

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-2030

Working together to strengthen the building blocks of health and wellbeing

1. Introduction

This is the third Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy from the Stockton-on-Tees Health and Wellbeing Board. With this strategy, we are developing a more coordinated, borough-wide approach, grounded in local action, supported by a joint delivery plan, and overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure stronger alignment.

The Role of the Health and Wellbeing Board: The Board plays a crucial role in fostering greater coordination and integration across local organizations, partners, and communities. Its aim is to collectively improve the health and well-being of local residents while narrowing the health inequalities that persist across the borough.

The Local Health and Wellbeing System: Stockton-on-Tees is fortunate to have a solid foundation of strong partnerships, a vibrant voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, and many strengths within local communities. Examples include:

- **Team Stockton:** The borough's 'Place Leadership Board' unites local leaders and the community to create a shared vision for the area and to work collaboratively to achieve it. Tackling the social and economic factors that affect health, and well-being is a key focus.
- **The Local VCSE:** The sector plays a vital role in prevention and early intervention, particularly in reaching disadvantaged and marginalized groups. A "Making it Real" (MiR) Board, comprised of individuals with lived experience, has also been established.
- **The Council's Powering Our Future Programme:** This direction is transforming how the Council works alongside partners and the local community to create better outcomes for all.
- **Integrated Care Board (ICB):** Across the Northeast and North Cumbria, the ICB, which brings together the NHS and its partners, has adopted the "Better Health and Wellbeing for All" strategy. This plan places a strong emphasis on addressing inequality and prioritizing early prevention.

Where this strategy adds value: This strategy unites the ambitions and commitments across the Council, local organizations, partners, and the community to improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities across the Borough. By bringing these efforts together, we are able to:

- Gain a clearer understanding of our collective actions and how they are interconnected.
- Apply a health perspective to all policies and strategies, assessing their positive or negative impact on health and well-being.
- Identify where we can have the most significant impact, offering opportunities for better coordination, collaboration, and efficient use of our collective resources.

2. Developing the Strategy

The strategy has been developed through a collaborative, inclusive, and evidence-based approach, ensuring it aligns with the needs and aspirations of local communities in Stockton-on-Tees. The approach and priority areas have been shaped by:

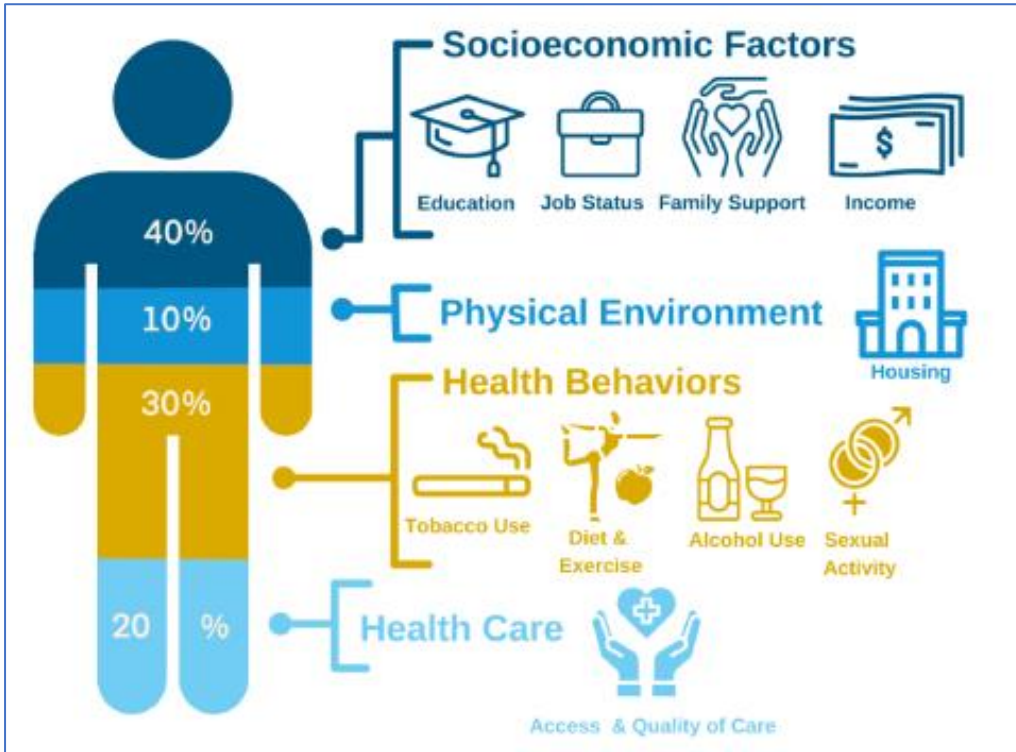
- **Reflecting on the past:** A review of the previous Health and Wellbeing Strategy, assessing successes, challenges, and lessons learned.
- **Collaborative input:** Analysing relevant existing strategies and plans from across the Council and its partners.
- **Evidence and best practices:** Reviewing the evidence base, national and regional policies, and learning from other localities' health and well-being strategies.
- **Local health insights:** Drawing on local data that highlights the overall health and well-being of the Borough and the factors influencing it.
- **Diverse perspectives:** Workshops with Health and Wellbeing Board members and consultations across the Council, local organizations, and partners.
- **Community voice:** Incorporating feedback from various consultations, surveys, focus groups conducted over the last few years, as part of service reviews, health needs assessments, strategy development, as well as input from the residents' survey.

