Lincolnshire JSNA: Life expectancy

Why is it an issue?

- Life expectancy is a summary measure of the all-cause mortality rates in an area in a given period. It is the preferred summary measure of all-cause mortality as it is readily understood, being the average number of years a new-born baby would survive if they were to experience the areas age-specific mortality rates for that time period throughout his or her life.

- Life expectancy figures are not the number of years a baby born in the area could actually expect to live, both because the mortality rates of the area are likely to change in the future and because many of those born in the area will live elsewhere for at least some part of their lives.

- Trend data from England and Wales suggests that despite increases in life expectancy, national inequalities in life expectancy at birth for males and females have increased over a 30 year period between 1982-1986 and 2007-2011. This is despite improvements within local areas.

- Today, in the UK, the biggest premature 'killers' are what are known as non-communicable diseases (NCDs). These are non-infectious diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease and stroke, which are usually associated with modifiable lifestyle factors including obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption.

- Within Lincolnshire differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy exist between the most deprived and least deprived areas. Addressing the variation in life expectancy across the county is a key health inequality issue.

Policy and Guidance

Few national policies, guidelines or targets exist solely focused on improvements in life expectancy. However, the risk factors and determinants for many causes of premature mortality are specifically addressed in various national and local policies, strategies and guidance. Lifestyle and behaviour play a predominant role in premature mortality, and individual risks are frequently associated with more than one disease or condition.


Public Health England also have a 5-year plan, 'From Evidence into Action: Opportunities to Protect and Improve the Nation's Health', which identifies seven priorities addressing the main risk factors for many causes of premature mortality, including tackling obesity, reducing smoking and reducing harmful drinking. [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-evidence-into-action-opportunities-to-protect-and-improve-the-nations-health](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/from-evidence-into-action-opportunities-to-protect-and-improve-the-nations-health)

The Department of Health reviewed the failings of their own 2003 strategy on reducing inequalities in Life expectancy in 'Tackling inequalities in life expectancy in areas with the worst health and
deprivation’, which also identified future opportunities for tackling inequalities in life expectancy targeted at the most deprived areas of England and Wales. 

What is the picture locally & how do we compare?

What is the picture in Lincolnshire?

In Lincolnshire, life expectancy at birth has continued to increase. Between 2011 and 2013 life expectancy at birth was 83.0 years for females and 79.2 years for males, compared to similar figures of 83.1 years and 79.4 years respectively in England.

Life expectancy does not vary greatly across the county’s districts but gaps in life expectancy may be seen when considering smaller geographies (e.g. ward level). The gap between male and female life expectancy also appears to be narrowing.

Healthy life expectancy, which estimates lifetime spent in ‘Very good’ or ‘Good’ health based on how individuals perceive their health, is higher in women in Lincolnshire than England and, for men, similar to England and Wales averages. However, within county differences exist with the lowest health life expectancies seen in Lincolnshire’s coastal areas as well as the county’s most urban wards for both men and women in 2009-2013.

The 2014 Director of Public Health’s Annual Report focused on the potential causes of premature mortality in Lincolnshire. It highlighted that the majority of deaths under the age of 75 years were due to non-communicable diseases, considered to be wholly or partially preventable, including some forms of cancer, circulatory diseases, accidents, respiratory diseases, and chronic liver disease. Between them, cancer and circulatory diseases were found to account for more premature deaths in Lincolnshire than all other causes combined, being two thirds of the total.

An outcome in the NHS Outcomes Framework (NHSOF) is to reduce the Potential Years of Life Lost (PYLL) that are amendable to healthcare (i.e. premature deaths that should not occur in the presence of timely and effective healthcare). Data collected between 2011-2013 suggested the directly age standardised rate per 10,000 population for Lincolnshire East CCG, Lincolnshire West CCG and South Lincolnshire CCGs was significantly higher than the national rate. However, during the same time period, the Public Health Outcome Framework outcome for PYLL due to all cause cancer showed South Lincolnshire and South West Lincolnshire to have lower standardised rates than England with the other CCGs being similar to England and Wales.

What are we doing about it & what can be done differently?

The 2014 report included a number of recommendations targeted at tackling major causes of premature years of life lost covered elsewhere in the JSNA. The recommendations were aimed at various partners in health and social care.

In order to address inequalities in life expectancy we will need to consider interventions that take into account wider determinants of health. An all-encompassing approach across local organisations from delivering ‘Making every contact count’ to working with spatial planners to promote healthy lifestyles are needed to reduce the number of years of life lost through preventable premature mortality and tackle individual inequalities in life expectancy.

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1 For the latest figures visit http://www.research-lincs.org.uk/Home.aspx
2 http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#gid/1000049
3 http://www.research-lincs.org.uk/UI/Documents/Compendium-of-PYLL-Indicators_version-1-1.xls
How do we compare?

Differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities are some of the overarching indicators in the Public Health Outcomes Framework. [http://www.phoutcomes.info/](http://www.phoutcomes.info/)