



Stronger for Longer

Director of Public Health Annual Report 2019

Welcome

This year's annual report highlights the important issue of ageing well and reducing our chances of becoming frail in later life.

In a departure from previous approaches, the report takes the combined format of a short animation and the online publication you're reading now. The aim is to try to reach as many people as possible around Derbyshire, and to get the message across in a way that everyone can relate to.

I've chosen the topic of frailty for an important reason; many of us assume that becoming frail is simply what happens as we get older. But frailty can be prevented. We can take steps now to build up what's known as our 'health reserves' by adopting good habits throughout our lives. By making small changes now, this has the potential to make a huge difference later.

It means that we could live in better health, staying independent and well for longer. This is about how we age, adding life to our extra years so we can spend more time doing the things we enjoy independently. Not only is this good for us, it could have a positive effect on the health and social care sector, reducing some of the burden placed on already overstretched public services.

So, the message in this report is that, by investing in your health today, you could improve the quality of your life now and in the future. Together we can help to keep the Derbyshire population stronger for longer.

Dean Wallace, Director of Public Health
Derbyshire County Council



I am very grateful to all those involved in the production of this report.

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Sources of information we have used to help inform this report.

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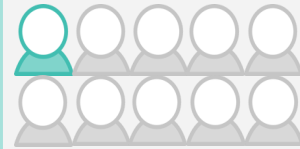
www.derbyshire.gov.uk/stronger

How we can all live stronger for longer



1 in 10

17,169 people aged 65+ are estimated to have frailty in Derbyshire¹



Women may be twice as likely to experience frailty compared to men^{2,3}

2x



The number of people with frailty is increasing⁴



Did you know that having good health is like saving coins in a jar?

The more we put in, the more we can get out. And the longer we save for - or build up our health reserves - the better the rewards later.

Why is this important?

As we get older, it's obvious that we're not going to be as fit and strong as we once were. We're going to slow down a bit, and it might take us longer to get better when we're ill, or if we're recovering from an operation or injury.

But sometimes, something else can happen that makes getting older a lot tougher. This is more than simply getting older; it's a state of health where our body systems gradually lose their in-built reserves.

This leaves us more vulnerable to sudden changes in health, triggered by what, in younger years, would have been small events, such as minor infections or changes in our environment or medication. This leaves us at increased risk of poorer health in the longer term and makes recovery more challenging. Medical professionals call this frailty.

It can be a big problem.

It's estimated that around one in ten people aged 65 and over have frailty, and as many as one in five over 85 year olds - that's over 17,000 people in Derbyshire¹. Some studies have shown that, in general, woman may be at a slightly greater risk of frailty than men^{2,3}.

As our population ages, the number of people with frailty is set to rise by as much as 50% within the next 10-20 years⁴.

Frailty - A clinical definition

There is no universally agreed definition of frailty yet, but a useful practical one is:

"A medical syndrome with multiple causes and contributors that is characterized by diminished strength, endurance, and reduced physiologic function that increases an individual's vulnerability for developing increased dependency and/or death"⁵.

But none of this is inevitable.

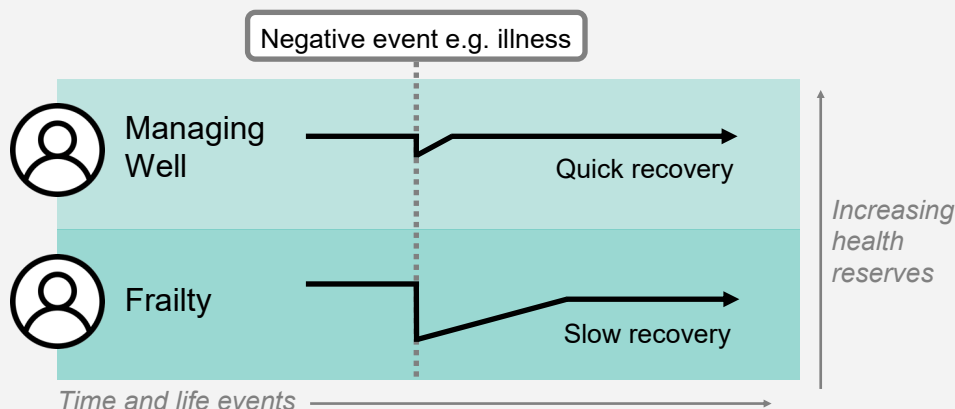
Because it builds up over time, frailty can be delayed or even avoided altogether. By making small changes now.... we can make a big difference later. And we'll be building up our reserves for when we need them.