DRAFT

3. Our collective approach and guiding principles

Through this strategy, we will place a greater focus on our collective efforts to improve the **building blocks** that contribute to health and well-being. Research shows that factors like education, quality employment, family support, and the surrounding environment (such as housing and green spaces) play a fundamental role in shaping health and well-being. In fact, these factors together have a greater impact on overall health and well-being than access to healthcare, important though this is.

What has the biggest influence on people’s health and wellbeing?



<https://www.uclahealth.org/sustainability/our-commitment/social-determinants-health>

We have a significant opportunity to improve the life chances of all local residents by working together to create the strongest foundations for health and well-being, building on our many existing local strengths. To steer our collaborative efforts, we will implement **five core principles** and **five key ways of working**.

DRAFT NARRATIVE – PRIOR TO DOCUMENT DESIGN AND FORMATTING

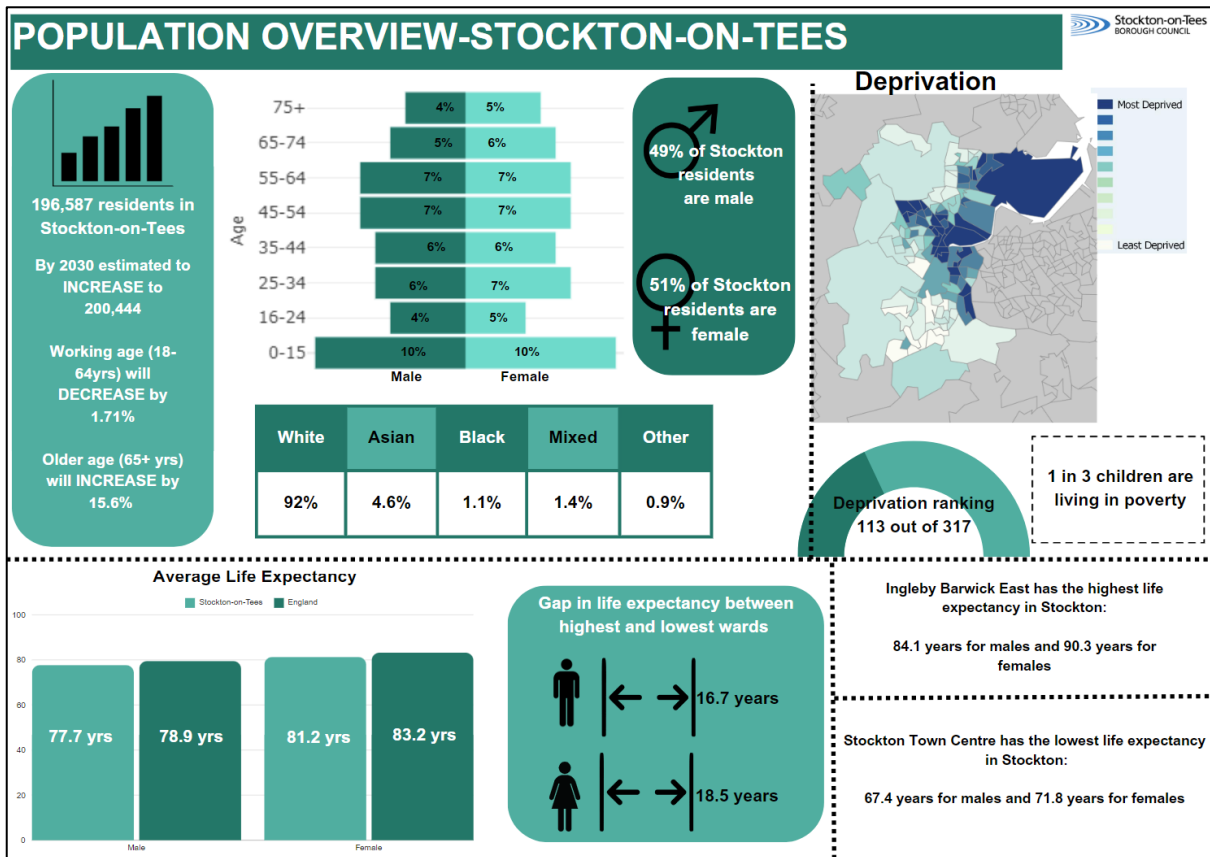
Five core principles:

- **Health is everybody's business:** The most effective way to tackle the broader determinants of health is to incorporate a health perspective into all policies and strategies, evaluating their potential impact on health and well-being. This is known as the "Health in All Policies" approach.
- **Communities at the centre:** Working alongside all our communities to understand what is important to them and what would help them to be healthier. By building on the many strengths within local communities, we will work together to create tailored approaches and services that address their specific challenges.
- **Commit to prevention and early intervention:** Through a life course approach, across all stages of life, from childhood to old age, acknowledging how early experiences influence long-term health outcomes.
- **Levelling the playing field:** Communities across the borough do not all have the same opportunities to live in good health and wellbeing. Our collective action across communities, organisations and services will seek to leave no one behind, acknowledging the complex web of factors that affect health and wellbeing for individuals and communities.
- **Placed based approach:** Our approach will be rooted in local communities and places. A local-first approach will help make the most of local knowledge, networks and resources to provide tailored support. Where it adds value and maximises resources, we will also continue to collaborate with our partners across places and beyond the Borough.

Five ways of working to be smarter with how we work and use collective resources:

- **Greatest impact:** We will work together to ensure the greatest impact based on evidence, for our collective resources.
- **The whole is greater than the sum of the parts:** We will seize all opportunities to better coordinate, integrate and implement shared approaches to key local issues. Evidence shows this delivers better outcomes.
- **Creative and taking measured risks:** We will pilot new ideas, continuously learn, and assess their potential for scaling across our local system.
- **Open to challenge:** Committed to regularly evaluating our impact and adjusting course when necessary.
- **Manage expectations:** We will establish a clear framework for co-production with partners and communities, setting out how and where local people can shape work to improve health and wellbeing and how this will happen. Whilst, respecting the rights of local communities to get involved as much or as little as they are able or wish to.

4. Stockton-on-Tees: Population at a glance



We are the largest Borough in the Tees-Valley with approximately 200,000 residents, with areas of affluence sitting alongside areas of deprivation. More than 25% of our wards are in the 10% most deprived in the country. Health inequalities remain a key challenge in the borough, most acutely demonstrated by the life expectancy gap of 16.7yrs for men and 18.5yrs for women between people living in the most deprived wards and those living in the most affluent wards. This gap in life expectancy is one of the widest in the country and has been persistent for some years despite significant efforts across organisations.

5. Strategic focus areas for 2025- 2030

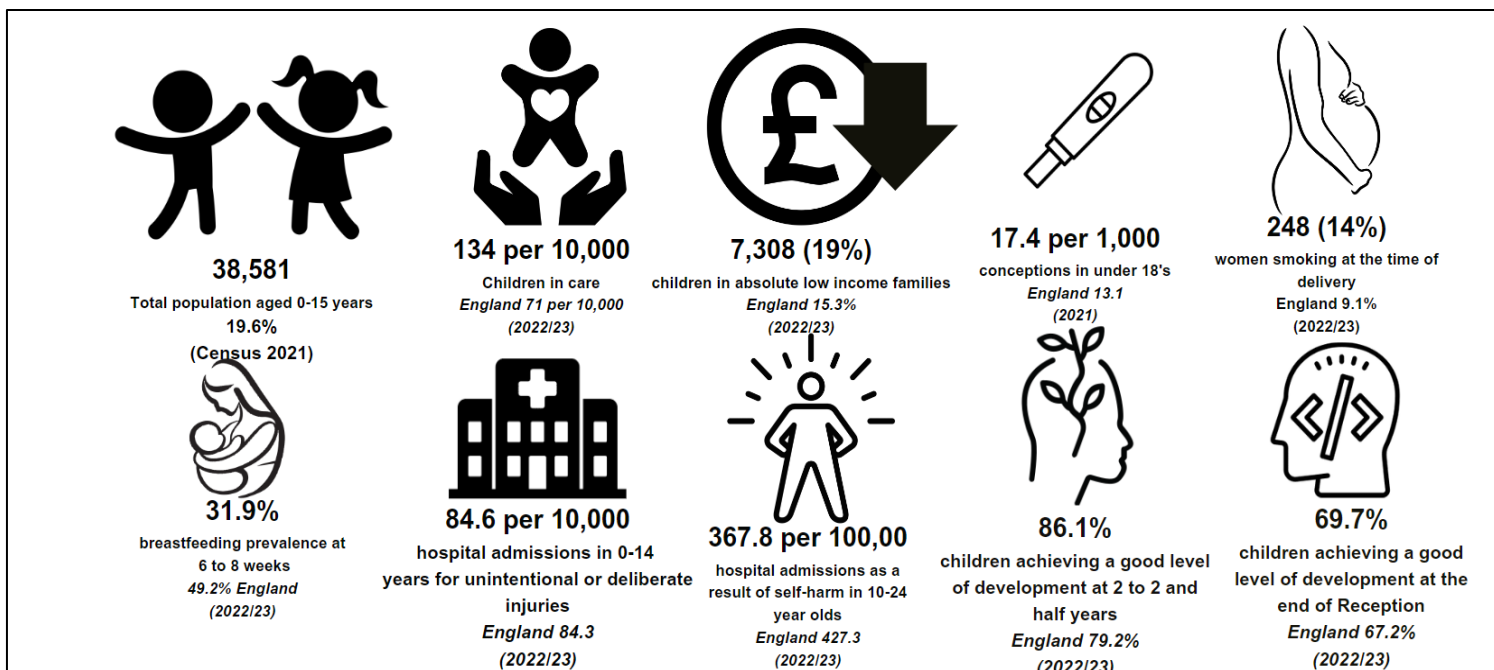
This strategy has **four priority focus areas** where we can have the most significant impact and offer the greatest opportunities for collaborative working over the coming years.

