

HEALTHY STEVENAGE STRATEGY 2026–2031

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Foreword by Councillor Myla Arceno, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, and Wellbeing

Stevenage continues to be a proud, diverse and resilient town. Despite significant strengths, the reality is clear. Our residents experience some of the most challenging health outcomes in Hertfordshire. Stevenage is currently the most deprived district in the county. People living in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods face shorter lives, poorer health and fewer opportunities to thrive. Data shows that men living in the most deprived areas live just over five years less than those living in the least deprived areas. Women experience a gap of four years.

These inequalities are not a reflection of individual choices alone. They are shaped by people's housing, income, education, work, environment, access to services and levels of social connection. No single organisation can fix this in isolation. The council, the NHS, Hertfordshire County Council, and our voluntary, community and faith partners must continue to work as a unified system with a strong focus on prevention.

This strategy sets out a refreshed approach for the next five years. It recognises the pressures we face, the ambition we share and the leadership role that Stevenage Borough Council will continue to play. It provides a clear direction for the Healthy Stevenage Partnership and a renewed commitment to working together to give every resident the chance to live a healthy, independent and fulfilling life.

As local government changes through Local Government Reorganisation, this strategy gives Stevenage a strong foundation to protect local priorities, strengthen partnerships and ensure residents' health and wellbeing remain central to future local decision making.

1. Introduction

Health in Stevenage is mixed. While we perform close to national averages on many measures, we consistently fall behind the Hertfordshire average. The latest health needs assessments highlight three major themes that require coordinated action across the system.

Three key themes are dominant across all the evidence:

1. Healthy Weight – 72% of adults are overweight or obese, and 37% of Year 6 pupils are overweight or obese, significantly above the county average.
2. Adult & Young People's Mental Health – higher prevalence of depression, common mental health disorders (CMDs), self-harm admissions and male suicide risk, strongly associated with deprivation.
3. Frailty & Dementia – diagnosis rates are higher than Hertfordshire, with mortality particularly high in more deprived areas, and waiting lists for mobility and strength-based support growing.

These challenges are closely linked to wider determinants of health, including poverty, education, employment, housing and access to transport and green space. Addressing them requires long-term, place-based prevention and coordinated partnership working. The NHS 10 Year Health Plan reinforces a shift from hospital to community, analogue to digital and sickness to prevention, while the HCC Public Health Strategy similarly prioritises prevention, early intervention and reducing inequalities.

This strategy reflects that direction and local consultation. Feedback from 84 residents and over 40 stakeholders across 17 organisations supported the five priorities, while calling for delivery to be practical, visible, affordable, inclusive and accountable.

2. Achievements so far

Following the launch of the initial Healthy Stevenage Strategy in 2018, the council along with Healthy Stevenage Partnership have delivered a number of successful initiatives to tackle health inequalities.

Creating a dementia friendly Stevenage



Partnership working to provide support to residence with dementia and their carers.

Strong partnership during COVID mobilising support



Partners mobilised quickly to provide practical support and reduce isolation.

Getting people more active in their communities



Local activity programmes helped more residents move more, more often.

Healthy Hub has established a key route into support



The Healthy Hub became a key front door to advice, support and onward referral.

Delivered preventative programmes in partnership



Community Kitchen, 5 Ways to Wellbeing Workshops, Strength & Balance, Fit, Fed & Read, Summer Parks

Preventative action to support those in crisis



Support provided to those in crisis to access and be referred into services.

Promoted active travel to get people more active



Supported the set of the Stevenage Cycle Hub and launched a Beryl Bike scheme to get people more active

More opportunities for young people during school holidays



Through partnership work created opportunities for young people to stay active in holidays

Secured investment into sport and recreation facilities



New Leisure Hub, upgraded tennis courts at Shephalbury Park, Playzone at KGV, Ridlins Athletics Track, Skatepark at Peartree Park

Enhanced our parks and green spaces



Investing in parks and green spaces to support active lifestyles

3. Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy sets the shared vision and priorities for improving health and tackling health inequalities in Stevenage between 2026–2031. It provides the framework for:

- A prevention-led town-wide approach
- A clear alignment with local JSNA evidence, the NHS 10 Year Health Plan and the Hertfordshire Public Health Strategy
- A re-set of the Healthy Stevenage Partnership as a system leadership platform
- A practical focus on interventions the local authority and partners are best placed to deliver, supported by named ownership, realistic resources and measurable outcomes

The strategy does not attempt to capture every service or programme delivered by health and care organisations. Instead, it focuses on a smaller number of priorities where the local authority and partners can work collectively to reduce inequalities, prevent avoidable ill health and support people to stay well for longer. It will be translated into a focused action plan, with annual public reporting on progress, learning and any changes required.