Want to know more?

Over the next few pages we will look in more detail at some of the ways we can all live 'stronger for longer'.

As well as providing you with practical tips, we will let you know what Derbyshire County Council and its partners are doing to help.

How our health reserves impact recovery



Making healthy choices a habit

Are your daily habits keeping you well?



Most of us would agree, if we really thought about what we could do to make sure our bodies and minds are as healthy as possible, we would:

- Eat a balanced and healthy diet
- Exercise our minds, as well as our bodies
- Avoid smoking, drinking alcohol or taking harmful drugs
- Find ways to be with others, as socialising is good for us

Why does this matter?

A healthy lifestyle helps you to look and feel great; it also reduces your chances of becoming ill. Research suggests that by making healthy choices now, we can help delay or even prevent frailty later in life⁶.

The good news is that it's never too late to start. Even those of us already living with frailty can benefit. Acting now can help us to take back and maintain our independence as well as preventing illness and injury.

What can you do?

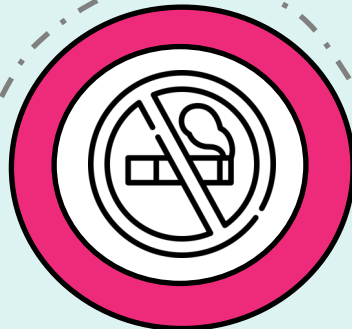


01

Be active

Exercising can strengthen our muscles and bones as well as improving our balance—building our reserves for when we need them.

02



Stop smoking

Stopping smoking is one of the best things we can do for our health, whatever our age. Research tells us that by stopping smoking we can also help prevent, or even reverse the symptoms of frailty too⁷.



03

Cut back the drink

The odds of developing frailty are greater for those of us drinking alcohol above the recommended limits, compared to those drinking within⁸.

04



Eat Well

Combining exercise with a healthy diet, is much more effective at preventing or reversing frailty than exercise alone⁹. Getting the right amount of nutrients from our diet is key to staying strong.

How does Derbyshire compare to England?



22%

of adults are physically inactive

Similar to England¹⁰



14%

of adults smoke

Similar to England¹¹



27%

of adults have too much alcohol

Similar to England¹²



43%

eat <5 portions of fruit & veg daily

Better than England¹³

What is Derbyshire County Council doing?

Live Life BETTER DERBYSHIRE

This service provides free support to help local people improve their health and wellbeing, including stop smoking, getting more active, losing weight, improving mental health, etc. Since April 2018 the service has helped over 1,200 people to stop smoking and over 750 people to lose weight.

Over the next 12 months the service aims to:

- Provide weight management support to families
- Help people who are inactive to start exercising
- Make the services more accessible to Derbyshire's most vulnerable people.
- Work more closely with partner organisations to support healthier choices



This is a community exercise programme for people aged over 65 years who have fallen or are at risk of falling. It improves strength, balance and coordination. A range of session available across the county, including chair based exercises and Tai Chi.

Over the next 12 months the service will:

- Increase the number of sessions in parts of Derbyshire where people might benefit the most.
- Link up with other physical activity programmes across Derbyshire such as the [walking for health scheme](#), which provides guided walks around the county. Basic stability exercises will be delivered as part of the walk.

Healthy choices and frailty - what's the link?

As we get older, our bodies start to slow down. But some changes can happen above and beyond what would be expected through 'normal' ageing. Some of us might find ourselves becoming increasingly weak, losing too much weight, walking more slowly or feeling exhausted⁶.

These are the key symptoms of frailty. By making healthy choices and keeping our bodies strong, we can prevent or, at least delay, becoming frail as we get older.

Our mental health is just as important as our physical health; the two are connected. We explore this in the next chapter.

What can health and social care professionals do?