- **All children and families have the best start in life**
- **Everyone has a healthy standard of living**
- **Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities**
- **Everyone lives long and healthy lives**

DRAFT

FOCUS AREA 1: All children and families have the best start in life

Snapshot: Facts and figures



Approximately 39,000 children and young people (ages 0-15) live in Stockton-on-Tees, representing about 20% of the overall population in the Borough. 19% of these children and young people are from low-income families and 58% receive free school meals. In 2022/23, there were more than 550 children in our care, a rate of 134 per 10,000 children, against a national rate of 71 per 10,000 children.

In the Borough, teenage pregnancy rates are higher than the England average. 14% of pregnant women are smoking at the time of delivery, and breastfeeding prevalence (6-8 weeks) stands at 31.9% compared to the England average of 49.2%. At year 6, 39.4% of children are overweight or obese, higher than the England average.

86.1% of children in the borough are achieving a good level of development at 2 to 2 and a half years, higher than the England average. Likewise, 69.7% of children are achieving a good level of development at the end of reception which is above the England average.

What have communities told us

Some key themes from various consultations, surveys, focus groups

- Knowledge and awareness of services and prevention offers
- Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Coordination between services
- Access to mental health and emotional wellbeing provision
- Advice and support for breastfeeding
- Identification of young people's needs at the earliest opportunity
- Support for transition periods

DRAFT NARRATIVE – PRIOR TO DOCUMENT DESIGN AND FORMATTING

Why is this a key focus?

A good start in life is essential for the lifelong health, well-being, and future opportunities of children and young people. Quality care before and during pregnancy, combined with the right support from early childhood through school and into adulthood, provides the best foundation for life-long health outcomes.

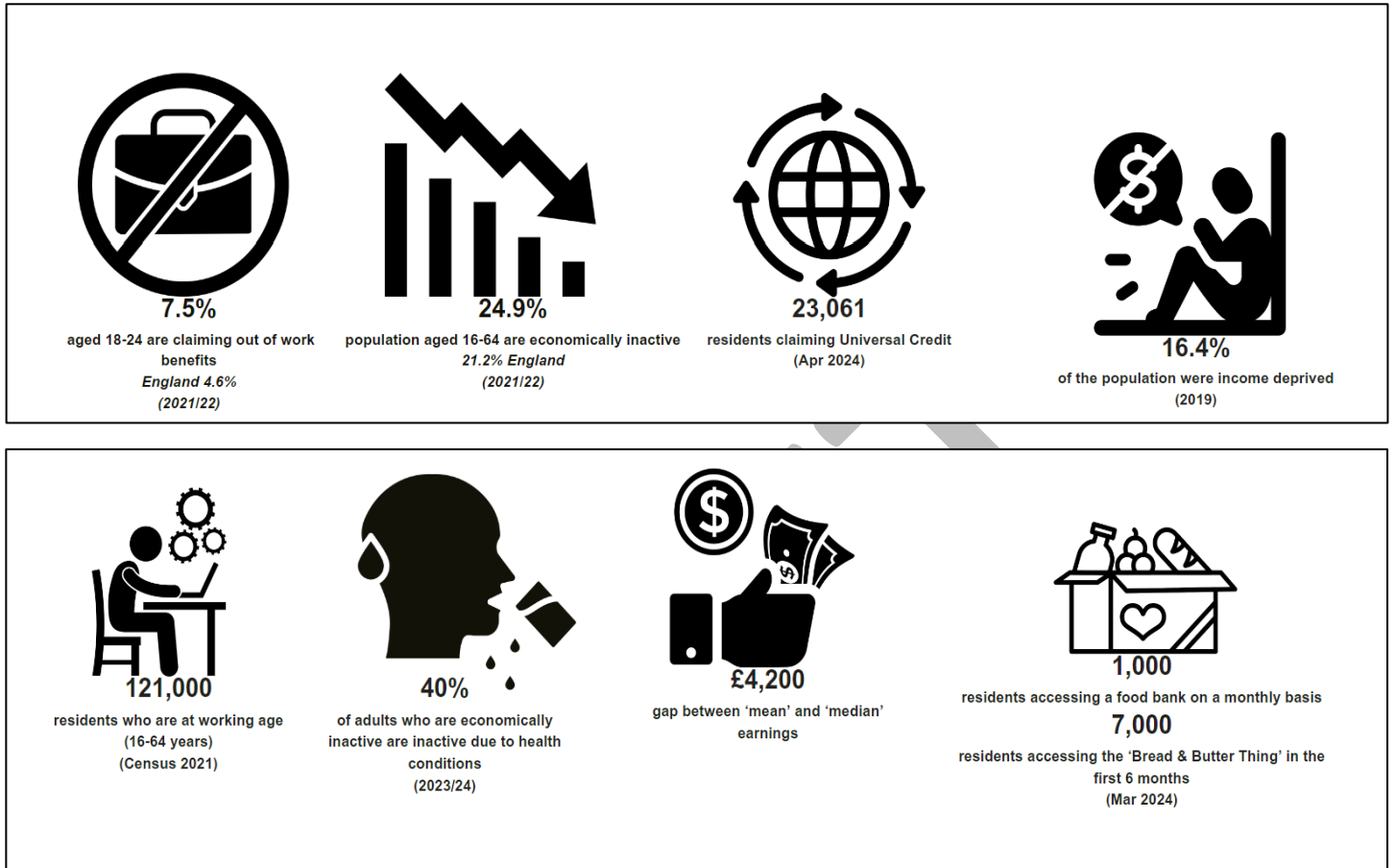
By investing in early childhood development, supporting parents, improving the home learning environment, promoting school readiness, bolstering resilience and mental health in young people, and providing targeted support to families in greatest need, we can ensure that every child is given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Commitments