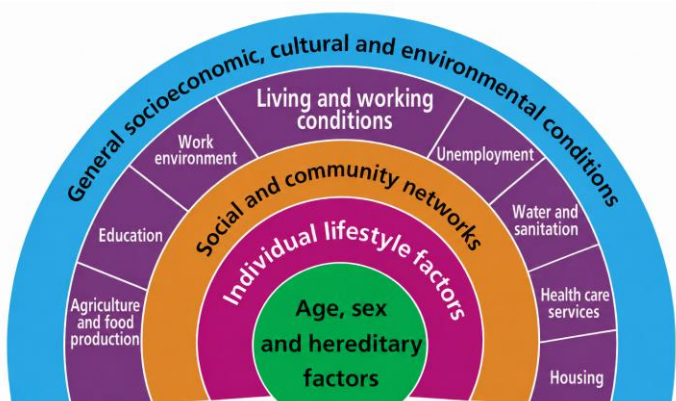
4. Determinants of Health

The JSNA makes it clear: health outcomes are shaped mainly by the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. In Stevenage, deprivation clusters in Bedwell, Shephall and Roebuck with higher rates of disability, long-term illness, unemployment and poorer access to services.

Key drivers of inequality include:

- Income & Cost-of-Living Pressures
- Housing quality and security
- Food insecurity
- Education and skills gaps
- Access to green space and active travel routes
- Social isolation and safety

Any effective health strategy must therefore be place-based, asset-led and grounded in local community insight.



Source: Dahlgren, G. and Whitehead, M. (1993) Tackling inequalities in health: what can we learn from what has been tried? Acknowledgement

5. Our Public Health Approach

The strategy adopts a prevention-first model aligned with the NHS Long Term Plan and the HCC Public Health Strategy:

1. Help people stay healthy through accessible services, healthy environments and everyday prevention.
2. Promote wellbeing, social connection and resilience across all ages.
3. Protect from harm, including poor housing, unsafe environments and preventable diseases.
4. Tackle inequalities head-on, recognising that deprivation is the strongest predictor of poor health in Stevenage.

We will embed behavioural science, lived experience, and data-driven decision-making across all programmes. Our approach will be universal but targeted: all residents should benefit, with additional outreach, capacity and investment directed towards neighbourhoods and population groups experiencing the poorest outcomes or greatest barriers. Digital routes will be supported by traditional options.

6. How Healthy Is Stevenage? (Summary of Key Inequalities)

Population and Context

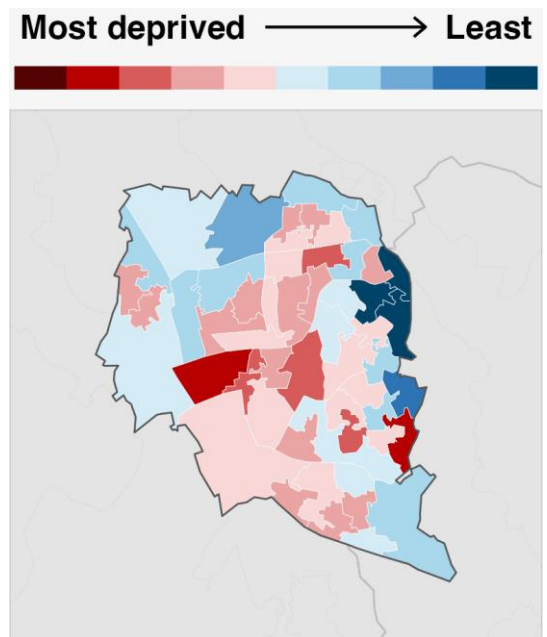
Stevenage has a population of around 91,000. While the town currently has a relatively young population, its demographic profile is changing, with the number of residents aged 65 and over expected to grow significantly over the coming years. Around 17.3% of residents are disabled and 2.7% provide more than 50 hours of unpaid care each week.

Stevenage is also increasingly diverse, with families, young people and growing ethnic minority communities contributing to the town's changing population. Alongside this, there are significant inequalities between neighbourhoods. Stevenage has the highest average deprivation score in Hertfordshire, with the greatest deprivation concentrated in parts of Bedwell, Bandle Hill and Poplars, Martins Wood and Shephall.

These inequalities are reflected in health outcomes.

Average life expectancy is 80.8 years, including 79.3 years for men and 82.2 for women, lower than the Hertfordshire average.

Working in partnership with Public Health Hertfordshire and their evidence and insight team to produce a joint strategy needs assessment (JSNA) for Stevenage (Appendix 1).



Key health themes from the JSNA:



7. Strategic Framework



Strategy Framework



Vision

To reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of all residents living in Stevenage



Mission

To enable people to live well for longer by creating healthy places, promoting prevention and strengthening partnership working across the town

Strategic Priorities

- 1 Healthy Weight and Active Lives
- 2 Good Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing
- 3 Ageing Well, Frailty Prevention and Dementia Support
- 4 Creating Healthy, Safe and Connected Places
- 5 A Strong and Collaborative Healthy Stevenage Partnership

Cross-Cutting Enablers

- Strong Leadership
- Evidence & Insight Led
- Co-Production & Community Engagement
- Communication, Navigation & 'No Wrong Door'
- Partnership Governance
- Data Sharing & Evaluation
- Inclusive & Accessible Design

8. Strategic Priorities

Vision:

Our vision is to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of all residents living in Stevenage.

