

Physical fitness & mental wellbeing

In May we celebrate national walking month, which includes 'walk to work week' and 'walk to school week'. Moderate exercise is really important for longevity and maintaining mobility. It is also linked to our mental wellbeing, so it is apt that mental health awareness week also falls in May, starting on the 14th.

Mental health has been featured frequently in the media over the last few years, with Prince Harry playing a role in publicising the issue by openly talking about his own experiences and establishing the 'Heads Together'¹ campaign, with the aim of destigmatising mental health. The campaign has encouraged other public figures to talk about their mental health issues which may be why the UK leads the world for reducing stigma and raising awareness of mental health issues.²

Big Numbers

62% Of Dorset's adults are overweight³

£8.4m Annual cost of physical inactivity in Dorset

61% Of Christchurch adults are physically active - below other parts of Dorset and England

2nd North Dorset's ranking for happiness in England

1st UK's ranking out of 30 countries for reducing stigma and increasing awareness of mental health issues

Box 1: Physical Fitness

We all know that physical activities like cycling and sports are good for our health, but did you know that walking and gardening can be just as good for you? The NHS reports that adults who are physically active³ are at lower risk of heart disease, strokes, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and colon/breast cancer, and are likely to experience improved mental health.



Dorset's residents are generally more active than the national average but Christchurch lags behind.³ Despite Christchurch's older age profile, there doesn't appear to be a link between age and activity when looking at all English authorities. Even though Dorset is better than average, it has been estimated that inactivity is costing Dorset £8.4m per year.⁵

The top 5 priorities in the national sports strategy:⁶

- physical wellbeing
- mental wellbeing
- individual development
- social and community development
- economic development

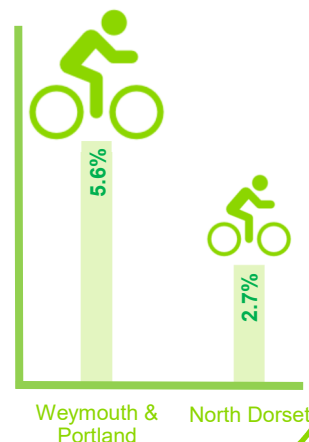
Cycling regularly is twice as popular in Weymouth & Portland (5.6%) as in North Dorset (2.7%).³

Cost of inactivity in Dorset



£8.4m pa

Christchurch residents tend to be less active⁴



Sources & Definitions:

¹ <https://www.headstogether.org.uk/>

² <http://mentalhealthintegration.com/#!/index>

³ <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/physical-activity>

⁴ 150 moderate intensity equivalent minutes of physical activity per week in bouts of 10 minutes or more

⁵ Sport England mini sport profile for Dorset

⁶ Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation, HM Government, December 2015

Box 2: Mental wellbeing

The Mental Health Foundation describes good mental health as making the most of your potential, coping with life and playing a full part in your family, workplace, community and among friends.⁶ Our mental health can change over time and, whilst many of us will face temporary setbacks, some people may find these hard to overcome.

- People report that green spaces have a beneficial effect on their mental health. Spending money on the landscape can reduce the need for expensive health interventions.⁷



Staff wellbeing

- Mental wellbeing in the workplace is of vital importance to both employer and employee. Firms with an interest in the wellbeing of their staff tend to be more profitable. A recent academic study found a positive link between happy workers and profitability.⁸ The charity Mind encourages employers to prioritise the mental health of staff by providing support and feedback on the organisation's approach to wellbeing; and by publishing an annual Workplace Wellbeing Index.⁹

Living sustainably can improve mental wellbeing

- North Dorset has the highest self-reported happiness levels in Dorset and ranked 2nd in England whereas Christchurch ranked 253rd out of 269 areas. This may be linked to self-reported health which tends to be poor in Christchurch.¹¹
- There is evidence that sustainable behaviours can improve people's happiness. Engaging in recycling and reducing waste improve the environment and civil society, leading to increases in wellbeing and life satisfaction.¹⁰ The government is exploring ways of reducing waste further with consultations on a 'latte levy' on disposable cups, a deposit scheme for plastic drinks bottles and a ban on plastic straws and cotton buds.



What are we doing about it?

Our LiveWell Dorset service supports people in making healthy lifestyle choices and leading active lives. More than 17,000 Dorset residents have already accessed LiveWell Dorset to receive advice and coaching; to meet recommended guidelines for physical activity and alcohol intake; to stop smoking and to maintain a healthy weight. You can ask your GP for a referral into LiveWell or visit our website yourself: <https://www.livewelldorset.co.uk/>

Working with Active Dorset we have secured funding from Sport England to work with partners across the county to support people to be more active and to take advantage of Dorset's green spaces. This includes working with the local nature partnership to encourage people with dementia and their carers to make use of areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Public Health Dorset promotes the '5 Ways to Wellbeing' as a way of maintaining good mental health.¹² These include Connect, Keep learning, Be active, Take notice and Give to others. On the last point, why not start volunteering today to benefit yourself and others? The Volunteer Centre Dorset has lots of volunteering opportunities: <http://www.volunteeringdorset.org.uk/>.

Sources & Definitions:

⁶ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/your-mental-health/about-mental-health/what-mental-health> [Accessed 19/04/18]

⁷ Public Health and Landscape, Creating healthy places, Landscape Institute, November 2013

⁸ Employee satisfaction and corporate performance in the UK, University of East Anglia, 28 February 2018

⁹ <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/workplace-wellbeing-index/> [Accessed 19/04/18]

¹⁰ Sustainable Happiness - Why Waste Prevention May Lead to an Increase in Quality of Life, The Happiness Research Institute, 2015

¹¹ 2011 Census, ONS

¹² <http://www.publichealthdorset.org.uk/your-health/>