Ask

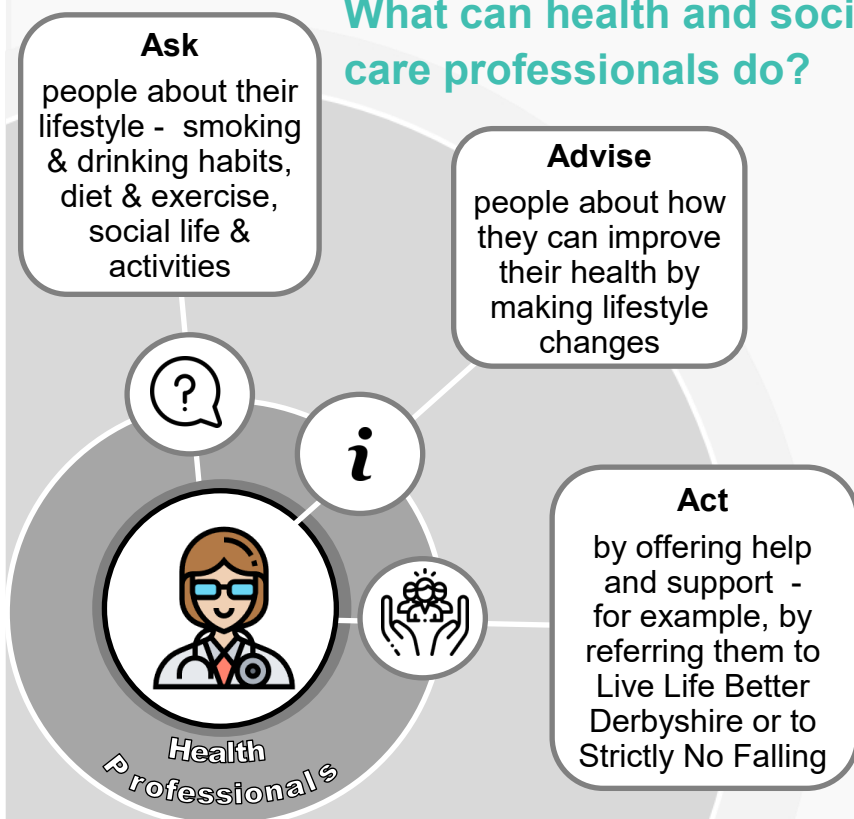
people about their lifestyle - smoking & drinking habits, diet & exercise, social life & activities

Advise

people about how they can improve their health by making lifestyle changes

Act

by offering help and support - for example, by referring them to Live Life Better Derbyshire or to Strictly No Falling



Want to find out more?

Click on the links:

[Live Life Better Derbyshire](#)

[Active Derbyshire](#)

[Heart of Derbyshire](#)

[Strictly No Falling](#)

Our Mental Health Matters

What is it?

When we talk about someone's mental health and wellbeing, we mean the way they are thinking and feeling, and how this affects their daily life.

If you have *good* mental health, you tend to be able to cope with everyday stresses; you are able to feel a range of emotions, build good relationships, feel engaged with the world around you, and deal with the ups and downs of life reasonably well.

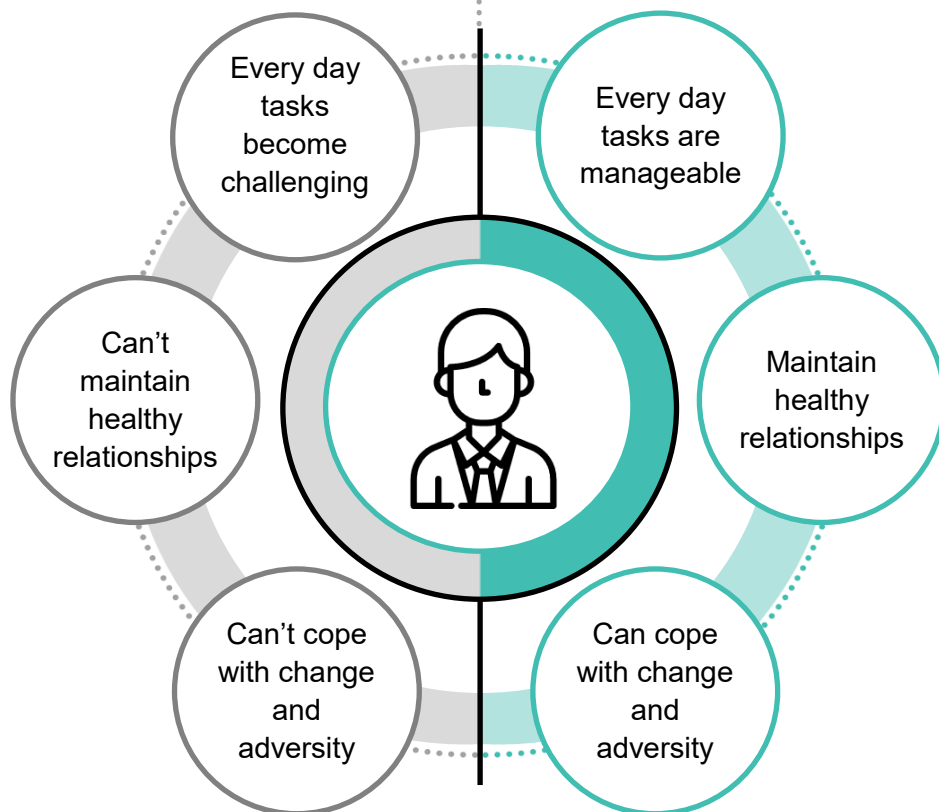
But, unfortunately, there are times when life is just not like this. And, when someone's mental health is not good, even the simplest of tasks can be really tough.

