, including promoting active ageing, preventing and managing long-term conditions, encouraging physical activity and active travel, supporting mental wellbeing, improving the conditions in which people live, and reducing inequalities experienced by more disadvantaged communities. It also highlights how existing programmes, including Age Friendly Dorset, Healthy Homes Dorset, Thriving Communities and LiveWell Dorset provide practical mechanisms to support longer and healthier lives.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

- Note the findings of the Healthy Life Expectancy JSNA
- Approve publication of the Healthy Life Expectancy JSNA report in Appendix 1

3. Reason for the recommendation(s)

3.1 To update the Board on progress in the JSNA programme and provide an overview of the key findings relating to healthy life expectancy and health inequalities in Dorset.

4. The report

4.1 This report presents the findings of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) in Dorset. Healthy Life Expectancy measures the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health and is a key indicator of population wellbeing and health inequality.

4.2 The assessment shows that people in Dorset generally live longer than the England average. However, many residents spend a substantial proportion of

their lives living with ill health, disability or long-term health conditions. On average, Dorset men spend around 16 years and Dorset women around 19 years of their lives in poorer health, highlighting a significant gap between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy.

4.3 Whilst Dorset performs well overall compared with national averages, county-level figures mask considerable inequalities between communities. Residents living in more deprived areas experience poorer health outcomes, develop long-term conditions at younger ages and are more likely to spend a greater proportion of their lives in poor health than residents in less deprived areas. The report demonstrates the strong relationship between healthy life expectancy and wider determinants of health, including income, employment, education, housing, transport and access to services.

4.4 Long-term conditions are a major contributor to reduced healthy life expectancy. Cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory disease, diabetes, musculoskeletal conditions and poor mental health all impact the number of years people can live independently and in good health. The report also highlights the increasing challenge of multimorbidity, where people live with multiple long-term conditions simultaneously, often resulting in reduced quality of life and increased demand for health and care services.

4.5 Health behaviours play an important role in determining healthy life expectancy. Smoking, inactivity, obesity, poor diet and alcohol-related harm continue to contribute to preventable illness and reduced quality of life. Conversely, maintaining an active lifestyle, supporting good mental wellbeing, preventing disease and enabling early diagnosis can help people remain healthier for longer.

4.6 The report identifies opportunities to improve healthy life expectancy through a whole-system approach that combines prevention, early intervention and action on the wider determinants of health. Existing initiatives across Dorset provide strong foundations on which to build, including programmes that support healthy lifestyles, early identification and management of long-term conditions, mental wellbeing and community resilience.

4.7 Also highlighting the importance of healthy ageing within Dorset's population. Dorset has a larger proportion of older residents than England as a whole and ensuring people can remain active, independent and connected to their communities for longer is central to improving healthy life expectancy. Evidence presented in the report demonstrates the benefits of physical activity, active travel, social participation and supportive environments in helping residents maintain good health throughout later life. Initiatives such as Age Friendly Dorset and Thriving Communities provide a framework for

creating communities that enable people to age well and continue participating in community life.

4.8 The findings provide an important evidence base for partners across Dorset. They reinforce the importance of reducing health inequalities, supporting healthy ageing and improving opportunities for people to live longer, healthier and more independent lives. The report will inform strategic planning, commissioning and partnership working across the health and care system and contribute to the delivery of the Dorset Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Not Applicable

6. Legal considerations

6.1 Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and 2022, Health and Wellbeing Boards have a duty to prepare a JSNA as part of assessing the health and social care needs of the local population.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from publication of this JSNA deep dive.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment includes consideration of the wider determinants impact on health and wellbeing in the local area.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 A comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process identifies key health and wellbeing issues, to which services provided by Health and Wellbeing Board representative organisations can contribute.

10. Other implications

10.1 The requirement for the Health and Wellbeing Board to have a process of Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is set out in Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

11. Risk Implications

11.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:
Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

12. Equalities

12.1 A JSNA should consider the impact of health inequalities and cohorts of the population who may experience poor health and wellbeing outcomes.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1 – Healthy Life Expectancy JSNA

14. Background papers

14.1 Dorset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

15. Report sign-off

15.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Assurance & Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director for Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Cabinet Member(s)