Mission:

Our mission is to enable people to live well for longer by creating healthy places, promoting prevention and strengthening partnership working across the town.

Priority 1: Healthy Weight & Active Lives

Healthy weight is a major concern for Stevenage. The strategy will aim increase physical activity, improve access to healthy food and support families to build healthy habits. Work will focus on reducing inequalities by targeting communities most affected by obesity and low activity levels.

What consultation told us: residents and partners asked for more free and low-cost activity, family options, non-competitive ways to move, clearer information and better use of parks, cycleways, schools and community venues.

What have we been doing? (Case Study): The Body Composition Project

This project gave 292 residents a free 12-week physical activity programme. The comprehensive programme was created to address the statistic that 70 percent of local adults in Stevenage are overweight or obese. This was a funded programme by HCC Public Health and worked in partnership with our Primary Care Networks (PCNs) that targets inactive adults with a body mass index (BMI) of 25 and above. Participants were given a body composition scan at week one, six and 12 to monitor their progress. Participants could be referred into the programme by their local GP or self-referred.



Recommendations:

- Expand free/low-cost access to physical activity through community-based and neighbourhood-focused interventions utilising parks, community centres, schools and leisure facilities.
- Strengthen the whole-system healthy weight approach across SBC, NHS, Herts Public Health and VCFSE partners by promoting opportunities for residents.

- Use planning, licensing, environmental health and local business engagement to support a healthier food environment and improve access to affordable healthy food.
- Increase early years and family-focused nutrition support, including culturally appropriate programmes for diverse communities.
- Treat physical activity as a cross-cutting prevention tool for mental wellbeing, healthy ageing, social connection and long-term condition prevention.

Priority 2: Good Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing

Partners will work together to strengthen early support, promote positive wellbeing, connect people to community resources and address the causes of poor mental health including debt, housing insecurity and isolation.

What consultation told us: mental health was the priority most often ranked first by residents. Feedback called for trauma-informed support, stronger provision for children and young people, visible crisis routes, suicide prevention, reduced stigma and easier access before needs escalate.

What have we been doing? (Case Study): Schools Mental Wellbeing Programme

This programme was developed as a follow-on from *Feel Good Week* in February 2024 and delivered in partnership with the Stevenage Schools Parliament. The sessions supported children to understand how food choices influence mental wellbeing, learn about essential nutrients through the *Eatwell Plate* and fruit-tasting activities, explore body image and self-acceptance, and recognise physical activity as a key contributor to positive mental health. Delivered by Stevenage Sporting Futures, the programme reached 24 schools and engaged over 1,200 children. Feedback from schools and parents was highly positive, particularly around discussions of body image and the mental health benefits of physical activity.



Recommendations:

- Agree a 'no wrong door' mental wellbeing pathway linking the Healthy Hub, GPs, social prescribers, NHS services, schools and VCFSE support, using warm referrals wherever possible.
- Use targeted outreach through schools, workplaces, housing, faith and cultural groups, sports clubs and community champions to reach children and young people, men, carers, veterans and residents who may not seek help.
- Expand affordable social connection and trusted 'third space' activity that reduces loneliness and supports wellbeing without requiring a clinical referral.
- Maintain strong crisis and suicide-prevention pathways, while ensuring community organisations are not expected to manage specialist or complex needs without appropriate support.

Priority 3: Ageing Well, Frailty Prevention & Dementia Support

The strategy will support older residents to remain active, connected and independent, while recognising the pressures on unpaid carers and the growing number of people living longer with frailty, dementia and multiple conditions. Delivery must be easy to navigate and available through non-digital as well as digital routes.

What consultation told us: partners valued existing Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly work, but highlighted fragmented information, digital exclusion, limited transport, carer pressure and waiting times for strength, balance and mobility support.

What have we been doing? (Case Study): Memory Lane Dementia Café

Working in partnership with the Stevenage PCN's the Memory Lane Dementia Cafe launched in October 2024. This café offers residents with dementia and their carers and opportunity to take part in exercise sessions, quiz's, choirs, visits from local year 6 students and advice from Alzheimer's Society and financial advice. On average there are 30 people at each session and continues to provide a great opportunity for those with dementia to socialise and offer that crucial respite to carers.



Recommendations:

- Deliver a coordinated Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly action plan with named partner leads, clear measures and visible local activity.
- Expand dementia awareness and accreditation, strengthen support for unpaid carers, and use walking and accessibility audits, housing and regeneration decisions to make the town easier to navigate.
- Ensure regeneration, housing improvements and accessibility upgrades benefit older residents and carers.
- Improve access to strength, balance and falls-prevention support through clearer referral routes, local provision and better connection with neighbourhood health teams.
- Use community venues, independent living, parks, allotments and volunteering as local assets for social connection, purposeful activity and healthy ageing.

Priority 4: Creating Healthy, Safe & Connected Places

Healthy, safe and connected places make it easier for residents to be active, feel secure, build relationships and access support. This priority will focus on well-maintained neighbourhoods, inclusive community spaces, parks and green space, active travel and the health impact of planning, housing and regeneration decisions.