Certain things may make us more vulnerable to experiencing poor mental health. This could include something that happened in the past or might still be happening now, such as:

- Childhood experiences
- Loss or bereavement
- A long term condition
- Abuse or violence
- Social isolation
- Caring for a family member or friend
- Poverty or debt
- Unemployment¹⁴

Signs of poor mental health

Signs of good mental health



It's more common than you might think...

Some mental health conditions affect us in small ways; others can have a much greater impact on the way we live our lives.

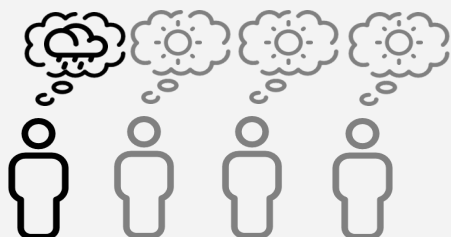
Did you know that most mental ill health is related to a life situation, an event or a particular period in your life... and is temporary?

Whatever difficulties you are facing, it's important that you talk with someone you trust. Think about your feelings, try to identify the root cause and seek professional help at the right time if you feel you need it.

Support is out there - whether informal, through friends and family, or from professionals.

Don't put it off; if you feel you need help, speak up.

1 in 4



1 in 4 of us will have a period of mental ill health at some point in our lifetime¹⁵

1 in 8



1 in 8 of us aged 5 to 19 had at least one period of mental ill health in 2017¹⁶

9 in 10



9 in 10 mental health service users experience stigma and discrimination according to a 2008 survey¹⁷

Try the Five Ways to Wellbeing to look after your own mental health



Tips for looking after each other:

Talk Starting a conversation about mental health can be a good way to break down barriers.

Check You may spot a change in your own or someone else's behaviour, a shift in mood or appearance. Ask if they are ok.

Respect Treat others with care and respect. Creating an understanding and non-judgemental environment makes it easier for people to talk about their mental health.

Mental health and frailty - what's the link?

Just as our bodies change as we age, so does our brain. In some people changes can occur that are over and above those that are part of normal ageing¹⁸. These can lead to problems remembering things, feeling depressed or anxious, having difficulty thinking clearly and experiencing low levels of confidence¹⁹.

Although it is possible to be physically frail without being mentally frail and vice versa, there is a connection between the two, and each can make the other worse¹⁸.

What's happening in Derbyshire?

Across Derbyshire we are doing lots to help people manage their mental health. Here are a couple of examples:

Connect To is a Chesterfield-based service helping local people increase their social connections and access emotional and practical support.

Men Talk provides support for men to help them feel more able to do just this. The service provides a safe space where men can just turn up and share their stories if they want to. Some speak, others listen. It's a supportive space that can make a difference.

Are you a health professional?

Consider signing up to Mental Health Training delivered by Derbyshire County Council [Find out more](#)

Interested in finding out more about managing your mental health?

Click on the following links to find out more.

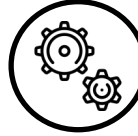


Strength in our relationships



Having good social connections can:

Help you increase your knowledge through sharing experiences



Point you in the right direction for help when you need it



Help you find opportunities to learn new skills and recognise your own strengths



Improve the way you manage existing health conditions



Encourage you to develop good habits, like choosing healthier food or taking an evening stroll



Are relationships important?