- **Early years:** Children and families are supported to develop a child's early speech, language and communication and provide a positive home learning environment.
- **Inclusive:** Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities have their needs met and Stockton-on-Tees is a Borough where all children and young people are included regardless of their need, background or vulnerability.
- **Early intervention:** Children, young people and their families have access to support as early as possible to prevent problems from escalating.
- **Corporate parenting:** Children in our Care and Care Experienced Young People are supported to enable them to achieve their full potential.
- **Safe from harm:** Children and young people are safe from harm and safe in their communities, protected from bullying, neglect and abuse in the home, online and in the community.
- **Transition:** Ensure there is a joined-up pathway that fully supports young people in their transition to adulthood.
- **Mental health and wellbeing:** Improve access to early support and care for children and young people through schools, primary care and community services.
- **Health and emotional wellbeing in schools:** Supporting schools to offer a holistic approach that promotes healthy behaviours and supports all children to build their resilience, emotional literacy and coping skills.

FOCUS AREA 2: Everyone has a healthy standard of living

Snapshot: Facts and figures



Stockton-on-Tees has some of the highest poverty and deprivation rates in the country. In 2021/22, 19% (7,298) of children were living in absolute low-income families in the Borough, compared with 15.3% nationally. 7.5% of the population aged 18-24 (965) are claiming out-of-work benefits against 4.6% nationally. As of April 2024, there were 23,061 people claiming universal credit in the Borough.

In 2021/22, 24.9% of population aged 16-64 were economically inactive against 21.2% nationally. The main reason for economic inactivity is health conditions.

Reliance on food banks has increased with data from 'Stockton & District Information and Advice Service' stating that the top reasons for referrals were rising cost of essentials, priority debt, impact of health, low sufficient income, and budgeting issues. There are 5 hubs across Stockton for residents to access the 'Bread & Butter Thing'. Within the first six months, almost 7,000 people across the Borough have utilised The Bread-and-Butter Thing Hubs.

DRAFT NARRATIVE – PRIOR TO DOCUMENT DESIGN AND FORMATTING

What have communities told us

Some key themes from various consultations, surveys, focus groups:

- Housing costs and access to affordable housing
- Rising cost of food
- Stigma associated with poverty
- Training and upskilling needs
- Access to foodbanks and pantries
- Lack of jobs
- Rising energy bills

Why is this a key focus?

There is a well-established link between the money and resources a person has and their mental and physical health. People with the lowest incomes, those at risk of or living in poverty (lacking enough for basic essentials), are at the highest risk of poor mental and physical health. They often face barriers to accessing nutritious food, safe housing, healthcare, and opportunities for education and employment.