What consultation told us: residents linked health to safer and cleaner places, parks, walking and cycling, accessible transport and community spaces. Partners cautioned that the priority must remain focused, measurable and realistic rather than becoming a catch-all for every place issue.

What have we been doing? (Case Study): Promotion of the Health Food Award

Following the launch of the HCC Herts Responsible Food Award the Council's Environmental Health Team have been promoting this opportunity to local food establishments. In Stevenage, we have seen three businesses be given the award with two at gold standard. This award recognises the efforts each establishment is making to provide healthier food options and sustainable practices. In return, they are given fully funded Level 2 Food Hygiene courses for staff, access to support packages from the Hertfordshire Growth Hub to boost your profitability and sustainability, advertisement and promotion, networking opportunities and discounts from local suppliers. One of our most recent recipient is Yom, who impressed the food award team with their vibrant and colourful menu, consisting of whole foods and



sustainably sourced ingredients. Yom's environmentally friendly ethos also shone through to earn them their Gold Award, demonstrating how even small businesses can go above and beyond to champion health and sustainability.

Recommendations:

- Use ward-level insight and Co-operative Neighbourhoods to target practical improvements in the places experiencing the greatest inequalities.
- Protect and activate parks, green spaces, play areas and community venues as free or low-cost places for movement, connection and wellbeing.
- Require planning, housing, regeneration, licensing and public-realm decisions to show how they support health, accessibility, safety and reduced inequalities.
- Involve young people, women, older people, disabled residents and other groups who may avoid public spaces because of safety, stigma or accessibility concerns.

Priority 5: Strengthening Prevention Through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership

The Healthy Stevenage Partnership will be the accountable delivery forum for the strategy. It will coordinate prevention, simplify access, align partner resources and monitor a small number of shared outcomes, with stronger participation from NHS, primary care and VCFSE partners.

What consultation told us: partners support the partnership but want it to move beyond information sharing. They asked for clearer membership and expectations, named ownership, shared measures, stronger NHS participation, a central directory and visible follow-through.

What have we been doing? (Case Study): Suicide Prevention (Real People, Real Stories Event & Night Light Crisis Café)

Reducing suicide attempts in Stevenage has required strong, multi-agency partnership working, combining prevention, awareness-raising and rapid crisis support. In November, Stevenage Borough Council worked with Stevenage FC, Samaritans and Everyone Active to deliver a *Real People, Real Stories* event at a home fixture attended by over 5,000 supporters. Linked to International Men's Day, the event focused on male suicide, using lived-experience stories to challenge stigma and encourage help-seeking. Samaritans provided on-site support, while Everyone Active's Mobile Healthy Hub offered health checks and wellbeing advice, demonstrating how trusted community partners can reach men who may not engage with traditional services.

This partnership approach continued in the setup of the Nightlight Crisis Café, delivered by Hertfordshire Mind Network with support from Stevenage Borough Council, HCC Public Health, NHS partners, police and transport organisations. This was established following increased suicide attempts at Stevenage station, the café provides immediate, non-clinical support every evening. Since opening in 2022 in it first 12 months the cafe supported over 1,400 people, helping reduce suicidal ideation, self-harm and social isolation. Together, these initiatives show how partnership working has been crucial in delivering an effective, place-based suicide prevention response in Stevenage.



Recommendations:

- Refresh the partnership's terms of reference, membership, leadership, attendance expectations and reporting routes, securing stronger NHS and primary care ownership.
- Agree a focused annual delivery plan with named leads, milestones, resource assumptions and a limited set of shared outcomes linked to the JSNA.
- Develop and maintain a central prevention, wellbeing and activity directory, with clear responsibility for keeping information current and non-digital alternatives.
- Publish a simple annual dashboard showing reach, outcomes, inequalities, learning and what will change, alongside a clear feedback route for residents and partners.
- Build sustainable delivery capacity through joint funding bids, shared assets and realistic support for voluntary and community organisations.
- Manage Local Government Reorganisation as a planned transition, protecting local relationships, data, priority services and accountability while using opportunities to align neighbourhood prevention.