Our relationships with the people we know, and our links to where we live, are important because they can have a big impact on our health and wellbeing.

Sometimes called 'social connectedness', the networks we are part of, the spaces we share, our sense of belonging and the support we receive (whether emotional, practical or through information) can all help to keep us well.

Why does this matter?

In many ways, our social strength can be as important as our physical or mental wellbeing.

According to research²⁰, people who have good social connections have been shown to be happier and healthier.

They feel they have more control over their lives and are better able to handle the everyday challenges that come their way.

Strong relationships and frailty - what's the link?

Connecting with others provides opportunities for physical activity and mental stimulation, both of which can have an impact on frailty.

It's also a source of support, both emotional and practical. So, good relationships can help us to manage our own health and wellbeing, now and later.

Finding ways to be with others...

Even though most people agree that connecting with other people can make us feel better, actually doing something about it is not always easy. However, here are three things you can do now, to help change this.

Get together

Try to connect with someone regularly. Even a quick chat on the phone can make a difference.



Volunteer

Those who help others in this way say their physical health, self-esteem and confidence improve as a result²¹.



Join a club or forum

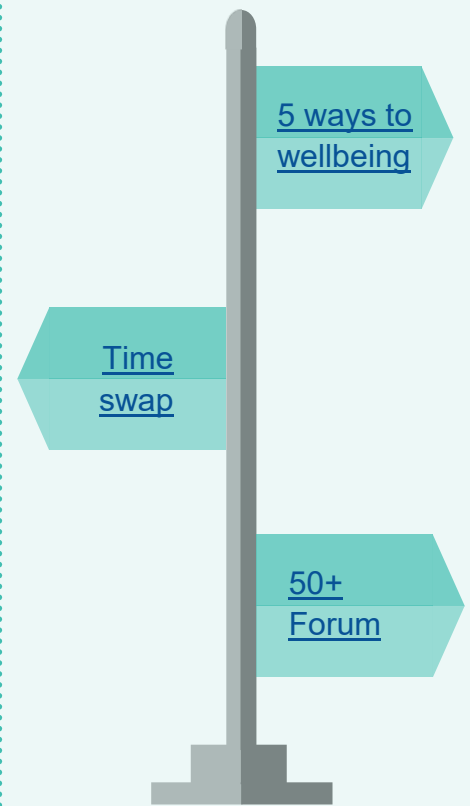
Joining a club or forum is a great way to connect with other people who have shared interests. Are you aged 50+ and would like to influence decisions in your community whilst meeting other people? Why not join the [Derbyshire 50+ Forum](#).





Want to find out more?

Click on the links below:



What can health and social care professionals do?

People who work in health and social care can:

Create opportunities for people to make the most of local assets - get to know and let people know about existing programmes that give people a chance to socialise, provide and receive social support, and grow their sense of belonging.

Think about who might benefit - Older people, young adults and people with poor mental health or disabilities may need opportunities to increase their levels of social connectedness. Others may need extra support at certain times of life such as retirement, when they lose a loved one or when children leave home.

4

Four Ways Derbyshire County Council are strengthening our communities

1



Connecting parents

The council has secured funding for a new interactive website to help parents access local groups and arrange to get together. Helping to beat loneliness, manage post-natal depression and build stronger communities.

2



Locality Social Connectedness Programme

We have programmes running in eight areas around the county aimed at building and celebrating social connections in local areas.

3



Time Swap

This scheme connects people with each other based on what they are good at or what they enjoy doing. People earn 'time' by supporting a community member, and then 'cash it in' to get help from other members.

4



Social prescribing

A personalised prescription that helps people focus on what matters to them and connects them to community groups and services for practical and emotional support in their area.

Working together



When information is not explained clearly it can be confusing. For example it may not be clear:

- what a test result means
- how and when to take medication
- how important getting vaccinated is

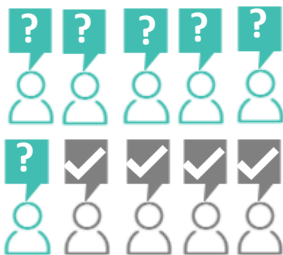
Have you ever struggled to understand something about your health?

Maybe a doctor explained an illness to you in a way that did not make any sense?