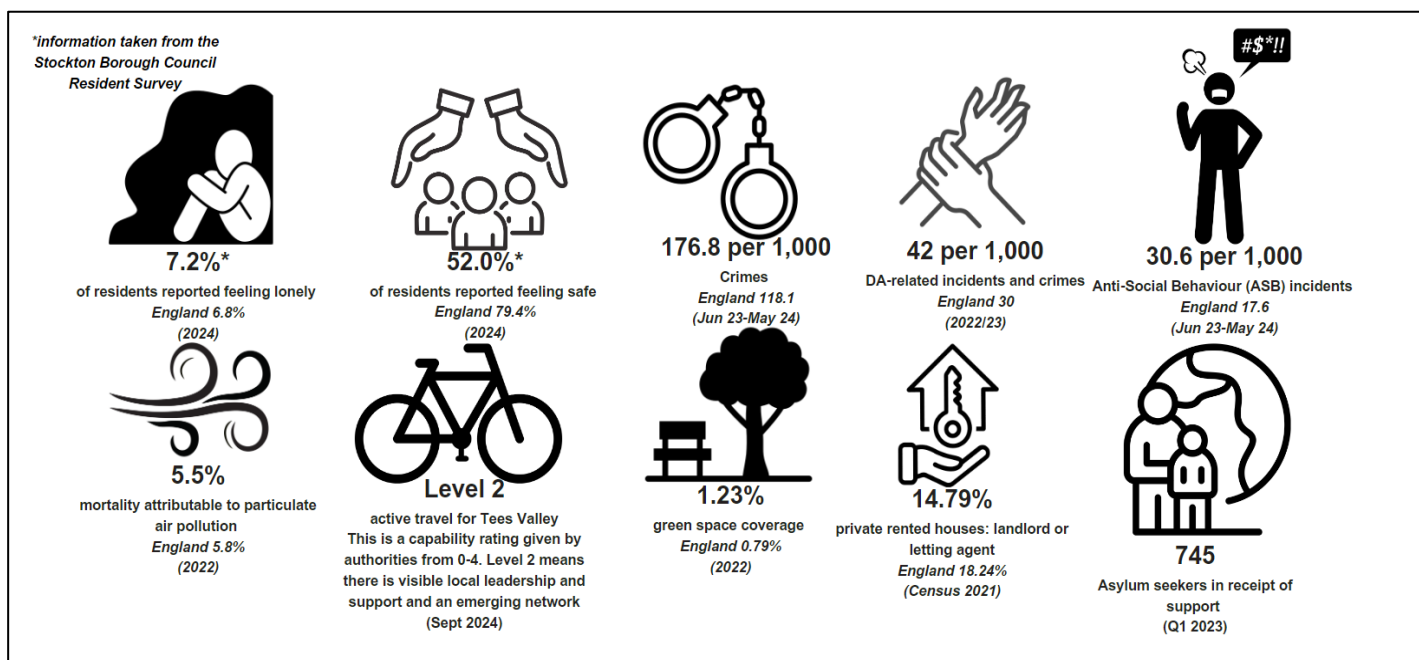
There is also clear evidence that employment can improve health, resilience, and well-being, but it needs to be good quality work. This means fair pay, a safe and supportive environment, where people have opportunities for growth and development.

Commitments

- **Poverty:** We will work to tackle the contributing causes as well as providing direct support, advice and information to people, families, households directly affected by poverty.
- **Equality and poverty impact assessments:** As a Council we will ensure that our policies, practices, and decision-making processes are fair, do not present barriers to disadvantaged and protected groups and those affected by poverty. This will be supported through the systematic use of equality and poverty impact assessments.
- **Food insecurity:** We will ensure people and households who face food insecurity (when people don't have enough to eat and don't know where their next meal will come from) are able to access nutritious food while working to address the underlying causes of food poverty.
- **Housing:** Ensure access to secure, affordable and quality housing, particularly for people and families with the greatest vulnerabilities.
- **Healthy workplace:** We will make Stockton-on-Tees a recognised place of good work and fair pay. As many employers as possible offering safe and supportive workplaces, that promotes and support staff health and wellbeing.
- **Addressing inequality:** We will provide support for skills, education and training to give people better chances to access the job opportunities available. We will focus efforts on communities that have more prevalent issues with lower skills and lower wages, as well as people facing barriers, such as those living with a disability or those with long term health conditions.

FOCUS AREA 3: Everyone lives in healthy and sustainable places and communities

Snapshot: Facts and figures



The resident survey was conducted last year across Stockton-on-Tees, results show that just over half of residents feel safe and 7.2% reported feeling lonely. Crimes, domestic abuse incidents and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) are currently all higher than the England average, however, there have been some improvements resulting in crime and ASB rates decreasing. Stockton currently has the lowest rates in the Cleveland force area.

Mortality rates attributable to air pollution continue to be lower than the England average. A Stockton-on-Tees Air Quality Strategy is currently in production, which will set out specific measures to support reduction of PM2.5 air pollution levels.

Stockton-on-Tees has similar rates of asylum seekers in receipt of support to Middlesbrough, however, the other authorities within the Tees Valley (Darlington, Hartlepool, and Redcar and Cleveland) remain lower.

What have communities told us

Some key themes from various consultations, surveys, focus groups:

- Loneliness (social isolation)
- More ways to facilitate physical activity
- Support people to eat more healthily
- Struggling to achieve healthy diet and weight stigma
- Affordability and availability of healthier foods
- More green space closer to homes
- More cycle routes and signposting
- Social and cultural barriers preventing people with disabilities to engage in physical activity

DRAFT NARRATIVE – PRIOR TO DOCUMENT DESIGN AND FORMATTING

Why is this a key focus?