9. Cross-Cutting Enablers

Strong Leadership	Stevenage Borough Council will provide visible local leadership on prevention and health inequalities. Using local insight, relationships and our democratic mandate, we will bring partners together, champion residents' needs and focus on communities where outcomes are poorest. Health and wellbeing will be embedded across council policy and decision-making, including planning, housing, regeneration, environmental services, community safety, leisure and neighbourhood working, recognising that many key drivers of health sit outside formal healthcare.
Evidence and Insight Led	Action will be guided by the Stevenage Health Inequalities JSNA, Public Health Outcomes Framework data, local service intelligence, community insight and evaluation. We will continue to use evidence to prioritise activity, understand where inequalities are greatest and avoid duplicating provision that already exists.
Co-Production & Community Engagement	Residents, community groups and people with lived experience should help shape the design and delivery of local action. Engagement will not be a one-off exercise. It will be built into consultation, delivery planning, neighbourhood work and review points so that activity remains relevant to local need.
Communication, Navigation and 'No Wrong Door'	Residents and professionals should be able to find and access support without needing to understand organisational boundaries. Partners will use consistent Healthy Stevenage branding, a maintained directory, warm referral practice and promotion through GPs, schools, community centres, housing, libraries, faith organisations and trusted local networks. Traditional routes will remain available alongside digital channels.
Partnership Governance	The Healthy Stevenage Partnership will be refreshed so it has a clear purpose, active membership and a stronger route into delivery. It should operate as a practical problem-solving forum, not simply an information-sharing meeting. Partners will be expected to contribute insight, capacity, assets or influence where this aligns with their role.
Data Sharing and Evaluation	Partners will seek to improve the way local data, service intelligence and evaluation findings are shared within appropriate information governance arrangements. This will help identify need earlier, track whether activity is reaching priority groups and understand what is working, what is not and where resources should be redirected.
Inclusive and Accessible Design	Programmes, communications, venues and engagement must be designed around residents who face the greatest barriers. This includes children and young people, older people, disabled and neurodiverse residents, carers, low-income households, ethnic minority communities, veterans, people with poor mental health, residents with limited digital access and those who may not routinely engage with services. Accessibility must consider affordability, transport, language, sensory and mobility needs, stigma, confidence and service thresholds.

10. Partnership Working

Improving health and wellbeing in Stevenage requires partners to act together, align priorities, share resources and join up services. The Healthy Stevenage Partnership, Integrated Neighbourhood Care Board, Hertfordshire County Council Public Health, Hertfordshire Sports & Physical Activity Partnership Stevenage Co-operative Action Network and residents will play a key role in targeting need, closing gaps and strengthening prevention.

Healthy Stevenage Partnership

The Healthy Stevenage Partnership will be the main delivery forum for the strategy, providing shared leadership and maintaining focus on agreed priorities. Bringing together the council, Public Health, NHS, VCFSE, leisure, housing, community safety, education, community partners and residents, it will coordinate action across Stevenage. The partnership will use JSNA evidence and local insight to agree priorities, join up prevention activity, strengthen referral and support pathways, make better use of partner assets and networks, identify funding opportunities, monitor progress and address barriers requiring wider system leadership.

Integrated Neighbourhood Care Board

The Integrated Neighbourhood Care Board and Integrated Neighbourhood Teams are central to delivering more joined-up, preventative care closer to home. In line with the NHS 10 Year Health Plan, this creates opportunities to connect health, care, council and voluntary sector support around local need. The strategy will align with neighbourhood priorities including frailty, dementia, falls prevention, mental health, long-term conditions, healthy weight and social prescribing. Stevenage Borough Council will help connect this work with community assets, Healthy Hub activity, housing, leisure, parks, community safety and wider place-based services.

Hertfordshire County Council Public Health

Hertfordshire County Council Public Health will remain a key strategic partner in delivering the Healthy Stevenage Strategy. We share a strong focus on prevention, early intervention, reducing health inequalities and addressing the wider determinants of health. HCC Public Health will support local delivery through JSNA evidence, population health intelligence, behavioural science, specialist public health advice and wider system leadership. This expertise will help partners identify need, target action effectively and connect Stevenage to relevant countywide prevention and commissioning programmes, ensuring local activity is evidence-led, coordinated and focused on improving outcomes for residents.

Hertfordshire Sports & Physical Activity Partnership

Hertfordshire Sports & Physical Activity Partnership (HSP) will be a key strategic partner in helping Stevenage residents be more active, more often. Its Strategic Plan 2022–2027, aligned with Sport England's *Uniting the Movement*, supports our focus on tackling inequalities through physical activity. HSP will help strengthen local pathways, build capacity across clubs and community providers, support inactive and underrepresented groups, and connect Stevenage to wider investment, insight and good practice. This will support healthy weight, mental wellbeing, ageing well and stronger social connection.

Stevenage Co-operative Action Network and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise partners

Stevenage Co-operative Action Network (CAN) and the wider voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector play a vital role in reaching residents who may not engage with statutory services. These organisations bring trusted relationships, local insight and practical support across issues including financial hardship, housing, food insecurity, social isolation, mental wellbeing, carers support and disability. The strategy will strengthen links between Stevenage CAN, VCFSE partners, Healthy Hub Stevenage, social prescribing, neighbourhood teams and council services. This will help create more joined-up support around the social and economic factors that influence health, wellbeing, long-term conditions and frailty.

Residents and community voice

Residents must remain at the centre of the strategy. Partner consultation, public consultation, cooperative neighbourhood activity, targeted engagement and lived experience feedback will be used to test priorities, identify gaps and shape delivery. This is particularly important for groups and neighbourhoods most affected by inequality.