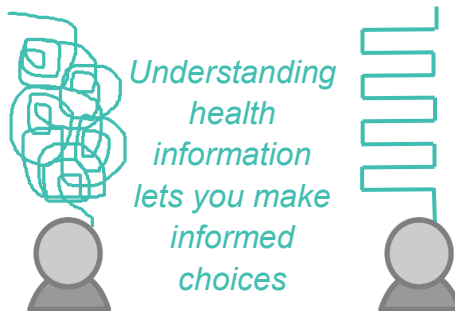
Perhaps you've found it difficult to keep track of your tablets or understand what a food label is telling you? If so, you are not alone.

Recent research²¹ tells us that 4 in every 10 people of working age in England have difficulty understanding, and using everyday health information.

It's not just wording; add numbers into the mix, and even more people are confused.



6/10 have difficulty understanding health information that includes both words and numbers

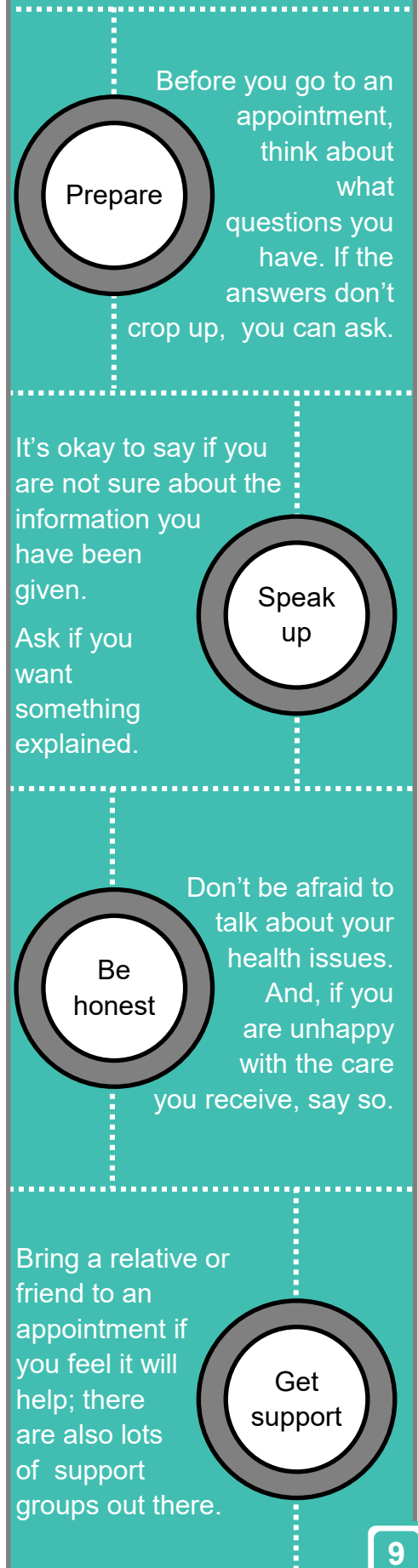


Making sense of health information is an important part of keeping us healthy. You have to know what things mean, in order to:

- Understand the choices you have
- find your way around the health care system
- Make the best choices about your health

Understanding health information, and making decisions as a result, is referred to by the health profession as health literacy.

4 steps to a better medical appointment



Easy to read

Now this looks good to read



+

Understandable

Is this making sense?



=

Informed decision

Yes! I know exactly what to do



By improving our health literacy we can:



Better manage our own health and wellbeing needs, as well as those of our families.



Find it easier to access the services we need.



Make sure we recover as quickly as possible by understanding medical advice.



Make better decisions to help prevent or delay frailty.



Feel more confident when chatting to health professionals.

What's happening in Derbyshire?

Our aim is to make everyone think more about health literacy and what they can do to help people understand the information they receive.

As a first step, staff working for Derbyshire County Council's Stop Smoking Service are going to be looking more closely at the language they use in their work.

Staff will also learn different ways to check in with the people they are helping to quit smoking, to make sure that everything is clear.



This is just the start...

If successful, this work will be expanded to other areas of health and social care throughout Derbyshire.

Tackling health literacy in this way has the chance to really make a big difference.

Health literacy and frailty - what's the link?



Health literacy can affect every health choice we make.

If we make good health choices throughout our lives, this will help us to build our health reserves.

Having larger physical and mental health reserves means we may be able to prevent or delay frailty later in life.