The places where we live (our homes and neighbourhoods), the communities we are part of, the natural environment, how we travel; all have a significant influence on our mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Healthy and sustainable places and communities are ones where people feel safe and included, social connections are strong, and environments facilitate healthy, active lifestyles for all ages. Evidence shows that creating such spaces can reduce the risk of long-term chronic conditions, improve mental health, and enhance overall quality of life.

Commitments

- **Neighbourhood design:** When planning new developments, or improvements to our existing neighbourhoods, we will prioritise opportunities for social interaction and physical activity, improving neighbourhood walkability, and access to local amenities.
- **Green space:** We want everyone to enjoy spending time in the natural environment, with accessible and attractive countryside, parks, recreation grounds, and other natural areas, that more people of all abilities and ages want to use (walking, running, children's play, formal and informal sport).
- **Leisure facilities:** We will invest in and improve our leisure facilities, to ensure that there are accessible and affordable sport and leisure opportunities, supporting increased physical activity and social connection.
- **Active travel:** We will reduce the barriers that stop people from choosing to travel actively to schools, colleges and work. Delivering improvements in walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure, and improving access to public transport, in order to support active travel for people of all abilities and ages.
- **Food environment:** Stockton-on-Tees has a healthier food environment where good food is easily accessible, affordable and which meets diverse cultural and nutritional needs. Healthy food should not be a luxury, and therefore everyone should be able to eat healthily every day, no matter who they are, what they do or where they live.
- **Air quality:** We will reduce air pollution by working with partnerships and networks to influence policy and planning decisions. Increase awareness by providing education on the health impacts of poor air quality and promoting behaviours that improve air quality, with a particular focus on areas and communities that experience the worst air quality.
- **Community safety:** To make Stockton a safer place where people are protected from serious harm and live in communities which are safer and welcoming.
- **Domestic abuse:** We want everyone living or working in Stockton-on-Tees to feel safe, supported and protected from domestic abuse, regardless of their age, sex, gender, sexuality, disability, socio-economic status, faith or background.