11. Role of Stevenage Borough Council

Stevenage Borough Council is not the statutory commissioner of most health services, but it has a significant influence on the conditions that shape health and wellbeing. Through the services we provide, the partnerships we lead, our local leadership and our statutory responsibilities, we can help create the conditions for residents to live healthier, safer and more connected lives. This work sits within our corporate plan, Making Stevenage Even Better, which sets out our commitment to improving the quality of life for residents and creating a fairer, healthier and more sustainable town. The Healthy Stevenage Strategy supports this ambition by translating the plan's priorities into practical action to improve health and reduce inequalities.

Our role can be described through four areas: Delivery, Collaboration, Championing and Statutory Duty.

Delivery

The council delivers and commissions a wide range of services and programmes that contribute directly to prevention and wellbeing, often through services and places that residents already know and use.

Leisure and physical activity are central to this role. Through our leisure contract with Everyone Active, we will continue to provide high-quality facilities while strengthening the focus on prevention, reducing inactivity and reaching residents who face the greatest barriers to participation. The Active Communities Programme extends this work beyond leisure centres into parks, community centres, neighbourhood venues and other local settings, supporting healthy weight, mental wellbeing, mobility, confidence and social connection.

Healthy Hub Stevenage remains an important part of the local prevention offer. Delivered through the leisure contract and supported by Hertfordshire Public Health, the Hub provides a local one-stop-shop for information, advice, signposting and practical support. Its offer includes physical activity, healthy weight, mental wellbeing, stop smoking support and wellbeing checks. The Mobile Healthy Hub takes this support directly into neighbourhoods and community spaces, particularly for residents who may not access traditional services.

The council will also continue to support **Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly Stevenage**, working with partners to help older residents remain active, independent and socially connected. Parks, playgrounds, green spaces, allotments, walking routes, community events and outdoor facilities provide further free or low-cost opportunities for activity, recreation and connection.

Other council-led services also contribute directly to wellbeing. Advice and support services help residents with issues such as debt, benefits, housing, employment, food insecurity and energy costs. **Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA)** provides specialist support around safety, advocacy and recovery, while the No More service

supports residents experiencing multiple and complex needs including homelessness, substance misuse, mental health issues and social isolation.

Future investment, including the new Leisure Hub, provides an opportunity to connect leisure more closely with prevention, social prescribing, weight management, mental wellbeing, falls prevention and dementia-friendly activity.

Collaboration

Improving health and reducing inequalities cannot be achieved by any single organisation. The council's role is to bring partners together around shared priorities, make better use of local assets and create clearer pathways for residents.

The **Healthy Stevenage Partnership** will provide the main forum for this work, bringing together Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council Public Health, NHS organisations, Primary Care Networks, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise partners, Everyone Active, sports and leisure partners and other local services.

We will use this partnership to coordinate prevention activity, identify gaps and duplication, improve referral and signposting routes and support a stronger 'no wrong door' approach. This will include closer links between Healthy Hub Stevenage, social prescribing, Primary Care Networks, neighbourhood teams, community groups and council services.

Neighbourhood working will also be important. Through **Co-operative Neighbourhoods** and community development, the council can bring resident insight into local planning, support volunteering and community activity and identify practical improvements that strengthen social connection and reduce isolation.

Collaboration also means aligning health with wider work across housing, regeneration, skills, education, community safety and local economic development. Initiatives such as **Pioneering Young STEM Futures**, local employability activity and work with schools and community organisations can support aspiration, confidence and longer-term wellbeing alongside more traditional health interventions.

Championing

Stevenage Borough Council has an important leadership role in keeping local needs visible and ensuring prevention remains a priority across the wider system.

We will use our democratic mandate, community insight and local relationships to champion the needs of Stevenage residents, particularly communities experiencing the greatest inequalities. This means making the case for investment, targeting activity where need is greatest and ensuring Stevenage is represented in wider NHS, countywide and neighbourhood health planning.

Health and wellbeing will be considered across council policy and decision-making rather than treated as a standalone agenda. Planning, regeneration, housing, environmental services, leisure, parks, community safety, events, skills and neighbourhood working all provide opportunities to support healthier lives.

The council will also use its communications and community networks to promote clear, accessible health messages and improve awareness of local services. Stronger Healthy Stevenage branding, partner communications and community insight will help residents understand what support is available and how to access it.

As Local Government Reorganisation progresses, the council will also champion Stevenage's local priorities, evidence and successful prevention work so they remain visible within future structures. The Healthy Stevenage Strategy will provide a clear evidence base for protecting local knowledge, partnerships and interventions and for influencing future commissioning and resource decisions.

Statutory Duty

Although statutory responsibility for public health sits primarily with Hertfordshire County Council, a number of Stevenage Borough Council's statutory functions have a direct impact on health outcomes and inequalities.

Housing and homelessness services help provide safe, secure and suitable homes, prevent homelessness and support residents experiencing housing insecurity. Housing development can also improve health through accessible, energy-efficient homes that support independence and reduce risks linked to fuel poverty, damp and overcrowding. The council can also use its direct relationship with tenants to share information and promote local health and wellbeing services, helping residents access support and make healthier lifestyle choices.