Want to find out more?

Click on the links below:

[What to ask your doctor NHS tips](#)

[Professionals: Plain English Guide](#)

Health professions: empower those you work with

Are you a doctor, a health visitor or someone who works in a care home? People with health and social care jobs can sometimes use words and phrases that have very little meaning outside their area of work.

This can be really confusing for anyone without that specialist knowledge. It doesn't have to be this way; by making small changes, we can tackle this together.



1. Explain clearly

Keep language as simple as possible

2. Demonstrate

Demonstrate instructions, such as portion size or measuring medication

3. Check understanding

Encourage service users to ask questions; listen well, and check their understanding

A healthy environment for all



When it comes to your health, where you live matters.

It is common sense that the quality of our health – and generally how we feel in ourselves (our wellbeing) – can be affected by where we live. The quality of our homes and spaces and places around us can help bring about good health; but they can also have the opposite effect.

Healthy environments are important. This is why this part of the report looks at the homes, communities and the areas where we live, work or study and the effect that these can have on the quality of our health, now and in later life.

What does a healthy environment look like?

A healthy environment doesn't simply mean the countryside; it's about having places you can get to and enjoy. Good services can be part of this; being able to reach shops, a doctor or optician, plus having transport links so that you can get to other places, can all help to support a person's wellbeing.

But where we live can sometimes affect our health in a negative way too.

Areas with high levels of air pollution, like smoke and car fumes, can increase the risk of lung disease. If you don't feel safe going out this could mean you are cut off and isolated which can affect your mental health. You may live in a house with a bad damp problem or without heating in winter which could lead to chest problems and lower your resistance to other health problems.

Upgrade the health potential of your environment...



First Contact

First Contact is a free service for adults living in Derbyshire. It provides an easy way for you to get in touch with local services who can support your wellbeing and help you stay independent.

Some areas First Contact can offer advice to improve your home environment include:

- Housing need (is your home fit for purpose?)
- Keeping your home warm
- Repairs to your home
- Home safety and security
- Falls prevention
- Community transport

[Click here to find out more](#)

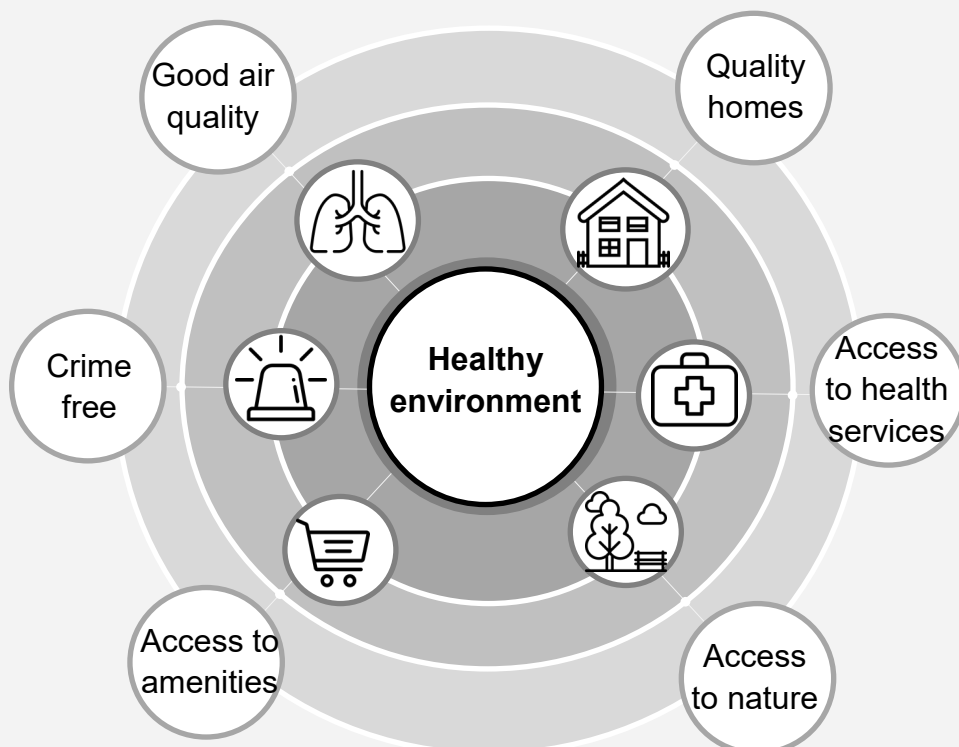


Welfare Rights

The Derbyshire Welfare Rights Team can help you to find out about any benefits you may be entitled to and how to claim. This could help with your living costs.