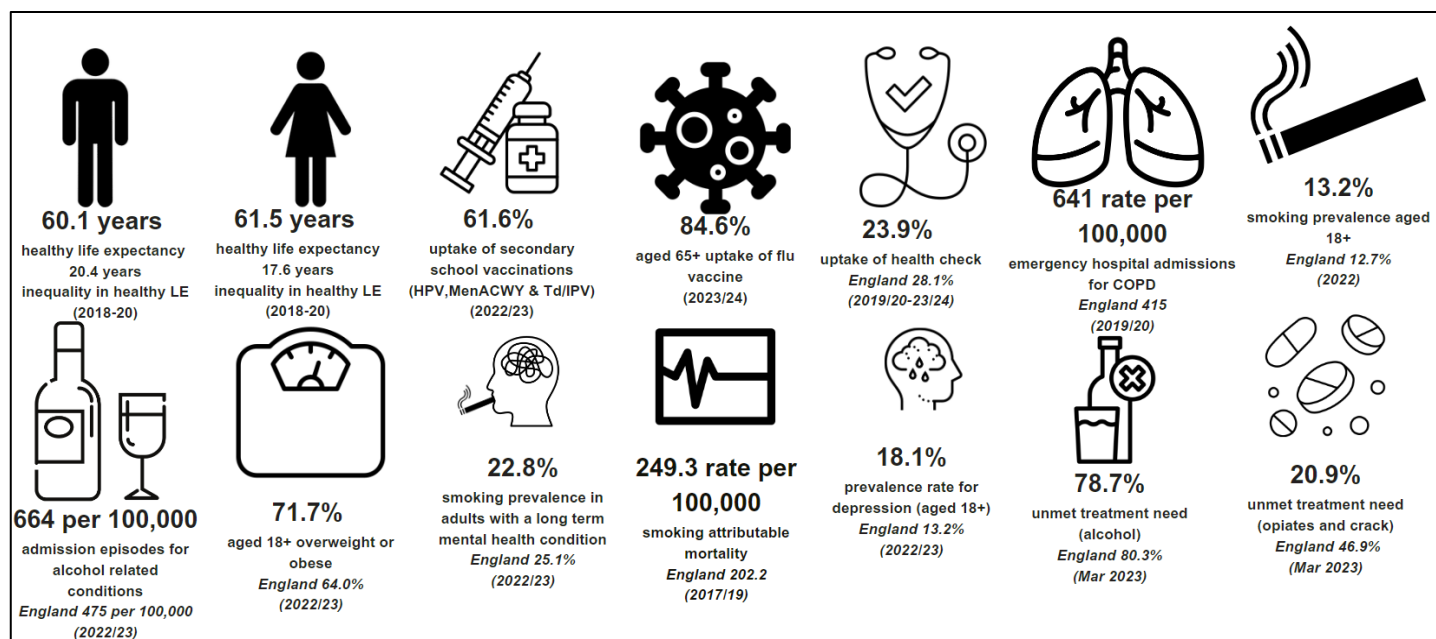
DRAFT NARRATIVE – PRIOR TO DOCUMENT DESIGN AND FORMATTING

- **Community resilience:** We will work with communities to strengthen resilience through evidence-based public health initiatives, fostering community networks and supporting education on emergency preparedness, including the health and environmental effects of the climate change emergency as well as future pandemics. Communities most likely to be negatively impacted will be prioritised.
- **VCSE:** We will continue to support and work with a vibrant and growing voluntary, community & social enterprise sector (VCSE) in Stockton-on-Tees.
- **Co-production:** We will have a clear and consistent approach to co-production with communities and take all opportunities to embed this into practice. Whilst, respecting the rights of local communities to get involved as much or as little as they are able or wish to.
- **Social isolation and loneliness:** we will work together with communities to tackle the contributing causes, encourage and facilitate more ways to connect within the community, as well as providing support for people at greatest risk or impacted.
- **Inequalities:** We will work together with marginalized and disadvantaged groups and communities to better understand their needs, helping to address the barriers they face and ensuring fair access to support and care.

DRAFT

FOCUS AREA 4: Everyone lives long and healthy lives

Snapshot: Facts and figures



Healthy life expectancy is a measure of the average number of years a person would expect to live in good health. In our Borough we see a significant gap of 16.7yrs for men and 18.5yrs for women between people living in the most deprived wards and those living in the most affluent wards.

In terms of access to preventative programmes, 62% of adolescents are taking up the offer of secondary school vaccinations, whereas around 85% of those over 65 years are taking up the offer of flu vaccines. For screening, there is a 24% uptake of the free NHS Health Checks.

72% of adults in the Borough are overweight or obese. Whilst there has been a decline over the years in overall smoking rates in the Borough, it is still higher than the national average. In addition, there are differences between groups and communities locally, with higher smoking rates in people with severe mental illness and routine and manual workers.

In 2022/23, there were 664 per 100,000 admissions for alcohol related conditions, significantly higher than the England average. In terms of mental health, the rate of people living with depression is 18% in the Borough, higher than the national average.

What have communities told us

Some key themes from various consultations, surveys, focus groups:

- Supporting young people with anxiety about vaccination
- Addressing distrust and vaccine misinformation
- Flexibility of venues and times to access services
- Access to holistic mental health support and services
- Coordinated and joined up services for people with multiple needs

DRAFT NARRATIVE – PRIOR TO DOCUMENT DESIGN AND FORMATTING

Why is this a key focus?

It is crucial not only to help people live longer lives, but also to ensure that most of those years are spent in good mental and physical health. Supporting people to make healthier choices empowers them to manage behaviours like smoking, diet, physical activity, and alcohol consumption, which can greatly improve their chances of staying healthy for longer.

Early diagnosis of risk factors and conditions provides an opportunity for timely support, promoting self-care and helping to prevent the onset of long-term chronic conditions. While many people are confident in seeking services to improve and manage their health, some groups require additional support and targeted services to achieve the same level of access and benefit.

Commitments

- **Vaccinations:** We will support and promote vaccination programmes to prevent serious illness caused by communicable diseases. Through partnerships and networks with the NHS, UK Health Security Agency and community organisations, we will improve vaccination uptake, with a focus on communities with greater barriers to access.
- **Screening:** We want all residents of Stockton-on-Tees to be able to access all available screening for circulatory disease, respiratory disease and cancers.
- **Smoking:** We will reduce the number of people smoking across all communities, whilst providing focused support for people with low incomes, living with mental illness and pregnant women.
- **Healthier Weight:** As well as tackling the wider causes of obesity, we will support those who are already experiencing overweight or obesity to make sustainable behaviour changes.
- **Alcohol related harm:** We will reduce alcohol related harm in Stockton-on-Tees whilst ensuring that alcohol can be enjoyed responsibly.
- **Drug related harm:** We will reduce the number of people using drugs through primary prevention initiatives and tackling the drivers contributing to drug misuse. We will treat addiction as a long-term health condition, breaking down stigma, and ensuring early help and treatment to reduce drug related harm.
- **Mental Health:** We will continue working to reduce stigma within our communities, enhance access to early support and care, and prioritize strengthening community-based integrated services.
- **Independence:** We will provide the right support at the right time to people to prevent, reduce or delay the need for ongoing support and maximise their independence.
- **Complex and multiple needs:** For people experiencing complex and multiple needs, we will look for all opportunities to better coordinate and deliver holistic support and care, rather than siloed.

6. How we will deliver and monitor the strategy

- **A joint delivery plan:** Underpinning the strategy will be the development of a joint delivery plan, with measurable objectives, activities, timelines and responsibilities.
- **Outcomes framework and Dashboard:** A set of high-level outcomes and process milestones will be developed, that can be monitored over time.
- **Feedback from communities:** We will engage with our communities to gather their feedback on our progress and ensure we are also responding to emerging needs.

DRAFT