Planning and regeneration shape the places in which people live, work and spend time. Through planning policy and development, the council can support active travel, access to green space, inclusive design, community facilities and neighbourhoods that make healthier choices easier.

Environmental Health, Licensing and Regulation protect residents through food safety, housing standards, environmental protection, licensing and enforcement. Licensing also provides opportunities to support wider safeguarding and health priorities, including dementia awareness and safer communities.

Community Safety functions contribute by tackling violence, anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, exploitation, substance misuse and perceptions of safety. Strong links with housing, youth services, mental health, licensing and neighbourhood working help reduce harm and create safer, more resilient communities.

Together, these statutory responsibilities mean that Stevenage Borough Council remains a significant local public health partner. By combining delivery, collaboration, local leadership and statutory functions, the council can help create the conditions for better health and reduce inequalities across Stevenage.

12. Making it Happen

Delivering the Healthy Stevenage Strategy will require clear ownership, practical action, shared accountability and strong partnership working. The aim is to turn strategic priorities into visible improvements for residents, particularly those experiencing the greatest health inequalities.

Delivery will be coordinated through a Healthy Stevenage Action Plan, developed with partners and aligned to the five strategic priorities. It will identify:

- Key projects and expected outcomes
- Lead organisations and partner responsibilities
- Delivery timescales and target communities
- Resource requirements and funding opportunities
- Measures of progress and success

The Action Plan will remain live and will be reviewed regularly to reflect local need, emerging evidence and available resources. It will focus on a manageable number of collaborative actions where partners can demonstrate meaningful progress.

The Healthy Stevenage Partnership will provide the main delivery and oversight mechanism. It will bring together Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council Public Health, NHS partners, Primary Care Networks, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations, Everyone Active, schools, housing and advice services, community safety partners and resident representatives.

The Partnership will:

- Coordinate activity around shared priorities
- Reduce duplication and identify gaps in provision
- Support joint initiatives across Stevenage
- Share data, expertise, assets and community insight
- Connect with Integrated Neighbourhood Care Board work
- Promote prevention and care closer to home

Practical areas of joint delivery may include healthy weight, physical activity, mental health, frailty prevention, dementia awareness, social connection, community outreach, stop smoking support, wellbeing checks and improved signposting.

Short Term - Plan and Reset

The first phase will establish the foundations for effective delivery. Priorities will include:

- Resetting the Healthy Stevenage Partnership, including its purpose, membership, governance and expectations
- Agreeing the Healthy Stevenage Action Plan, with named leads, measurable outcomes and achievable actions

- Establishing task and finish groups where needed, including around healthy weight, mental health, frailty, dementia and healthy places
- Confirming available resources and securing continued funding for key prevention programmes, including Healthy Hub Stevenage
- Identifying external investment opportunities through public health, the NHS, Sport England, the National Lottery and other funders
- Using the JSNA, service intelligence and community insight to identify priority populations and neighbourhoods
- Agreeing proportionate arrangements for performance monitoring, data sharing and evaluation
- Developing and implementing a communications plan to raise the visibility of Healthy Stevenage, strengthen and consistently apply the Healthy Stevenage brand, and ensure residents, partners and communities understand the strategy, available support and opportunities to get involved

This phase will ensure that resources are directed towards the communities and issues where partnership action can have the greatest impact.

Medium Term - Mobilise Delivery

The second phase will move from planning to visible delivery in communities. The council and its partners will make better use of existing local assets, including:

- Parks, open spaces and recreation facilities
- Leisure centres and community centres
- Schools and neighbourhood venues
- Community, voluntary and faith organisations
- Housing, advice and social prescribing services

These assets will provide accessible and affordable opportunities to improve physical activity, healthy weight, mental wellbeing, social connection and healthy ageing.

Healthy Hub Stevenage and the Mobile Healthy Hub will be strengthened as key access points into prevention services. Outreach will focus on priority neighbourhoods and communities, connecting residents to:

- Wellbeing checks
- Stop smoking support
- Physical activity opportunities
- Social prescribing
- Advice and information
- Wider community and health services

Partners will improve referral and signposting pathways to create a consistent 'no wrong door' approach, ensuring residents can access appropriate support regardless of where they first seek help. This will require stronger links between council services, Primary Care

Networks, NHS services, social prescribing, VCFSE organisations and community-based provision.

Delivery will focus particularly on JSNA priorities, including healthy weight, mental health, frailty and dementia, while recognising the wider influences on health, such as housing, income, employment, isolation and community safety. Prevention will also be embedded across council functions, including planning, housing, parks, regeneration, environmental health, leisure and Co-operative Neighbourhoods.

Long term - Influence and Scale

The third phase will use evidence from delivery to influence wider system change and expand successful approaches. Priorities will include:

- Making the case for greater investment in neighbourhood prevention and care closer to home
- Exploring opportunities for a Neighbourhood Health Hub or strengthened neighbourhood health model
- Influencing NHS neighbourhood arrangements and Local Government Reorganisation
- Ensuring Stevenage's health inequalities, community assets and local priorities remain visible in future investment decisions
- Identifying successful programmes for scaling and wider adoption
- Sharing learning with partners across a future unitary area and neighbouring districts
- Pooling expertise and resources where common health challenges exist

This wider influence will support investment and learning while retaining a strong focus on Stevenage's neighbourhoods and communities.