[Click here to find out more](#)

Elements that make a healthy environment



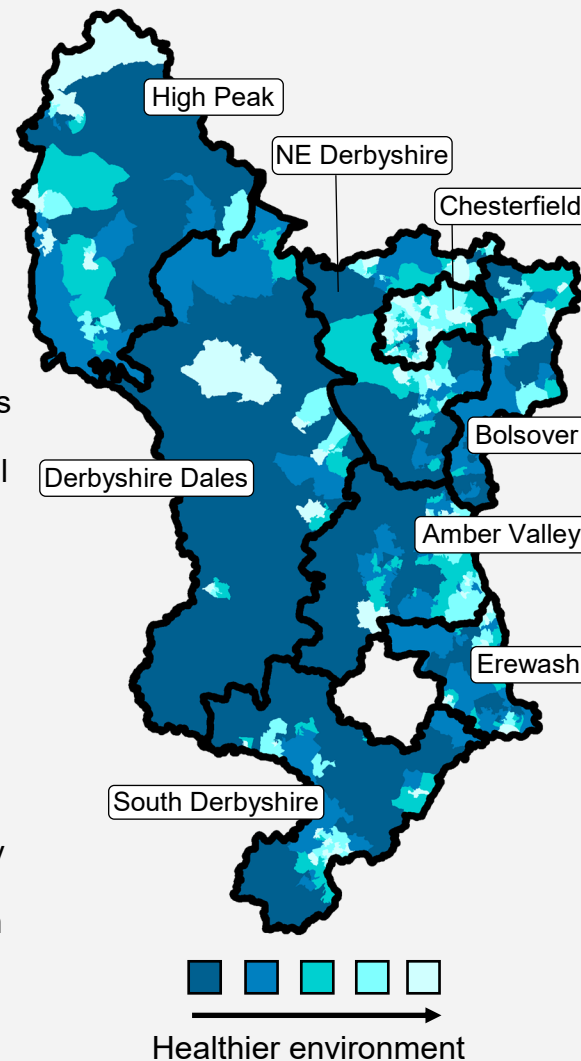
Derbyshire has one of the best environments for health in the East Midlands

According to research conducted by the University of Liverpool, Derbyshire has one of the best environments for health in the East Midlands¹.

These findings were based on a number of factors, including; access to nature, access to health services, the retail environment and air quality.

However, there is still room for improvement, with some parts of Derbyshire fairing better than others.

Rural areas may not be as healthy as we think. This is caused largely by the isolation of these communities from health services²².



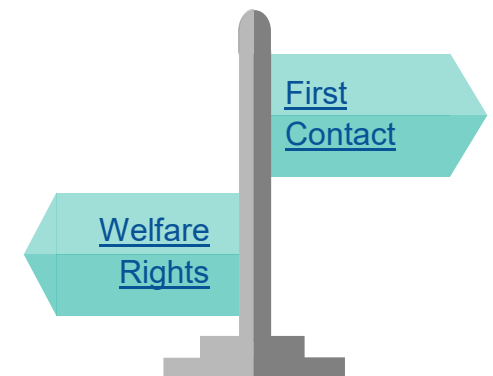
A healthy environment and frailty - what's the link?

A good environment for health can help protect us from illness and makes it easier to make healthier choices - building up our health reserves.

For example, good neighbourhood design can affect how much we exercise, how our social lives develop and our mental health. It can also help people to live as independently as possible.

Want to find out more?

Click on the links below:



What is Derbyshire County Council doing?



Support

Supporting our vulnerable populations to live in well-planned and healthy homes has been marked out as a key priority as part of the council's current Health and Wellbeing Strategy²³.

This is supported by the Strategic Statement for Planning and Health across Derbyshire and Derby City (2016)²⁴ that outlines key principles for work in Derbyshire.



Working together

DCC is working with planners to make sure that health is thought about when designing the 'built environment' like homes, property developments and estates.

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019)²⁵ recognises that planners need to create safe and healthy places for people to live, with access to the kinds of facilities and opportunities that help to build a sense of community.

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