Monitoring Progress

Progress will be reviewed regularly through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership, with updates provided to relevant council and partner boards. A proportionate performance framework will track:

- Delivery against agreed actions
- Outcomes and impact
- Progress in reducing inequalities
- Resident and community insight
- Learning and next steps

Resources are limited, so delivery will remain focused on a small number of high-impact actions with clear ownership. Success will be judged not only by the number of projects completed, but by whether residents can access support more easily, services are better connected, community assets are used effectively and collective action reaches those experiencing the poorest health outcomes.

13. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

The timeframe of this strategy will coincide with major structural changes through Local Government Reorganisation. Although this shift may pose challenges for continuity, governance, resourcing, data management and existing local partnerships, it also offers a chance to enhance the coordination of prevention and health improvement within a future unitary system.

For Stevenage, maintaining a strong local focus throughout this transition will be essential. The Healthy Stevenage Strategy provides a clear, evidence-based framework that sets out the town's specific health inequalities, neighbourhood needs and agreed priorities. This will help ensure that Stevenage remains visible within wider strategic planning and that local health and wellbeing needs are not diluted as new structures and responsibilities are developed.

The strategy can also support future commissioning, service planning and resource allocation by providing a clear account of local need, existing assets and partnership priorities. It will offer a practical basis for sharing local insight with the new unitary authority and for protecting effective prevention activity, established partnership arrangements and local knowledge during the transition.

LGR also provides an opportunity to reduce fragmentation and strengthen neighbourhood-based approaches to prevention. The Healthy Stevenage Partnership and the relationships already established across local government, health, voluntary and community organisations can provide a strong foundation for future working arrangements. A new unitary model also creates opportunities to upscale successful local delivery, share best practice across a wider geography and work with partners to embed proven approaches more consistently.

As reorganisation progresses, transition planning should therefore focus on protecting priority services, maintaining clear ownership of delivery, preserving local data and insight, and ensuring continuity of trusted local partnerships. In this way, the Healthy Stevenage Strategy can act both as a delivery framework for the next five years and as a practical tool to help shape future health and wellbeing arrangements so they remain responsive to the needs of Stevenage residents.

This strategy will also sit alongside neighbouring strategies developed by North Herts District Council, including the [Active North Herts Strategy](#), ensuring alignment and continuity of approach across the wider local area during and beyond the transition period. Post LGR, it is also expected that work will take place to review and amalgamate strategic health and wellbeing objectives and priorities for the new unitary area, supporting a more joined-up and consistent approach across the future authority.

14. Conclusion

The Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2026–2031 sets out a clear response to the health and wellbeing challenges facing the town. Stevenage is the most deprived district in Hertfordshire, with deprivation concentrated in areas including Bedwell, Bandle Hill and Poplars, Martins Wood and Shephall. Men in the most deprived areas live 5.1 years less than those in the least deprived areas, with a 4.0-year gap for women. Around 72% of adults and 37% of Year 6 pupils are overweight or obese. Mental health need is closely linked to deprivation, dementia diagnosis rates are higher than Hertfordshire and England, and wider factors including income, disability, caring responsibilities, education and the local environment continue to shape health outcomes.

The strategy retains a simple but ambitious vision: to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of all Stevenage residents. Its mission places prevention, partnership working and healthy places at the centre of local action. Five priorities provide the framework for delivery: Healthy Weight and Active Lives; Good Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing; Ageing Well, Frailty Prevention and Dementia Support; Creating Healthy, Safe and Connected Places; and Strengthening Prevention through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership.

Delivery will require more than individual projects. Strong leadership, evidence and insight, co-production and community engagement, effective partnership governance, better data sharing and evaluation, and inclusive and accessible design will underpin delivery. These enablers will help ensure activity is targeted, measurable and shaped by the communities it is intended to support.

Stevenage Borough Council has an important role through delivery, collaboration, championing and its statutory responsibilities. By embedding health across council services and place-shaping decisions, and working with the NHS, Hertfordshire County Council Public Health, VCFSE organisations, schools, businesses, communities and residents, we can strengthen prevention and reduce inequalities.

The next five years must be focused, practical and accountable. A clear action plan, a ‘no wrong door’ approach, improved communication, affordable local activity, shared ownership, targeted neighbourhood delivery and transparent reporting will help move the strategy into action. Success will be measured by whether support is easier to find, more inclusive and better connected, and whether measurable progress is achieved in communities experiencing the greatest inequalities.

The strategy also provides a strong foundation as Stevenage moves through Local Government Reorganisation. It will help keep local health inequalities, neighbourhood priorities and prevention needs visible, supporting continuity, local accountability and effective partnership working while providing a clear evidence base for future review and delivery within new local government arrangements.